

died for our sins, being put to death in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit, in which, also, coming, he preached to those spirits that were in prison." Now, what was this prison? It was not surely the hell of the damned, but that hell or prison of which the Apostles' Creed speaks, in which were detained the souls of God's servants who died before Christ, and to whom the Saviour came to announce the glad tidings of their liberation and of their eternal salvation. It is of those spirits the scripture speaks when it says of Christ that, ascending on high, He led captivity captive (Chap. 4, v. 8), that is, he freed from the captivity of their prison the patriarchs, prophets, and just of the old law, and led them in triumphant entry into heaven on the day of the ascension.

Our blessed Lord and teacher tells us in Mathew, (chap. xii, 32). "That he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost the sin shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." These words manifestly imply that sins may be forgiven in the world to come, and, therefore, there must be a middle place wherein this forgiveness could be meted out, as it could not take place in either heaven or hell, and this is the meaning which the Holy Fathers, with a striking unanimity, attach to this text.

The last scriptural authority to which we shall call attention in proof of a middle place, or purgatory in the next life, is taken from St. Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians, (iii, 13-15,) where the apostle says: "The day of the Lord shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's works abide, he shall receive a reward. If any man's works be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire." Here the apostle draws a distinction between perfect works done in charity, which stand the test of fire, and bring rewards to their authors, and imperfect works and venial sins, which are burnt by purgatorial fires, whilst their authors are saved by those purgatorial fires.

The general council of Florence, held in 1438, and in

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