

OLD THEOLOGY QUARTERLY.

THE
SCRIPTURE TEACHING

ON

Purgatory.

‘Inquire for the Old Paths.’ — Jer. 16:6.

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Purgatory:—

IS IT A ROMISH, A PROTESTANT OR A BIBLE DOCTRINE?

Protestants generally have ignored the Bible doctrine on the subject of a future Purgatory, while Romanists have shamefully perverted and counterfeited it, as they have every other truth, to the unholy ends of human ambition and avarice. Indeed, the whole Papal system is a counterfeit of the truth, and herein has been its great power to deceive and lead astray. It is because of this resemblance to the truth, in its completeness and its general outline, notwithstanding its outrageous perversions and its shameful abuses, that Papacy has well been described as “A masterpiece of Satanic ingenuity.” Macaulay, the celebrated historian, modestly says it “is the very masterpiece of human wisdom. Among the contrivances which have been devised for deceiving and oppressing mankind, it occupies the highest place.” Yet, like a counterfeit coin, it may require an expert to detect and expose it.

While we have no sympathy with the doctrine of Purgatory as taught by Romanists, nor yet as hinted at by some Protestants in what they term the Intermediate State—between death and the resurrection, when the soul, they claim,

is purged from sin and made fit for heaven—we do see that the perverted doctrine of Purgatory had a start in the truth; that the Scriptures teach the doctrine of Purgatory; and that it is one of the most glorious features of the divine plan for the salvation of our race.

The term *purgatory* signifies a place or condition of purging or cleansing; and it is freely admitted that all mankind must of necessity be purged from sin and uncleanness (as well as redeemed and justified), before they will be fit to enjoy the blessings of eternal life. The common sense of mankind acknowledges this necessity for purgation, and the Scriptures clearly teach the doctrine. The way of salvation lies through redemption by the precious blood of Christ (justification through faith in the redemption thus accomplished) and purgation, or the actual cleansing from sin and uncleanness, and perfecting in holiness.

Protestants (claiming that all mankind are *now* on trial, and that as a result of the present presumed trial they must, at death, be ushered at once into either a heaven of everlasting bliss or a hell of eternal torture) have no alternative from either one or the other of the following conclusions: First, that only the justified, sanctified and faithful saints developed in the present life will ever be saved, and that all others—medium good, and bad—will be hopelessly and forever lost; or, Secondly, that all mankind, except the vilest of wilful sinners, will be taken to heaven and will constitute it a very bedlam of confusion as the various classes attempt to associate and affiliate with each other—the matured saints (a “little flock”), the inexperienced babes, the ignorant and degraded savages, the idiotic, the insane—all persons of all classes for whom *hope* is entertained by kindly human hearts, all who it is felt sure are at least too good or too innocent to deserve *eternal torture* of any description.

Some Protestants take one of these views and some the other ; but whichever horn of the dilemma is accepted, insurmountable difficulties are encountered, as every thinking Christian knows. The first view, if really believed, would fill the world with an indescribable gloom. Death-bed scenes already sad would be still sadder, if such a view were really entertained. And it is the *professed* view. But if the second view be accepted, as it generally is by people of heart and breadth of mind, the difficulty is but slightly lessened ; for with the idea that at death we must go to either heaven or hell, the only reasonable conclusion is that all who escape hell must go to heaven. The difficulty with this view is that it would fill heaven with a heterogeneous mass of beings, and so mar its peace and harmony that it would be only another babel of confusion such as earth has been. And some, at least, would still feel like praying that they might go “Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.” Such a condition would be only a continuation of the present imperfect and unsatisfactory state. What fellowship hath light with darkness, or what common joy could these share whose states and experiences differ so widely ? None whatever.

But, says one who never before thought of it so, May we not suppose that those lower classes will be gradually disciplined and corrected, and so brought into harmony with God and each other, and that peace and joy will result in the end ? Ah ! then instead of doing without a *Purgatory*, you are supposing heaven is Purgatory—a great hospital and reform school for the treatment of moral diseases and deformities. No, that cannot be. Well, suggests another, may it not be that in the instant of dying, all those who are not notoriously bad (and hence too good to be eternally tormented) are perfected and fitted for heaven ? No ; because in that case present experience would be wholly

useless; for beings so changed would not know themselves—in fact would not *be* themselves, but new beings, wholly different in every particular. If such were the program it would have been wiser to make them so at first. Besides, that is not God's method of working. We should observe that his operations are always on philosophical principles; and the principles of moral philosophy are just as fixed and firmly established as are the principles of natural philosophy. Observe how steadily God adheres to the principles of natural philosophy as he saw fit to establish them. Does water ever flow up hill? did an acorn ever spring into an oak in an instant? was ever a human being born fully developed either mentally or physically? do grapes grow on thorns, or figs on thistles? We smile at such preposterous suggestions as these; but why? Because we recognize the fixed principles of natural philosophy, which never will and never can change. And we see that if they were not thus fixed, the results would be confusion throughout the realm of nature.

Our God is a God of order; and in moral law as in natural law his principles are fixed. Character is a growth, a development. It may grow rapidly or grow slowly, but *grow* it must. It never arrives at maturity without the preliminary processes of growth, or development by degrees. And along whatever lines—of virtue or of vice—the discipline, experience and consequent growth have been, of such kind will be the matured character—whether bad or good. It is preposterous, therefore, to presume that a perfect moral character can be instantaneously bestowed upon the morally polluted or upon the morally blank in the instant of death. But here we should distinguish between perfect and imperfect beings *without character* and perfect and imperfect beings *with character*. Adam was a perfect being without character. He was put on trial to give him

an opportunity to develop a character. His inexperience soon stamped his effort—Failure. But God has provided a ransom for Adam and all whom he represented in his trial; and this implies another opportunity to develop a *character* such as God can approve—fit for an eternity of companionship with him. Either a good character or a bad one can be demonstrated by imperfect beings, and it is determined by the *conduct* of each person after he comes to a knowledge of the truth on moral questions. God makes no promises of heavenly bliss except to such as develop *character*—“overcomers”—and yet it is evident that infants who have formed no character, and many of the ignorant who have never come to such a knowledge of the truth as would constitute a full trial, or as should condemn them as fit for torment or for second death, constitute the great majority and are as unfit for heaven as eternal torment would be unfit for them. For all such God has prepared a Purgatory, a school of discipline which will favor the development of good characters, after which they will be tested; and this we will show from the Scriptures, shortly.

We know ourselves now, and our friends know us, both by our physical features and by our mental and moral developments. But when death has destroyed the physical man, and only character remains for identification (and this is the general claim), if the character, or mental or moral development, should undergo instantly such a marvelous change as perfect character would imply, all the surrounding conditions and circumstances being new also, how could the man know himself? And if such be God's plan, why has he permitted sin and death and all our present painful experiences at all? and why need any strive against sin? The idea is absurd.

If such were God's plan, the present time of the permission of sin, evil and death might as well be dispensed with

as useless, to say the least. And if such are to be thus changed instantly to perfection, why not miraculously change *all*—even the worst? and why are any exhorted now to “*holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord?” and where would come in the many and the few stripes for deeds done in the present time?

THE PURGATORY OF SCRIPTURE.

Seeing that all of the above theories are lame, unreasonable and unscriptural, we come now to the Purgatory of the Bible.

First. It will be established on Earth—not elsewhere.—Prov. 11:31.

Second. It is not now in operation, but is to begin when this Gospel age ends, when the little flock of saints has been selected.—2 Pet. 2:9.

Third. The overcoming “little flock” of saints, who will have part in the first resurrection and be like their Lord, spirit beings, will then be associated with him in the work of judging, correcting and teaching those in process of purgation during the Millennium, when the world and the “castaways” of the Church are being disciplined and corrected in righteousness. And that will be the only really holy, righteous *Inquisition* (*i. e.*, court of judicial inquiry or examination on matters moral and spiritual), of which Papacy made so terrible, blasphemous and cruel a counterfeit during the dark ages.—John 5:22; 1 Cor. 6:2.

In a word, the long-promised reign of the Christ, the glorified Church, during the world’s thousand-year judgment day, or period of correction in righteousness, is the *Purgatory* of the Bible. The saints shall not come into purgatorial judgment at all (1 Cor. 11:32); because, in this life, hating sin, they became reckonedly dead to it and alive to righteousness in Christ. Neither will the faithful over-

ccomers of the past, noted in Hebrew xi., have part in that Millennial age Purgatory; but all others of the human family will there be dealt with—corrected and disciplined in righteousness—to bring about true reformation and finally perfection of character. (1 Pet. 4:5; Matt. 12:36.) All will thus be purged except such as in the present age, having enjoyed extraordinary light and privilege, nevertheless sin *wilfully* against it. For such only there is no further hope (Heb. 10:26, 27), through the discipline and purgation of that judgment period; for, says the Apostle, “It is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance.”—Heb. 6:4–6.

That time will be one not only for rewarding the evil and good then done, but also for rewarding the evil and good deeds of the present time. Whoever now gives even a cup of cold water to one of the Lord’s disciples, because he is such, shall have a reward in that Purgatory; and whoever has wronged one of the least of them shall receive a just recompense for the evil deed. And the scourgings of that time shall be justly in accordance with the knowledge that was sinned against.—Luke 12:47, 48; Matt. 10:41, 42; 16:27; 2 Tim. 4:14.

The Purgatorial period will be specially severe at its beginning, particularly upon the people of civilized nations of so-called Christendom. They have enjoyed many advantages and opportunities above those of heathen lands, and are correspondingly responsible. For the purpose of quickly bringing mankind to a realization of the new conditions in force under the new, Millennial dispensation then introduced, the Lord, the righteous Judge, “will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire [judgments, destructive to evil systems and schemes]. For by fire [destructive judgments upon evil things] and by his

sword [the truth] will the Lord plead with all flesh : and the slain of the Lord shall be many." (Isa. 66:15, 16 ; Rev. 19: 15.) "He shall judge among the nations and *rebuke* [by his judgments] many people : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2: 4.) The judgments of that day of the Lord are symbolically represented, in all the prophetic delineations of that time, by *fire* ; because fire not only *destroys*, but causes *pain* in connection with the destruction. These purgatorial flames of righteous judgment will consume the evil systems and false principles and theories of the world—political, religious and financial ; and while individuals will suffer and weep bitterly, it will be, to the many, reformatory or purgatorial suffering ; and only such as willingly cling to the evil will be destroyed with the evil and as a part of it.

This Purgatory will begin in the close or "harvest" of the Gospel age—the Millennial or purgatorial age lapping over upon it. Indeed, the first to enter it will be those Christians who are "double minded"—who seek to serve both God and mammon, and who, to be saved at all, must come up out of great tribulation, washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14.) In fact, it might be said that the purgatorial work has to some extent progressed upon this same class throughout the Gospel age (See 1 Cor. 5:5) ; but the class has been so small in comparison with the world that the term "Purgatory" may properly be applied only to the Millennial age of the world's purgation ; for such is the Scriptural method of referring to it. Referring to the beginning of this Purgatory and its first effect upon the two classes of the Church, the Prophet says (Mal. 3:2, 3): "But who may abide the day of his [Messiah's] *coming* ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he

is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and *purge* them [in that Purgatory] as gold and silver, that they may offer [themselves] unto Jehovah an offering in righteousness."

The trouble which will purge the great company of the nominal church, who are unworthy of a place in the real Church, is a part of that which is coming upon the world in general. They are the unfaithful servants who, though not hypocrites, receive a portion of trouble, as chastisement, with the hypocrites and unbelievers. (Matt. 24:51.) While they will be coming through great tribulation it will be because they have the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is a selfish spirit: it includes love of the praise of men, love of wealth, love of power, love of ease, love of pleasure—love of everything pertaining to self, and neglect and lack of interest in the welfare of others. This class, and in fact the whole civilized world—"Christendom," as it is called—have had the law of Christ presented to them—Love to God and love toward each other; yet they have neglected it and allowed selfishness to rule them instead. The trouble coming will be the outgrowth of this very selfishness. Kings and princes selfishly seek their own continued advantage and power, and the masses selfishly seek liberty and equality; rich men and corporations seek selfishly to perpetuate monopolistic methods, customs and privileges which give them a decided advantage over others and secure them and theirs the cream of life's comforts and blessings; and in opposition to these their mechanics band together, not on general principles for the good of all, but on selfish principles, to get for themselves as large a share of the spoils and to give as small a return of labor as possible.

This crop of selfishness is fast ripening in the brighter light of this nineteenth century. As the light increases, both sides become more cunning as to how to advance their respective selfish ends, and how to detect and meet each other's moves. The breach is rapidly widening and preparing for what God has predicted from of old—"A time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation," "no, nor ever shall be." (Dan. 12:1.) This trouble is the be-

ginning of the Purgatorial fire of the day of the Lord. In it the mountains [kingdoms of earth] shall melt and flow down like wax [to the level of the people—equality], and those which do not *melt* shall be removed and carried into the sea [swallowed up in anarchy], while the *earth* [society and general order] shall be removed. See Psalm 46 for a symbolic presentation of these retributive and Purgatorial troubles coming upon the world, remembering that in the symbolism of Scripture *mountains* signify kingdoms; *earth*, the social fabric supporting kingdoms; *sea*, the lawless or anarchistic elements; and *heavens*, the religious influences.

This same trouble is also graphically portrayed in the symbolic “*fire*” in 2 Pet. 3:10–13. Here the earth (society) is shown as melting or disintegrating into its various elements, which, in the heat of bitterness of that time of selfish strife, will no longer blend and coalesce as before. Here the burning of the heavens—the destruction of the religious systems and principles which at present govern and control mankind—is shown, their passing away with great commotion. Then Peter tells how this confusion and trouble shall be followed by a new organization of society, under new religious principles and government—new *heavens* and a new *earth* wherein dwelleth righteousness—wherein right and truth and love will have supplanted error, superstition and selfishness. David also (Psa. 46: 8–11) portrays the introduction of the same blessed Millennium of peace and righteousness.

During that Purgatorial trial the glorified Christ, the righteous judge, shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and shall sweep away every refuge of error. (Isa. 28:17.) “He shall judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment . . . and shall break in pieces the oppressor.” (Psa. 72:2, 4.) This will be the beginning of the Purgatorial judgments—in favor of the poor, the ignorant and the oppressed, and hence against the wealthy and great and learned who have been willing to use their superior advantages of birth, of wealth, of education and of mental balance simply for themselves, selfishly—instead of having that sympathy and love for mankind that would lead them to desire and to labor for the elevation of their less favored brothers. Inasmuch as

any have permitted selfishness to rule them, so that they are willing to take advantage of the weaknesses and circumstances of others to amass to themselves great wealth and power, and to use that power and wealth selfishly, to that extent they will suffer most in the beginning of this Purgatorial age. Upon this class its hottest fires will come first. See James 5:1-7.

The judgments of this day of the Lord are represented repeatedly in the Scriptures. Isaiah (Chapter 33:2,3,5-16) points out God's succor of the saints from the coming trouble, saying: 'O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited on thee: be thou their arm [the helper of all truth seekers, even though not overcomers], . . . also *our salvation* in the time of trouble.' Then the effect of the trouble upon the nations is briefly summed up: "At the noise of thy thunder the people fled; when thou stoodest up nations were scattered." Next, the effect of the Lord's standing forth to judge the world is shown upon the Church: "The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high. He hath filled Zion with justice and righteousness. *Wisdom* and *knowledge* shall be the stability of thy times and the strength of thy happiness; the fear [reverence] of the Lord is his treasure." That is to say, the Zion class will be distinct and separate from others, and their advantage will consist largely in the divine wisdom and knowledge granted them, because of their obedience to their consecration. These are to be sealed "in their foreheads," intellectually (Rev. 7:3; 14:1; 22:4), that they may not be in darkness with the world (1 Thes. 5:4), and so may pass through much of the trouble with a happiness based upon this knowledge.

The prophet proceeds to picture the remainder of the world, aside from the saints, in that trouble. (See Isa. 33:7, 8.) Their valiant ones are discouraged and weep, powerless to stem the tide of anarchy: all lovers of peace weep bitterly, greatly disappointed that when they were crying Peace! Peace! and predicting a Millennium of peace by arbitration, all their predictions fail and a time of trouble is precipitated such as was not since there was a nation. They expected it not so, because, neglecting God's revelation, they were not sealed by his truth in their fore-

heads. The highways [of commerce] lie waste, the travelers cease, contracts cease to be of force or value; and cities [because dependent upon commerce] will become very undesirable places, while principles of honor and manhood will no longer be regarded or trusted; and the earth [society in general] will languish and mourn.

This is the time when I will stand up to give judgment and justice, and to exalt myself, saith the Lord. The nominal church, which has conceived chaff instead of true wheat, shall bring forth only stubble; and her own breath (or doctrines) shall set her on fire and cause her consumption. (Isa. 33:11. See also the burning of the tares, with which this is in harmony, and but another picture. Matt. 13:30, 40.) As for the people in general (verse 12), they will be of two classes. Some, as thorns, evil-doers, will become furious in the fire, because cut off and hindered from their opportunities of doing evil secretly, and will be consumed. Others will be like slaking lime: the heat will be intensified as the water of truth is cast on, until their stoniness, their hardness of heart, shall be dissolved completely, bringing them into complete harmony with the Millennial Kingdom and its just and loving laws.

Going back, the Prophet takes another view of the trouble seen to be approaching; and he pictures the different classes and shows the class which all must join who would pass through that Purgatory successfully. (Isa. 33:14-16.) Transgressors in [nominal] Zion will be afraid, the hypocrites will be in terror as they witness the troubles of this day draw near. Which can abide [*i. e.*, not be consumed] with this devouring fire? Which can abide with lasting burnings? The answer is clear:—not the selfish, but—“He that walketh in justice and speaketh truth, that despiseth the gain of oppression or deceit, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from the hearing of blood [of plans which might cost life, or wreck another morally, physically and financially], and shutteth his eyes against looking on evil. He shall dwell on high.” [Such shall pass through the purgatorial fire, and be exalted.] This class shall be preserved from the intensity of trouble and fire; and such as were otherwise at first, but who become of this class, shall be delivered from

the burnings of this Purgatory as they develop this character which is a return to the likeness of God and to harmony with his law of love.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this coming Purgatory when he declares, "Some men's sins go before to judgment [being punished in the present life] and some they follow after." (1 Tim. 5:24.) Those who receive punishment for sins in the present life are oftenest the consecrated saints. Hence he declares: "If we would judge [criticize, discipline] ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord. But when we are judged of the Lord, we are chastened [punished] that we should not be judged [tried and punished in the Millennial Purgatory] with the world."—1 Cor. 11:31, 32.

The same Apostle (Rom. 2:3-11) speaks of this Millennial Purgatory as the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God against all who are in opposition to righteousness and truth, and who obey unrighteousness. Upon such, he declares, shall *then* be rendered indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every being doing evil, but glory, honor and peace upon all that work good.

The same Apostle refers again (2 Thes. 1:6-9) to the tribulation to come at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and declares that it will be but a just thing for the Lord, who declares, "Vengeance is mine: I will repay," to render a recompense of *tribulation* [Purgatorial punishment] upon those who have been opposers of the truth and of the saints. This, of course, includes the individual punishment of those evil doers of the Apostle's day, and indicates that the tribulation promised was not inflicted at their death, nor yet, but will be inflicted at or during the thousand years of the Lord's second presence—*when* he shall be revealed in flaming fire, etc.

That their punishment or tribulation will be *just*, and not an unjust one, we are fully assured from the character of their judge, as well as by the Apostle's words. Those who have sinned against little light shall have the fewer stripes (of punishment), and those who have transgressed with more light shall have the greater punishment.—Luke 12:47, 48.

Our Lord's coming is not only for his *saints*, to be glorified in them, but also on behalf of all who will *believe* in

that Millennial day of his presence, that his character and laws may be admired and obeyed by all such. But the same flaming fire [of righteous Purgatorial judgment] in which his *presence* will first be revealed to the world, in the great day of trouble which will introduce the new dispensation (new heavens and new earth), will continue to burn throughout that thousand-year day against all evil doers, revealing clearly right and wrong, good and evil; finally *consuming* all who, after clear knowledge and full opportunity, continue to reject God's goodness. Those who thus refuse to obey the glad tidings or to acknowledge God will be *consumed* by that fire as being themselves evil: thus they shall be punished with lasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. —2 Thes. i:6-9. See *Diaglott* translation.

Thus, in a word, the symbolic fires of Purgatory shall, under Christ's direction, consume evil, and leave the world cleansed, free from sin and every evil. It will first burn against evil *things*, against evil principles and practices in men, and not against men as evil men. But as knowledge is increased and the weaknesses of the fallen ones are removed, all who still love evil ways and practices and principles will be elements of evil themselves, and will be destroyed as such.

And not only shall evil doers be punished in this Purgatory, but in it also every good deed of theirs shall be rewarded—even a cup of cold water given to a disciple because he is disciple shall surely have its reward.

Thank God for his gracious provision in Christ, not only for the forgiveness of the sins of the world, but also for the Purgatorial provisions: whereby the sin-sick may be fully cured and restored to divine favor and likeness. Thanks be to God for *his* Purgatory! for the great and perfect Inquisition of his plan and for the well-fitted Inquisitors—the Christ of God, perfected, Head and body.

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