

I FOUND THE ANCIENT WAY

By

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CHAPTER SIX

PURGATORY

I BELIEVED AS FIRMLY in the existence of Purgatory as I had in the preceding dogmas, and in the effectiveness of masses and indulgences as an antidote. I hadn't noticed that there was no foundation in Scripture for a dogma of such importance - one that affects all the practices and customs of the Catholic Church.

The truth is that the priest hardly thinks of the Bible, to base his faith on it, for so great is the veneration inculcated in faithful Catholics for their church that its teaching takes the place of the authority of the Holy Scriptures which is so constantly claimed by the Protestant. Without paying attention to the matter or studying it the Catholic takes it for granted that what the Catholic Church teaches is the revealed Word. This feeling persists in the seminary, where every doubt is silenced by the authority of the professor.

The priest is freer in his functions, but he doesn't dare to doubt either, much less to investigate, for fear of the very fruit of his investigations. He knows that his life depends on blind assent to the teachings received from the church, and he avoids getting in too deep. The proverbial saying of our uncultured ancestors, "The church has its doctors," is a refuge against the questionings of conscience.

Several times I had been tormented with the idea that a great and just GOD such as the Scripture describes to us could not have created Purgatory, and much less depend on the recommendations of worldly men, so utterly commercial, in carrying out the dictates of His righteousness on the souls of sinners.

I am going to give an example of it; I can guarantee its accuracy, for if the reader of this book were to go to a certain town in the Pyrenees the main character could be pointed out to him.

It concerns a priest to whom, because of friendship, a certain religious order that has a house in Barcelona used to send their extra masses, as if they were potatoes.

The payment or fee for those masses was from 15 to 20 pesetas, while the prevailing rate in his diocese at that time was seven pesetas. So that priest never said masses for his parishioners because he lost eight to 13 pesetas per mass. He always had some excuse for not saying them and only said them in cases of real obligation.

I used to think often that if the souls of his deceased parishioners had to wait for him to free them from Purgatory with masses, they didn't have much luck for they were going to be in Purgatory quite awhile. Is it possible that GOD would leave in the hands of the ambition of men the suffering of souls who trusted only in Him? GOD is a father, and no father on earth would do it, much less the One who is infinitely better than all of them together.

Since there isn't a single passage in the whole Bible that speaks of Purgatory, the Catholic Church had to lay hold on I Maccabees, where chapter 12, verses 43 to 46 advises praying for the dead as a good thing.

This book can't be inspired since, among other things, it contains contradictions, a thing that is not possible in a book whose author is GOD, even though the instrument may be a man.

It narrated two deaths of King Antiochus. In Book 1, chapter 6, it says that he died of a melancholy that had taken hold of him as a result of the rout his army suffered in the land of Judea. And in the second Book, chapter one says he was stoned to death by the priests of the temple of Nanea. Concerning such obvious contradictions, the Catholic Church says that whether he died of melancholy or by stoning is immaterial, the important thing is that he died. As the reader can see, there is always an explanation, even if it is as unreasonable as this one, to get one out of a difficulty.

Not only does it contain these contradictions, but errors as great as the praise given the suicide of Racias. And in conclusion it uses the following words:

"Such was the story of Nicanor. And since from that time the city has been in possession of the Hebrews, I will end my narrative here. If it is well done and such as a historical narrative should be, that is what I should like; but if it is imperfect and mediocre, may I be forgiven."

I think any child taught in the Bible would recognize in the difference of expression the authority with which any inspired author speaks, even though he be a poor shepherd like Amos, and the little confidence that an author deserves who, as he himself says, has only tried to write history and even begs pardon if it hasn't turned out to the taste of the reader.

Nevertheless in this book is to be found the only foundation on which Purgatory rests.

All the other Bible texts that they try to adduce in support of the dogma are not clear. They neither speak of Purgatory nor do they support the practice of praying for the dead.

The Holy Scriptures speak of only two places, Heaven and Hell, and there are numberless texts by which the nonexistence of Purgatory can be seen. I shall mention three, so as not to be tiresome. In II Corinthians 5:1, Paul says: "**For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**" And to the Philippians (1 :21, 23), he declares, "**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.**"

As the reader can see, this doctrine is in open contradiction with that of Rome. Doubtless Paul didn't know that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we don't have a mansion prepared in Heaven but a place in Purgatory where we shall have to roast perhaps for whole centuries. How ignorant Paul was!

John in Revelation 14:13 says: "**Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors.**"

But good Theresa, in a vision she said she had, claimed to have learned that a thousand years of the most horrible sufferings that can be imagined here on earth are more transitory than a minute of Purgatory. Consequently John, instead of calling blessed those who died in the Lord, should have called them very unfortunate and not have asserted that they are resting from their works on the earth. Small rest indeed to spend years and years in the midst of such horrible torments!

Fortunately we know that when we die, if we have believed in JESUS and so are saved, we go to Heaven, because "**there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus**" (Romans 8:1).

We have said that the Catholic Church adduces other Bible texts but that their interpretation is obscure. So that the reader may see for himself, I shall present the two texts that it uses, whose logical interpretation says nothing about and has nothing to do with a place of purification after death.

The first is JESUS' warning to become reconciled with one's neighbor, through respect to GOD who commands it and does not look favorably on a worshiper who keeps a grudge (Matthew 5:24); and through respect to human authority with whom it is always unpleasant to have an unsettled account (v. 25). There is nothing in this passage that could refer to Purgatory.

The second is the declaration of the Apostle Paul that we ought to work honestly for the Lord and with good materials, since it is not the appearance of our labor but its reality and goodness that GOD recognizes and will appreciate in the day of judgment (I Corinthians 3).

So the reader can take note of the literary honesty of the aforementioned series of anti-Protestant works, we are going to transcribe the Biblical text according as we are given it in the book referred to: *Basta el Ultimo Cuadrante (To the Last Farthing)*.

VALERA TRANSLATION

13. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

TRANSLATION OF CATHOLIC FAITH

13. Every man's work shall be made evident. The [great] Day will show it and it shall be with fire in this manifestation. The fire shall try of what quality the work of each man is.

14. If this work abides, he who has built will receive his salary.

15. If the work of another perish in the flames he shall suffer a punishment; he of course will be saved, but as through fire.

GREEK TEXT

18. Hekastou to ergon phaneron genesetai; he gar hemera delousei, oti en puri apokaluptetai, kai hekastou to ergon o poion estin to pur auto dokimasei.

14. Ei tinos to ergon menei ho epoikodomesen, misthon lempsetai;

15. ei tinos to ergon katakaesetai, zemiothesetai, autos de sothesetai, houtos de hos dia puros.

I have only a slight knowledge of the Greek, but the simplest layman in such matters can convince himself, with the simple help of a good Greek-Spanish dictionary, that the translation "*he shall suffer a punishment*" is a complete departure from the language.

The translators Nacar and Colunga didn't dare translate the text in such a favorable way to the Roman Catholic thesis of Purgatory and they translated:

"The one whose work abides will receive the reward, and the one whose work is consumed will suffer the damage; he, nevertheless, will be saved, but as if he passed through fire."

In this case the damage may be the loss of the reward he should have received if his work had been good. This is without doubt the idea of the Apostle, for the expression "as if he passed through fire" cannot refer to any purgatorial fire; for in such a case it would be improper to say "as if he passed," but it would be necessary to say "he will pass through the fire," or "after having passed through the fire."

It is precisely the expression "as if he passed" that does away with and contradicts every idea of Purgatory. If I were to say that someone will be as if he were sick, everyone will understand that he is well.

The true interpretation of the expression can be understood from the parallel text in Zechariah 3:2, where the Lord says about the priest Joshua: "**Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?**" and in Amos 4:11, where GOD says to His people: "**Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning.**"

That is, you were snatched from danger, saved at the last hour, when you were at the point of perishing.

This was the case with the thief saved on the cross, who didn't go to Purgatory but went that very day to Paradise. This is what happens also to many Christians converted in the last moments of their life, who enter Heaven without the chance of bringing along any treasure of good works that will get them a triumphant entry, according to II Peter 1:11, or a great reward in the eternal kingdom, II Corinthians 5:10.

Many Christians who don't serve the Lord in the right way may find themselves in this situation when their work is judged of no value and they are saved without reward here.

We could cite numberless examples of texts fixed to the taste of the Catholic translator, so as to serve the interests of his church rather than the truth. Following are two Catholic versions of the same text, one of Nacar-Colunga, more faithful to the Greek text, and the other of Torres Amat, adapted so as to support the Catholic dogma of salvation by works:

NACAR-COLUNGA TEXT

For by grace have ye been saved by faith, and this does not come of yourselves, it is a gift of God; it does not come of works, so that no one may glory; for we are his making, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works, which God previously prepared that we should walk in them.
(Ephesians 2:8-10).

TORRES AMAT TEXT

For of pure grace have ye been saved through faith, and this does not come of yourselves: since it is a gift of God; nor by virtue of your previous good works, which are purely natural, so that no one can glory. For we are his workmanship in grace, just as we were in nature, created in CHRIST JESUS for good works, prepared by God from eternity that we might practice them and merit glory.

The idea of Purgatory was a non-apostolic doctrine that began to be promoted in Christian circles at a very early time. But in spite of its being shared and affirmed by many Christian writers, it was still not considered sure in the fourth century, as these quotations from Augustine prove:

"Catholic faith resting on divine authority believes that the first place is the kingdom of heaven and the second is hell; we are completely ignorant of a third" (*Hirog.* 1:5, Vol. 7. *Basel* 1529).

It is strange that this quotation is not refuted in the volumes of "*Catholic Faith*" that refer to Purgatory. They limit themselves to bringing in other quotations from Augustine that appear to contradict it.

From what we have said, the reader can judge how much credence he can give to the bitterly sarcastic remarks of the anonymous author or authors of the collection of booklets called "*Catholic Faith*" concerning the literary inaccuracies that they say they found in various Evangelical publications; especially in the book, *To the Sources of Christianity*, regardless of the fact that in most cases they admit they found the quotations from the Fathers and don't know how to explain them.

As far as I am concerned, my joy increases day by day and so does my gratitude to GOD, who opened my eyes to find the ancient way that CHRIST revealed; the way that the Apostles followed, as did all those who by the grace of GOD burst the chains that bound them to the world and its religion.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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