

The Two Babylons Chapter IV. Section V – Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead



Good news for Catholics: There is no such place as Purgatory!

This is the continuation of [Section IV – Extreme Unction](#)

“Extreme unction,” however, to a burdened soul, was but a miserable resource, after all, in the prospect of death. No wonder, therefore, that something else was found to be needed by those who had received all that priestly assumption could pretend to confer, to comfort them in the prospect of eternity. In every system, therefore, except that of the Bible, the doctrine of a purgatory after death, and prayers for the dead, has always been found to occupy a place. Go wherever we may, in ancient or modern times, we shall find that Paganism leaves hope after death for sinners, who, at the time of their departure, were consciously unfit for the abodes of the blest. For this purpose a middle state has been feigned, in which, by means of purgatorial pains, guilt unremoved in time may in a future world be purged away, and the soul be made meet for final beatitude. In Greece the doctrine of a purgatory was inculcated by the very chief of the philosophers. Thus Plato, speaking of the future judgment of the dead, holds out the hope of final deliverance for *all*, but maintains that, of “those who are judged,” “some” must *first* “proceed to a subterranean place of judgment, where they shall *sustain the punishment they have deserved*”; while others, in consequence of a favourable judgment, being elevated at once into a certain celestial place, “shall pass their time in a manner becoming the life they have lived in a human shape.” In Pagan Rome, purgatory was equally held up before the minds of men; but there, there seems to have been no hope held out to any of exemption from its pains. Therefore, Virgil, describing its different tortures, thus speaks:

“Nor can the grovelling mind,
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confined,
Assert the native skies, or own its heavenly kind.
Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains;
But long-contracted filth, even in the soul, remains
The relics of inveterate vice they wear,
And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.
For this are various penances enjoined;
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plunged in water, *others purged in fires*,
Till all the dregs are drained, and all the rust expires.
All have their Manes, and those Manes bear.
The few so cleansed to these abodes repair,

And breathe in ample fields the soft Elysian air,
Then are they happy, when by length of time
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime.
No speck is left of their habitual stains,
But the pure ether of the soul remains."

In Egypt, substantially the same doctrine of purgatory was inculcated. But when once this doctrine of purgatory was admitted into the popular mind, then the door was opened for all manner of priestly extortions. Prayers for the dead ever go hand in hand with purgatory; but no prayers can be completely efficacious without the interposition of the priests; and no priestly functions can be rendered unless there be *special pay* for them. Therefore, in every land we find the Pagan priesthood "devouring widows' houses," and making merchandise of the tender feelings of sorrowing relatives, sensitively alive to the immortal happiness of the beloved dead. From all quarters there is one universal testimony as to the burdensome character and the *expense* of these posthumous devotions. One of the oppressions under which the poor Romanists in Ireland groan, is the periodical special devotions, for which they are required to pay, when death has carried away one of the inmates of their dwelling. Not only are there funeral services and funeral dues for the repose of the departed, at the time of burial, but the priest pays repeated visits to the family for the same purpose, which entail heavy expense, beginning with what is called "the month's mind," that is, a service in behalf of the deceased when a month after death has elapsed. Something entirely similar to this had evidently been the case in ancient Greece; for, says Muller in his *History of the Dorians*, "the Argives sacrificed on the thirtieth day [after death] to Mercury as the conductor of the dead." In India many and burdensome are the services of the Sradd'ha, or funeral obsequies for the repose of the dead; and for securing the due efficacy of these, it is inculcated that "donations of cattle, land, gold, silver, and other things," should be made by the man himself at the approach of death; or, "if he be too weak, by another in his name" (*Asiatic Researches*). Wherever we look, the case is nearly the same.

In Tartary, "The Gurjumi, or prayers for the dead," says the *Asiatic Journal*, "are very expensive." In Greece, says Suidas, "the greatest and most *expensive* sacrifice was the mysterious sacrifice called the Telete," a sacrifice which, according to Plato, "was offered for the living and the *dead*, and was supposed to free them from all the evils to which the wicked are liable when they have left this world." In Egypt the exactions of the priests for funeral dues and masses for the dead were far from being trifling. "The priests," says Wilkinson, "induced the people to expend large sums on the celebration of funeral rites; and *many who had barely sufficient to obtain the necessaries of life* were anxious to save something for the expenses of their death. For, beside the embalming process, which sometimes cost a talent of silver, or about 250 pounds English money, the tomb itself was purchased at an immense expense; and numerous demands were made upon the estate of the deceased, for the celebration of prayer and other services for the soul." "The ceremonies," we find him elsewhere saying, "consisted of a sacrifice similar to those offered in the temples, vowed for the deceased to one or more gods (as Osiris, Anubis, and others connected with Amenti);

incense and libation were also presented; and a prayer was sometimes read, the relations and friends being present as mourners. They even joined their prayers to those of the priest. The priest who officiated at the burial service was selected from the grade of Pontiffs, who wore the leopard skin; but various other rites were performed by one of the minor priests to the mummies, previous to their being lowered into the pit of the tomb after that ceremony. Indeed, they continued to be administered at intervals, *as long as the family paid for their performance.*" Such was the operation of the doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the dead among avowed and acknowledged Pagans; and in what essential respect does it differ from the operation of the same doctrine in Papal Rome? There are the same extortions in the one as there were in the other. The doctrine of purgatory is purely Pagan, and cannot for a moment stand in the light of Scripture. For those who die in Christ no purgatory *is, or can be, needed; for*

"the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from ALL sin."

If this be true, where can there be the need for any other cleansing? On the other hand, for those who die without personal union to Christ, and consequently unwashed, unjustified, unsaved, there can be no other cleansing; for, while **"he that hath the son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath *not* life,"** and never *can* have it. Search the Scripture through, and it will be found that, in regard to all who *"die in their sins,"* the decree of God is irreversible: **"Let him that is unjust be unjust still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still."** Thus the whole doctrine of purgatory is a system of pure bare-faced Pagan imposture, dishonouring to God, deluding men who live in sin with the hope of atoning for it after death, and cheating them at once out of their property and their salvation. In the Pagan purgatory, fire, water, wind, were represented (as may be seen from the lines of Virgil) as combining to purge away the stain of sin. In the purgatory of the Papacy, ever since the days of Pope Gregory, FIRE itself has been the grand means of purgation (*Catechismus Romanus*). Thus, while the purgatorial fires of the future world are just the carrying out of the principle embodied in the blazing and purifying Baal-fires of the eve of St. John, they form another link in identifying the system of Rome with the system of Tammuz or Zoroaster, the great God of the ancient fire-worshippers.

Now, if baptismal regeneration, justification by works, penance as a satisfaction to God's justice, the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, extreme unction, purgatory, and prayers for the dead, were all derived from Babylon, how justly may the general system of Rome be styled Babylonian? And if the account already given be true, what thanks ought we to render to God, that, from a system such as this, we were set free at the blessed Reformation! How great a boon is it to be delivered from trusting in such refuges of lies as could no more take away sin than the blood of bulls or of goats! How blessed to feel that the blood of the Lamb, applied by the Spirit of God to the most defiled conscience, completely purges it from dead works and from sin! How fervent ought our gratitude to be, when we know that, in all our trials and distresses, we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, in the name of no creature, but of God's eternal and well-beloved Son; and that that Son is

exhibited as a most tender and compassionate high priest, who is TOUCHED with a feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Surely the thought of all this, while inspiring tender compassion for the deluded slaves of Papal tyranny, ought to make us ourselves stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and quit ourselves like men, that neither we nor our children may ever again be entangled in the yoke of bondage.

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