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*The following article by the editor of this journal, appeared recently in several of the Pittsburgh dailies. We publish it here for the sake of a large list of new readers to whom this number will go.*

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## **THE OLD THEOLOGY.**

### **THE WAGES OF SIN.**

"The wages of sin is death." "By one man sin entered into the world and death by [as a consequence] of sin." – Rom. 6:23; 5:12.

The teaching of "Orthodoxy," that the wages of sin is everlasting torment, is emphatically contradicted by the above words of inspiration, and by many others, direct and indirect, which might be cited. How reasonable is the Bible statement, and how absurd the common view, which is founded neither in reason nor in the Scriptures, and which is in most violent antagonism with the plan and character of God, as presented in his Word.

The eternal torment theory had a heathen origin, and began very gradually to attach itself to nominal Christianity during its blending with heathen philosophies in the second century. The credulity of the present day, therefore, receives it as a legacy, not from the Lord, or the apostles, or prophets, but from the compromising spirit which sacrificed truth and reason, and shamefully perverted the doctrines of Christianity, in an unholy ambition and strife for power and wealth and numbers. Eternal torment as the penalty for sin, was unknown to the patriarchs of past ages; it was unknown to the prophets of the Jewish age; and it was unknown to the Lord and the apostles; but it has been the chief doctrine of Nominal Christianity since the great apostasy – the scourge wherewith the credulous, ignorant and superstitious of the world have been lashed into servile obedience to tyranny. Eternal torment was pronounced against all who offered resistance or spurned

her authority, and its infliction in the present life was begun so far as she had power; and the pains of purgatory she promised, in such measure as she should dictate, to any of her votaries who showed the slightest disposition to be refractory. Under the terrible bondage of a superstitious reverence for self-exalted fellow-men, in dense ignorance of God's real plan, and tormented with a wretched fear of eternal misery, the masses of men resigned their reason; and even yet, under the increasing light and liberty of this nineteenth century, men scarcely dare to think for themselves on religion and the Bible.

### **WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?**

Let God's inspired writers be heard in opposition to heathenized church traditions, and let reason judge which is the sensible and Godlike view, and which the unreasonable and devilish. The prophets of the Old Testament do not mention a word about eternal torment, but they do repeatedly mention destruction as the sinners' doom, and declare over and over again that the enemies of the Lord shall *perish*. The Law given to Israel through Moses, never hinted at any other penalty than death, in case of its violation. The warning to Adam when placed on trial in Eden, contained not the remotest suggestion of eternal torture in case of failure and disobedience; but, on the contrary, it clearly stated that the penalty would be death – "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt *die*." – Gen. 2:17, margin.

Surely if the penalty of disobedience and failure is *everlasting life* in torment, an inexcusable wrong was done to Adam, and to the patriarchs, and to the Jewish people, when they were misinformed on the subject, and told that death is the penalty. Surely Adam, the patriarchs, or the Jews, should they ever find themselves in eternal torment, where the various sectarian creeds shamelessly and falsely assert that the vast majority will find themselves, will have sufficiently good ground for an appeal for justice. Such, no less than the heathen billions who died without knowledge, and hence surely without faith, would have just ground for cursing the injustice of such a penalty as a

most atrocious misuse of power – first, in bringing them into a trial subject to such an awful and unreasonable penalty, without their consent; and secondly, for leaving the one class wholly ignorant of such a penalty, and for deceiving the others by telling them that the penalty of sin would be death, – to perish. It must be admitted that the presumption to declare that death, destruction, perish, and similar terms, mean *life* in torment, belongs to word-twisting theologians since the apostles' days.

Look next at the New Testament writings: Paul says, he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and yet he did not write a word about eternal torment. Neither did Peter, nor James, nor Jude, nor John; though it is claimed that John did, in the symbolic figures of Revelation. But since those who make this claim consider the Book of Revelation a sealed book, which they do not and cannot understand, they have no right to interpret any portion of it literally in violation of its stated symbolic character, and in direct opposition to the remainder of the Bible, including John's plain non-symbolic epistles.

Since the apostles do not so much as mention eternal torment, all truth-seekers, especially Christians, should be interested to search what they do teach concerning the penalty of sin, – remembering that they, and not the apostate church of the darker ages, taught "the whole counsel of God."

Paul states the matter thus: – "The wages of sin is *death*;" The disobedient "shall be punished with everlasting *destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power;" and "Many walk who are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is *destruction*." – Rom. 6:23; 2 Thes. 1:9; Phil. 3:19.

John says: – "The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God *abideth forever*....He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might *destroy* the works of the

devil...He that loveth not his brother *abideth in death*. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and we know that *no murderer hath eternal life* abiding in him...He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God *hath not life.*" – 1 John 2:17; 3:8,14,15; 5:12.

Peter says: – The disobedient "shall be *destroyed* from among the people:" that the evil-doers "bring upon themselves *swift destruction;*" that the Lord is "not desiring that any should *perish*, but that all should come to repentance." – Acts 3:23; 2 Pet. 2:1 and 3:9.

James says: – "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death.*" "There is one law-giver who is able to save and to *destroy.*" – Jas. 1:15; 4:12.

No one who has studied the subject, can consider the penalty of sin, as Scripturally set forth and defined, too slight a punishment. When understood, it is seen to be neither too slight, nor too severe, but simply a *just* recompense of reward. "The gift of God," says the apostle, "is eternal life." And that gift or favor bestowed upon Adam, and through him upon his posterity, was to be lasting only on condition of its proper use, which was to glorify God in its well-being and well-doing, and not to dishonor him by rebellion and sin. And when God creates, he reserves to himself both the right and the power to destroy that which he considers unworthy of continuous life. When man sinned, therefore, God simply withdrew the favor he had granted which had been misused, and death (destruction) followed: preceded naturally by the dying process – pain, sickness, and mental, moral and physical decay. **[R1086 : page 7]**

Had God not provided redemption through Christ, the death penalty which came upon our race in Adam would have been everlasting; but in mercy all have been redeemed from death; yet all are again, individually, put under the same law, which changes not – "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Did our Lord Jesus ever use the expression, eternal torment? or even once hint that he came into the world to save men from eternal torment? No, never! Yet, if this were the truth, and if they were in danger of a penalty so terrible for not receiving him, it would have been neither just, nor kind in him, to have kept back the truth whatever it might be. He did tell them, however, that he came to save them *from death*, from perishing. The penalty of sin, death, being against all, none could hope for a resurrection to any future life, but all were hopelessly *perishing*, unless Christ should redeem and restore them from death, to that which was lost in Adam, – to righteousness and its privileges of everlasting life and favor. The Lord's title, Savior, has a weight too in this examination. It does not imply a deliverer or savior from torment, but a savior from death. The Greek word translated Savior signifies literally *Life-giver*.

What did our Lord say of his mission? we may well inquire. He said that he came "to preach deliverance to the captives." What captives could he refer to but the captives of sin, receiving daily its wages – dying by inches and entering the great prison-house, the tomb. He said he came to "open the prison-doors" – what prison, but the tomb? of which also the prophet had spoken. (See, Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18.) He declared that he came that mankind "might have *life*;" that he came "to give his *life a ransom for many*" lives – in order that by believing in him men "should *not perish*, but have eternal *life*;" and again, "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto *life*," and "broad is the way that leadeth to *destruction*." – John 10:10; Matt. 20:28; John 3:15; Matt. 7:13.

### **AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT.**

It will generally be admitted by Christians that our Lord Jesus redeemed mankind by his death; that he endured willingly the penalty of man's sins, in order that man might be released from that penalty. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are

healed." (Isa. 53:4,5.) This being admitted, it becomes an easy matter to decide to an absolute, unquestionable certainty, what the penalty of our sins was, if we know what our Lord Jesus did endure when "the chastisement for our peace" was inflicted upon his willing head. Is he suffering eternal torment for us? If so, that would thus be proved to be the penalty against our sins.

But no one claims this, and the Scriptures teach that our Lord is now in glory, and not in torment, which is incontrovertible proof that the wages of sin is not torment. But what did our Lord do to secure the cancellation of our sins? What did he give when he paid our ransom price – the price or penalty against sinners? Let the Scriptures answer. They repeatedly and explicitly declare that "Christ *died* for our sins;" that he gave his *life* a ransom to secure *life* for the condemned sinners; that he bought us with his own precious blood; that for this purpose the Son of God was manifested in flesh, that his flesh he might give for the *life* of the world; that as by man came death, by man ("the man Christ Jesus") might come the resurrection of the dead. – 1 Cor. 15:3; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; 1 John 3:8; John 6:51; 1 Cor. 15:21; 1 Tim. 2:5,6.

Is there room to question further the clear Bible doctrine that "the wages of sin is death"? Is there room to doubt further either the unscripturalness, or unreasonableness of the heathenish dogma of eternal torment? We answer, No! Let the God-dishonoring, saint-perplexing, scoffer-making, and wholly absurd blasphemy go – back to its vile and worthy source, the devil.

### **OBJECTIONS BRIEFLY CONSIDERED.**

Limited space will permit merely a glance at certain of our Lord's parables and dark sayings, which, with the popular idea of torment firmly entrenched in the mind from childhood, appear to many to support that doctrine. We will, however, briefly notice two of these, generally considered impregnable – the parable of the sheep and goats, Matt. 25:4-46, and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke

16:19-31. We shall find that properly interpreted, they teach nothing of the kind.

Not to enter into details – the parable of the sheep and goats describes a trial of the world of mankind in the coming Millennial age – "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory." The separating work will be according to character, and will require all of that period of a thousand years. Verses 41 and 46, which give expression to the final sentence upon all the lovers of unrighteousness, the goats, are the points upon which the interest of our topic centers.

Verse 41 reads, "Depart from me accursed ones into lasting fire, prepared for the devil and his messengers" (servants). We must infer that the fire here is as symbolic as the goats which go into it. As goats fitly represent wayward and unrighteous [R1086 : page 8] men, so fire fitly represents *destruction*. Fire is always destructive, never preservative. The goat cast into a fire would be consumed, destroyed, if the fire did not too soon become extinct. And hence in the parable, in order to show the certainty and completeness of the *destruction* of the finally incorrigible, the symbolic goats are represented as being cast into a *lasting fire, i.e.*, a lasting or perpetual destruction – extinction.

Verse 46 reads, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." We are not questioning that the unrighteous are to be punished, nor that the punishment upon this class is to be *everlasting*; the nature of the punishment is the question we are investigating. We have seen that the punishment or wages of sin is death, and nothing else, as clearly stated all through the Scriptures; and this parable certainly teaches nothing to the contrary. Only the prejudice of deep-seated error makes this passage even appear, to some, to teach anything to the contrary. The Greek word rendered punishment in this verse, speaks positively regarding the kind of punishment. The original word is *kolasin*, whereas if torment were meant, the Greek word *basinos* would have been used. *Kolasin*, on the contrary, derived from *kolazoo*, signifies, 1., *To cut off*; as in pruning



off branches from a tree; 2., *To restrain*, or repress. The Greeks write, – "The charioteer restrains his fiery steeds;" 3., *To chastise*, to punish; *to cut off* an individual from life or society, or even to restrain his liberties. That the first definition, "to cut off," is the proper one in this case is evident from the antithesis of the succeeding and last clause of the verse, where *life*, the reward of the righteous, is put in contrast with the death, or cutting off from life of the unrighteous.

## THE PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS.

– *Luke 16:31.* –

While this is admitted to be a parable, it is generally treated as if it were a literal statement. To regard it as a literal statement involves several absurdities; for instance, that the rich man went to hades because he had enjoyed many earthly blessings and gave nothing but crumbs to Lazarus. Not a word is said about his wickedness. Again Lazarus is blessed, not because he was good, or full of faith in God, but simply because he was poor and sick. If this be interpreted literally, the only lesson to be logically drawn from it, is, that unless we are poor beggars full of sores, we will never enter into future bliss; and that if now we wear any fine linen and purple, and have plenty to eat every day, we are sure of future torment. Again, the coveted place of favor is Abraham's bosom; and if the whole statement is literal, the bosom must be literal, and surely would not hold very many of earth's millions of sick and poor. But why consider absurdities? As a parable, it is of easy interpretation. In a parable, the thing said is never the thing meant; as for instance in the parable of the wheat and tares, the Lord explained that *wheat* meant children of the kingdom, and *tares* the children of the devil; and similar classes in another parable were represented by sheep and goats. So in this parable the rich man must represent a class, and Lazarus another class; and the narrative applies to these classes.

The rich man represented the Jewish people which up to and at the time of the parable "fared sumptuously," as the special recipients of God's favors. As Paul said, the Jews had "much advantage every way,



chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (the Law and Prophecy). The promises to Abraham and David invested that people with royalty, as represented by the rich man's "*purple*." The typical sacrifices of the law, constituted them in a typical sense, a "holy nation," represented by the rich man's "*fine linen*" – symbolic of righteousness. – Rev. 19:8.

Lazarus represented the God-fearing people of other nations debarred, until the close of the Jewish Age, from those blessings conferred upon Israel specially. As the linen represented Israel's justification, so the sores represented moral defilement in this class, for whose justification no sin-offering had at that time been made. They were not even typically cleansed, and had as yet no share in the rich promises of the kingdom. They were on the contrary outcasts, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. (Eph. 2:11-13.) As to how these ate of the "crumbs" of divine favor which fell from [R1087 : page 8] Israel's table of bounties, and how they accounted themselves as companions of "dogs," the Lord's conversation with the Syro-phenician woman, who was one of this class, offers a clear explanation. – See, Matt. 15:27.

But there came a change to both of these classes. The "rich man" (the Jewish nation) died, ceased to exist as a nation, and as the national representatives of God's favors, when God's favors were taken from them (Matt. 21:43) and given to those formerly outcasts.

The "rich man" class was cast out of favor, into trouble. And from then till now, the Jews as a people have been in torment; yet were hindered by their law prejudices (as a great gulf) from accepting of Christ. The "Lazarus" class also died, or ceased from their former condition, and were received into the favor of God. (Acts 10:28-35.) Accepting of Christ, these henceforth were received to Abraham's bosom – esteemed the true children of believing Abraham, and the true heirs of the promise made to him. – See, Gal. 3:16,29; Rom. 11:7-9,12-25.

## **LET HONESTY AND TRUTH PREVAIL.**

Having demonstrated that neither the Bible nor reason offer the slightest support to the doctrine that eternal torment is the penalty of sin, we note the fact that the various church creeds, and confessions, and hymn books, and theological treatises, are its only supports; and that under the increasing light of our day, and the consequent emancipation of reason, belief in this horrible, fiendish doctrine of the darker ages, is fast dying out. But alas! it is not because Christian people generally are zealous for the truth of God's Word and for his character, and willing to destroy the grim creed-idols. Ah no! they still bow before their admitted falsities; they still pledge themselves to their defense; and still spend time and money for their general support, though they are at heart ashamed of them and privately deny them.

The general influence of all this, is to cause the honest-hearted of the world to despise Christianity and the Bible; and to make hypocrites and semi-infidels of nominal Christians. Because the nominal church clings to this old blasphemy and falsely presents its own errors as the teachings of the Bible, the Word of God, though still nominally revered, is being practically repudiated. Thus the Bible, the great anchor of truth and liberty, is being cut loose from, by the very ones who, if not deceived regarding its teachings, would be held and blessed by it.

The general effect, not far distant, will be first open infidelity, then anarchy. For much, very much of this, lukewarm Christians, both in pulpits and pews, who know or ought to know better, are responsible. Many such are willing to compromise the truth, slander God's character, and stultify and deceive themselves, for the sake of peace, or ease, or present earthly advantage. And any minister, who by uttering a word for an unpopular truth, will risk the loss of his stipend, and reputation for being "established" in the bog of error, is considered a bold man, even though he ignominiously hide his identity by withholding his name from his published protests.

If professed Christians would be honest with themselves and true to God, they would soon learn that "their fear toward God is taught by the precepts of men." (Isa. 29:13.) If all would decide to let God be true though it should prove every man a liar (Rom. 3:4), and should show all human creeds to be imperfect and misleading, there would be a great creed-smashing work done very shortly. Then the Bible would be studied and appreciated as never before; and its testimony that the wages of sin is death (extinction), would be recognized as "a just recompense of reward."

