

DOCTRINE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

by Harry Buis

Buis's theological study of the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment, examining the scriptural evidence, historical development, and theological arguments concerning the nature, duration, and purpose of divine judgment.

12 Chapters

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00 Buis - Doctrine of Eternal Punishment

The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment by Harry Buis 01 The Teaching of the Old Testament 02 The Inter-Testamental Period 03 The Teaching of the New Testament 04 The Pre-Reformation Period 05 Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought 06 Post-Reformation Thought 07 Denials and Their Answers 08 Present-Day Conservative Position 09 Infant Salvation or Damnation 10 The Heathen Who Have Not Heard The Gospel 11 Denial By The Cults The Reverend Harry Buis in a comprehensive yet popular treatment demonstrates this conclusively. Written to meet a very real need in church and school, the discussion traces belief in the doctrine of eternal punishment historically from the age of the Old Testament to the present. The Biblical position is well-expounded and numerous variations therefrom in past and contemporary thought are cited. The treatment should be of benefit to many.

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Mr. Buis was born in Fairlawn, New Jersey. A graduate of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, he has studied at the Graduate School of Theology of Oberlin College. Mr. Buis' first pastorate was at the Brooklyn Community Reformed Church in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio. He is now the pastor of the Vriesland Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigan.

Preface This book is not written because the author takes delight in the subject. The thought of hell terrifies. It ought to make us all shudder. But it is a fact taught in God's Word. To deny or to ignore any Scriptural teaching is a serious matter.

We have been led to a serious study of this subject for several reasons. One is that there is no other doctrine that is clearly taught in Scripture which is so generally denied or ignored in our modern theological world. In our generation we have witnessed an increased belief in the deity of Christ and in the authority of the Word of God. We have witnessed a trend toward orthodoxy with regard to many other cardinal doctrines. But the doctrine of eternal punishment is strongly denied by many.

During the preparation of this book, the doctrine of eternal punishment was publicly denied by several leaders in the church in Norway. Bishop Kristian Schjelderup of Hamar declared that "The doctrine of eternal punishment is not at home in a religion of love." The resulting controversy still rages. Even in the Roman Catholic church there are some who question this doctrine. An example of this is the recently publicized statement of the late Giovanni Papini, well known as the writer of the Life of Christ. His statement expressed some doubt with regard to the commonly accepted teaching of the Roman Catholic church.

Many theological libraries contain numerous books denying the doctrine, but very few that defend it. In fact, to our knowledge, no major work has been printed in defense of the doctrine in recent years. Some of the best books on the subject, written many years ago, are no longer accessible to

the Bible student. Dr. Pusey's book *What is of Faith as to Eternal Punishment* (1880) is an important work, yet the writer found it very difficult to obtain a copy, and when one was finally located in a seminary library, it was discovered that it had only been checked out on two occasions, in 1902 and in 1912! (see note below) But more serious than the widespread denial of the doctrine is the attitude of many evangelicals toward it. Many dare not preach it; while others go to the opposite extreme, describing hell in such gross and lurid terms that they often do more harm than good. As Robert Mackintosh says: in *The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, "Besides all these changes or innovations in belief, the growing reticence, and one may say reluctance, among those who maintain full traditional orthodoxy is even more significant."¹

Another reason for our writing on the subject is that the man on the street fails to take this doctrine seriously, as is shown by his constant use of the word "hell" in a thoughtless and meaningless way. That keen European thinker Berdyaev says, "It is remarkable how little people think about hell or trouble about it. This is the most striking evidence of human frivolity."² Schilder makes a similar and more detailed analysis of the situation when he says, "What is hell? When you place this question before the modern cosmopolitan man of our day, who is satiated with hyper-culture, then his answer is ready: Hell is a figment of the imagination! Hell? Well, this shadowy frightfulness which is implied in the word, as man says, can't be anything other than a notion of founders of religions and of priests and lying prophets, wherewith they deceive the masses, and the world which wants to be deluded, in order to fill their empty pockets in this life with the preaching of the total emptying of the sinner in the hereafter . . . they tell you bluntly, that the world doesn't believe any more in hell."³ For these reasons, we write on the subject of hell, with the earnest prayer that our work on the subject may be used of God in keeping some precious souls from experiencing hell's terrible reality.

1. R. Mackintosh, in *Hastings The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, II "Universalism" (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1909), p. 785.
2. N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1937), p. 338.
3. K. Schilder, *Wat Is De Hel?* (Kampen, J.H. Kok, 1920).

Webmaster's Note: Dr. Pusey's book is held by 136 libraries

01 The Teaching of the Old Testament

The Teaching of the Old Testament The plan in presenting the subject of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment will be primarily that of an historical survey. We shall not attempt to be exhaustive in treatment lest we get lost in a maze of details. To find out what the Bible teaches, and what Christians have believed about the subject are the major concerns. Since Christian belief is rooted in Hebrew teaching, it is necessary to determine exactly what the Hebrews believed about eternal punishment. That portion of the history of Hebrew belief which is most important is found in the Old Testament. Here we have not only the record of Hebrew beliefs over a period of many centuries, but most important of all, we have the beginning of divine revelation on the subject. Those, however, who expect to find a great deal of material dealing directly with the doctrine of eternal punishment will be disappointed. The Old Testament contains little information about the eschatological future of the individual, and almost all of this is concerned with the future of the godly rather than that of the ungodly. In the study of this subject one must not read back into the Old Testament concepts which were not held until much later in the history of doctrine. On the other hand, even the critical scholar Burney points out that "Those who believe that in the Old Testament we have the record of a revelation, partial and fragmentary indeed, but divinely inspired and leading up to the manifestation of our Lord in the fulness of time, will realize that in many cases the statements of Old Testament writers and the ideas which they embody are susceptible of a deeper significance when read in the fuller light of New Testament revelation."¹ That there is little material dealing directly with the doctrine of eternal punishment does not mean that there is little or no valuable information in the Old Testament regarding the study of our subject. General information in the Old Testament with regard to the subject of the life after death provides a background for the study of the doctrine of eternal punishment. The common conception of the life after death held by the Israelites in the Old Testament period was existence in a place called Sheol. This was a shadowy, limited existence compared to this life, but it was a very real existence. Belief in Sheol was a doctrine of immortality, not of annihilation. Furthermore, side by side with this common conception of the life after death, passages exist here and there that reveal glimpses of a more wonderful life after death for the believer, and a few which hint at a more terrible life after death for the unbeliever. Also, great concepts are revealed in the Old Testament which led the Jews of the Inter-testamental period from the general concept of Sheol to a more developed doctrine of individual destiny including a clearly defined doctrine of eternal punishment.

First the concept of Sheol must be studied. This concept was similar to that held by other contemporary peoples. All of the civilization of the Middle East believed in a place where the dead went to live in a rather shadowy type of existence. The Egyptians called this place Amenti, the Babylonians called it Arallu, the Greeks called it Hades, and the Israelites called it Sheol. The Egyptians especially had a rather completely developed eschatology, including the concept of judgment of evil. In the centuries which the Israelites spent in bondage in Egypt, they must have come into contact with these ideas.

It must be recognized that the word Sheol translated "hell" in the King James Version of the Old Testament does not refer to a place of eternal punishment, but to this place of shadowy existence where the good and the evil continued to exist together after death. That the latter idea is intended is recognized by the more accurate rendering of the American Standard Version where the word "hell" is not used in the Old Testament, and Sheol is left untranslated. The etymology of the word "Sheol" is uncertain. Some scholars believe that it is derived from the verb "to ask," and connect this derivation with the practice of consulting the dead. Others consider this derivation as describing the insatiable nature of Sheol, always asking for more inhabitants (Proverbs 30:16). Others believe the derivation comes from the verb "to be hollow," referring to the idea that Sheol is a hollow place under the earth. A careful study of the Old Testament will indicate the common conception of Sheol to be that of a continued existence in a very dreary underworld.

Numerous passages of the Old Testament give such a description, of which the following are examples: a. Sheol was a place of darkness. "Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness . . . as darkness itself/ and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness"² (Job 10:21-22). "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead" (Psalms 143:3). b. Sheol was a place of silence. "Unless Jehovah had been my help, my soul had soon dwelt in silence" (Psalms 94:17). The dead praise not Jehovah, Neither any that go down into silence" (Psalms 115:17). c. Sheol was a place of forgetfulness. "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness" (Psalms 88:12)? d. Sheol was a place of separation from God. "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who shall give thee thanks" (Psalms 6:5)? e. Sheol was a place without knowledge of what transpires on earth. "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them" (Job 14:21). "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and their envy, is perished long ago, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Ecclesiastes 9:10). The above passages reveal that the individual, upon his entrance into Sheol, was but a shadow of his former self. However, as we have already mentioned, we have here a doctrine of immortality, not of annihilation. Existence in Sheol may have been limited in comparison to this life, but it was very real existence. There are other passages describing the state of the dead which present this side of the truth. "Abraham was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:8). Sheol was a place of reunion: Jacob said regarding Joseph, "I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning" (Genesis 37:35). David said of the child that was smitten, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). The Hebrew word for those who were inhabitants of Sheol is Rephaim. "They that are deceased tremble beneath the waters and the inhabitants thereof" (Job 26:5). The marginal translation for "they that are deceased" (Rephaim) is "shades." The next verse is rendered: "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon hath no covering." Evidently Abaddon is another name for Sheol, and here the marginal note has "Destruction." Speaking of the effect on the Rephaim of the descent of the King of Babylon, Isaiah 14:10-11a says, "All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol." Ezekiel 32:17-32 consists of a long passage describing the inhabitants of Sheol, and also implies recognition among its inhabitants. These

passages as well as others show that those in Sheol are sentient beings, that they recognize and can talk to each other. This is further evidence of the fact that although existence in Sheol was considered less active than life on earth, it was still a state of continuing existence, and certainly not annihilation.

There was, however, little distinction between the good and the evil people in Sheol; both together were engulfed in comparative gloom. The fine conservative scholar, Oehler, says, "In no part of the Old Testament is a difference in the lot of those in the realm of death distinctly spoken of. Job 3:17-19 describes them there as all alike. Only in Isaiah 14:15, Ezekiel 32:23, where the fallen conquerors are relegated to the uttermost depths can we find an indication of different grades in the realm of the dead — perhaps in the sense in which Josephus (Bell. Jud. iii, 8.5) speaks of an outer darkness for self-murderers. Elsewhere, only a division into peoples and races, and not a division of the just and unjust, is spoken of. 'Tomorrow,' says Samuel to Saul, 'shalt thou and thy sons be with me' (1 Samuel 28:19). The inhabitants of the kingdom of the dead 'have no more reward' (Ecclesiastes 9:5 ff). In itself, the condition in Sheol, which is in the main the most indefinite existence possible, is neither blessedness (although longed for as a rest by him who is weary of life), (Job 3:13-19) nor positive unblestness: for to those who are swept away in the midst of the enjoyment of life the punishment consists in being thus carried away (Numbers 16:30 ff., Psalm 4:16). The Mosaic retribution has its sphere entirely on this side of the grave."³ Later there emerged a clear distinction between the compartment where the good dwelt in Sheol, and that where the evil existed; but that distinction took place after the Old Testament period closed. As to the location of Sheol, it was generally believed to be somewhere underground.

Two possible views are tenable regarding the facts just described. One is that at death the Old Testament saints actually did go to this dreary place called Sheol, and that they remained there until the time when Christ paid the price for sin, descended into Sheol, and brought the redeemed into heaven. In Lange's Commentary, E.R. Craven has a very detailed discussion supporting this view.⁴ This was the prevalent view held by the early Church, and it was such a descent into Sheol which was originally intended by the words of the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into hell." It is, however, significant that this article was evidently one of the last to be added to the Creed. Vast literature has been written on the subject to which reference will be given later. This view has this to commend it: it connects the salvation of Old Testament believers directly with the cross of Christ. There is also here a close connection with the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. This, however, is beyond the scope of our present study. The other possible view of Sheol is based on the fact that revelation in the Bible is progressive. As Hodge states: "The progressive character of divine revelation is recognized in relation to all the great doctrines of the Bible. One of the strongest arguments for the divine origin of the Scripture is the organic relation of its several parts. They comprise more than sixty books written by different men in different ages, and yet they form one whole; not by mere external historical relations, nor in virtue of the general identity of the subject of which they treat, but by their internal organic development. All that is in a full-grown tree was potentially in the seed. All that we find unfolded in the fulness of the gospel lies in a rudimental form in the earliest books of the Bible. What at first is only obscurely intimated is gradually unfolded in subsequent parts of the sacred volume, until the truth is revealed in its fulness. This is true of the doctrines of redemption; of the person and work of the Messiah, the promised seed of the woman; of the nature and office of the Holy Spirit; and of a future state beyond the grave."⁵

(Italics are mine.) At the beginning of the Old Testament, God's people naturally shared more or less the erroneous conceptions of the pagans on many subjects; only gradually the light of Divine Revelation was shed on these subjects. According to this view, the passages describing Sheol are a record of the conceptions of the Israelites before they had learned the wonderful truth that at death the souls of God's people go immediately to heaven. This second view has its problems, yet it fits in more fully with the way in which we would expect God to treat those who lived close to Him in Old Testament days. "Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah forever" (Psalms 23:6). Under this conception it would follow that the souls of the ungodly in the old dispensation also went directly to the place of punishment, in keeping with later revelation, rather than to the more neutral Sheol of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, side by side with the descriptions of the shadowy form of the immortality of Sheol, there are clear intimations of the revelation of a more wonderful life after death for God's people. These passages tend to confirm the second of the two views just described. On the other hand, most of these passages can possibly be interpreted as a future rescue from Sheol, which took place at the time of the descent into Sheol, and which Christ effected at his death according to the advocates of that view. The first of such references is found in the very description of the creation of man, in the fact that he was created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26), and that God himself "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7), so that man became a "living soul." Although this cannot be considered absolute proof of the natural immortality of man, it certainly points in that direction. Of the first passage, the critical scholar Oesterley says, "It means that the breath breathed in by a Creator who was immortal conferred thereby on man the faculty of becoming immortal."⁶ He also says, "In all the three accounts referred to, the immortality of man will be accounted for because of the mode of his creation, a part of his partook of the divine, and therefore immortal nature."⁷ Bartlett, the author of a very fine book refuting the doctrine of annihilationism, comes to this conclusion: "The Hebrew view of the nature of the soul was such as to lay a natural foundation for a belief in its continued existence after death. The human being is specially distinguished from the animal world in his creation, and the soul is specially distinguished from the body, and allied to God, its creator."⁸

Another intimation of immortality is found in the existence of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. It is mentioned in Genesis 2:9, "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Even more significantly, after the Fall it is recorded, "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:22-24). The translations of Enoch and Elijah are especially significant. They clearly demonstrate the possibility of continued fellowship with God, and the possibility of the total being, body as well as soul, escaping the penalty of death. The phrase "to go to one's fathers" also speaks of immortality. It is often descriptive of death in the Old Testament, and meant more than simply burial in an ancestral tomb, for in several instances the phrase is used where no such common burial took place. Gerlach, commenting on Genesis 15:15 says that this phrase is "the gracious expression for a life after death." Baumgarten says "a continuance after death is assuredly expressed therein."

Delitzsch commenting on Genesis 25:8 says "The union with the fathers is not a mere union of corpses, but of persons."⁹ The fact that the magical invocation of the dead persisted in Israel in spite of clear prohibitions indicates the popular belief in a life after death, and in a form of life which included certain power and knowledge.

Jesus' refutation of the doctrine of the Sadducees also has a bearing on the subject. The fact that long after the patriarchs died, God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was for Jesus proof that "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). Though the average Old Testament Israelite may not have grasped this implication, this in no way invalidates the reality of its truth. As Oehler comments, "To him who has an eternal value for God an eternal existence is assured."¹⁰

Moreover there are a number of passages in the poetic section of the Old Testament that express hope of a life beyond death of a higher nature than the gloom of Sheol. Abraham's words to his servants, "I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship, and come again to you" (Genesis 22:5) are interpreted in Hebrews 11:19 as implying that Abraham believed that God would restore Isaac to him and at least suggest belief in a life beyond death. Another such passage is Job 19:25-27, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger." The Hebrew is difficult to translate, and there is a wide range of interpretation of these verses; nevertheless it is difficult to see how anyone can miss the sense that Job expected a vision of God in the world beyond. Burney accepts this interpretation. He says, "The idea of a future life using the expression in the sense of an existence after death not wholly removed from the presence of God — has been hinted at, as we have seen, earlier in the book, though to the writer it seemed beyond the reach of aspiration. Here it bursts forth into an expression as a conviction."¹¹

Psalms 16:1-11 states, "My flesh also shall dwell in safety. For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy: In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (verses 9b-11). Again there are differences of opinion as to exactly what David's hope as expressed here was, whether to be kept from death, or of a fuller life beyond Sheol. The context certainly seems to favor the latter interpretation. In Psalms 17:1-15 we read, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form" (vs. 15). There is a difference of opinion whether this awakening refers to ordinary sleep or the sleep of death. The idea of beholding God, however, certainly fits the latter idea rather than the former. The skeptical scholar De Wette denied the basis of the Davidic authorship of this Psalm on the ground that it clearly expresses the hope of immortality.¹²

Psalms 49:1-20 contains the following passage: "But man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he will receive me." (verses 12-15). It is significant that the verb in verse 15, "he will receive me," is the same in the Hebrew as the one which describes the translation of Enoch. As Burney says, while warning against the danger of

reading New Testament doctrine back into the Old Testament, "The more I examine this Psalm the more does the conviction force itself upon me that the writer has in view something more than the mere temporary recompense of the righteous during this earthly life."¹³

Psalms 75:1-10 records "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, And afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart fails; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever" (verses 24-26). In verse 24 the verb is the same as that describing Enoch's translation. In summary: the Old Testament clearly teaches a life after death, commonly in the form of an existence in Sheol, where good and evil alike share a similar dreary fate. However, there are also passages of inspired hope in a better life beyond death for the believer, a life of glorious fellowship with his God. Although there is in these passages no direct teaching with regard to the eternal punishment of the unbeliever, there is the beginning of a differentiation between the lot of the unbeliever and that of the believer. While the believer is rescued from Sheol, no such hope is expressed for the unbeliever. In the light of the highly ethical teaching of the Old Testament with its strong emphasis on reward and punishment, it should not cause surprise that in the Inter-Testamental period there should be a further development of a more detailed description of the blessed condition of the believer and of the severe punishment of the unbeliever.

We now turn to passages in the Old Testament which hint at future retribution. One very clear reference to future punishment is found in Daniel 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." A few more verses should be noted. One is Isaiah 24:21, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." A.B. Davidson states that he believes that this verse contains the germ of the idea of future punishment. The last verse of Isaiah says: "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." This passage contains some of the phrases later used to describe eternal punishment. Exactly what they signify in Isaiah, however, is a difficult question to answer. It is important to notice that the word rendered "abhorring" is the same Hebrew word as that rendered "contempt" in Daniel 12:2. Delitzsch describes it as the strongest word for "abomination." This same commentator adds, "It is perfectly obvious, that the thing itself, as here described, must appear monstrous and inconceivable, however we may suppose it to be realized — he is speaking of the future state, but in figures drawn from the present world. The object of his prediction is no other than the new Jerusalem of the world to come, and the eternal torment of the damned."¹⁴ Some commentators believe that the following verses refer to future punishment:

"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:11).

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). In some of the older literature, the following passage is used as a proof that the punishment of the wicked shall be eternal: "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in

the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Ecclesiastes 11:3). While this verse can hardly be considered an absolute proof of the eternal nature of punishment in the world to come, yet it is in a context describing principles by which God deals with men, and therefore carries that implication. Of more importance than individual verses are the general principles which run throughout the Old Testament. The whole Old Testament certainly pictures God as hating sin and punishing it most severely. It is completely silent regarding any further opportunities after death. The critical scholar A. B. Davidson says: "There is the universalistic view according to which all shall be restored. Then there is the view, stopping short of this, which demands a place of repentance and sphere of development beyond the grave, and which, assuming many gradations of salvation, finds a place for at least most of the race. And there is the view which calls itself that of conditional immortality, according to which those finally and persistently evil shall be annihilated. These views are in addition to the one which has been generally accepted. Now, of course, such questions will not be decided on Old Testament ground, but in the light of the clearer revelations of the New Testament. I do not wish, therefore, to speak with great decision on such a question; but my impression is, that the whole scope of the Old Testament is in favor of the ordinary opinion. In all those Psalms which have been alluded to, faith in the future sustains itself by planting its foot on the present. The view of the Old Testament saints is chiefly confined to the present — the future is to him, so far as he himself is concerned, and so far as the wicked are concerned, but the prolongations of the present So far as the Old Testament is concerned, a veil is drawn over the destiny of the wicked in death; they descend into Sheol; death is their shepherd; they die in the old sense of death, and nothing further seems added in regard to them. There is no indication that their personality in Sheol ceases, or that they are annihilated As Job expresses his assurance of seeing God's face after death, this might seem to carry also the opposite, that the wicked have no such vision."¹⁵ Chapter 2 || Table of Contents 1. C.F. Burney, *Israel's Hope of Immortality* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909), p.6 2. Note: All Biblical quotations throughout this book are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

3. G.F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1883), p. 173.
4. J.P. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, The Revelation of John* (New York, Scribner, 1874), E.R. Craven, "Excursus on Hades" pgs. 364-377.
5. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, I* (New York, Scribner, 1871), 446.
6. W.O.E. Oesterley, *Immortality and the Unseen World* (London, Society for Printing Christian Knowledge, 1921), p. 198.
7. Ibid.
8. S.C. Bartlett, *Life and Death Eternal* (New York, American Tract Society, 1866). p. 148.
9. Bartlett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 156.
10. Oehler, *Op. Cit.*, p. 174.
11. Burney, *Op. Cit.*, p. 54.
12. Bartlett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 16.

13. Burney, Op. Cit., p. 41.

14. F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, II (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), p. 517.

15. A.B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1904), pp. 529-531.

02 The Inter-Testamental Period

The Inter-Testamental Period

Two main groups of literature exist that describe Jewish thought in the Inter-Testamental period. One is called Apocryphal literature; the other, Apocalyptic literature.

1. Apocryphal Literature The Apocryphal literature consists of those books which while never in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, were included in the Greek Septuagint version. They are accepted as canonical by the Roman Catholic church, but not by the Protestant. Although references to our subject are found in these books, there is little of significance. The most important passage is in the Second Book of Esdras, the seventh chapter. The passage contains an alleged conversation between God and Ezra. Some confusion exists in the numbering of the verses. The following is contained in Goodspeed's translation of the Bible: God says, "I will rejoice over the few who will be saved, because it is they who have made my glory to prevail more now, and through whom my name has now been honored. And I will not grieve over the great number of those who perish, for they are the ones who are now like vapor, and counted as flame and smoke, they have burned and glowed, and gone out" (vs. 6f).

"So those who live on the earth will be tortured on this account because, though they had intelligence, they did iniquity, and though they received commandments, they did not keep them, and though they had obtained the Law, they broke it" (vs. 72).

Then Ezra asks a question, "If I have found favor in your sight, Sovereign, show this also to your slave; whether after death as soon as each one of us gives up his soul, we shall be faithfully kept at rest until these times come when you begin to renew the creation, or shall be tortured at once" (vs. 75). To which God answers: "I will show you that also; but you must not associate with those who have shown scorn or count yourself among those who are tortured. For you have a treasure of works laid up with the Most High, but it will not be shown to you until the last times. For about death, the teaching is: When the final sentence goes forth from the Most High that a man is to die, when the soul departs from the body to return again to him who gave it, first of all it prays to the glory of the Most High; if it was one of those who scorned and did not observe the way of the Most High, and of those who have despised his law, and of those who hate those who fear God, such spirit shall not enter dwellings but wander about thenceforth in torment, always grieving and sad, in seven ways: The first way is that they have scorned the Law of the Most High. The second way is that they can no longer make a good repentance, so that they may live. The third way is that they will see the reward destined for those who have believed the agreements of the Most High. The fourth way is that they will consider the torment destined for them in the last days" (vs. 76f)

Later Ezra has a further question which is of particular significance in the study of our subject: "If I have found favor in your sight, show me, your slave, further, whether on the Day of Judgment the upright will be able to intercede for the ungodly, or to beseech the Most High on their behalf, fathers for sons, or sons for parents, brothers for brothers, relatives for their kinsmen, and friends

for those who are most dear to them" (vs. 102-103). To this question, God answers: "Since you have found favor in my sight, I will show you this also. The Day of Judgment is final and shows to all the stamp of truth. Just as now a father cannot send his son or a son his father or a master his slave or a friend his dearest friend to be sick for him, or sleep or eat or be cured, so no one can pray for another then, or lay a burden on another, for they must all bear everyone his own iniquity or uprightness then" (vs. 104-105).

Another important passage in II Maccabees will be taken up later in connection with the study of the views of the Rabbis. Besides the Esdras passage just quoted and this Maccabees passage, there is scant reference to our subject in the Apocryphal literature.

2. Apocalyptic Literature The Apocalyptic literature on the other hand, is filled with references to the subject. This literature consists of the descriptions of visions. Most of it is pseudepigraphical, that is, it is written under an assumed name, usually that of some great character of the Old Testament. It is generally believed that the Essenes were the authors of this body of literature. Some of these books were written in the Inter-Testamental period, others were written during and after the New Testament period. The main development of the doctrine of eternal punishment in this period comes from the fact that Sheol is now divided into two compartments: one for the good, called Paradise; the other for the evil, called Gehenna. The concept of Gehenna comes from the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem, which was a place where the worshipers of the idol Molech had sacrificed their own children by fire, and later became a place where the refuse of the city was burned. The valley was considered a place of judgment. An important question is this: What caused this division of Sheol into two compartments? Some trace it to foreign sources, particularly to Persian Zoroastrianism with its dualism. However, most scholars, including many not at all conservative, fail to find foreign sources, but consider this development a result of problems finding their source in a conflict between the previous conception of Sheol, and principles revealed in the Old Testament. We may, therefore, consider this development as a legitimate application of the principles revealed in the Old Testament with regard to the question of life after death. Oesterley says, "The Apocalyptic literature continues, and in some respects develops, the eschatological teaching of the Old Testament."¹

What were these problems of conflict between the old Sheol conception and the revelation of the Old Testament? One was this: The teaching of the Old Testament is that the real meaning of life is fellowship with God. This fellowship was very real to the Old Testament saints, and obviously precious to them, and to God himself. The usual Sheol concept, however, declared that this fellowship was destroyed by death. It is natural that the conviction should grow that this could not be true. Such an assurance was ultimately based on the Old Testament revelation that the eternal God has fellowship with his people. Surely, then, even death could not destroy the bond between God and his people. Therefore there couldn't be simply a common shadowy existence beyond death for both the righteous and the ungodly. There must be a division in Sheol; there must be a Paradise where the godly had a blessed life of fellowship with God. Abraham's Bosom was another term which came to be used to describe Paradise. Such a chain of logic was the inevitable result of the experience of the Old Testament saints. As Oesterley says, "It needs but few words to show that when a real, intimate, and personal relationship between God and the individual is established and experienced, the conviction must soon become overpowering in men that this relationship cannot be severed by the death of the body."² A second problem was created by the

difference between the Sheol concept and the Old Testament revelation which led to the concept of the division of Sheol into two distinct compartments. The old Sheol concept did not provide for the justice that the Old Testament revelation would lead the believer to expect. The Old Testament certainly reveals a God of perfect justice. Yet, as is obvious in life, the wicked often live long prosperous lives, while the righteous suffer. The justice taught in the Old Testament, therefore, demands that there be no common hereafter for the righteous and the wicked; but a place of blessing for the righteous, and a place of punishment for the wicked. In the Inter-Testamental period we trace the beginning of a clearly enunciated doctrine of punishment after death. This doctrine, however, resulted from a legitimate extension of important principles revealed in the Old Testament. Orr refers to this legitimate extension of Old Testament concepts when, having mentioned the problem of injustice in this life, he says, "From these causes the thought almost necessarily presented itself of the extension of retribution for the wicked into the state beyond death. Hence, as before seen, Sheol did come in the later age to assume something of a penal character for the unrighteous."³ A careful study of the Apocalyptic literature of the period, however, soon reveals the fact that the concepts presented there went far beyond a legitimate extension of Old Testament principles, and included detailed descriptions of the punishment of the wicked.

Most important of the Apocalyptic literature is a group of writings falsely attributed to the Old Testament character, Enoch. They were probably written about 200 B.C. They include a description of a tour, supposedly taken by Enoch, of the heavens and of the center of the earth. Beneath some high mountainous rocks, Enoch saw four hollow places; two of these were for the righteous, the one being for saintly martyrs like Abel, the other for ordinary righteous people. There were in addition two places for sinners, one for the wicked who were unpunished in this life, and for certain other evil people. These were to remain in this dark realm until the time of the resurrection, and then they would be cast into Gehenna. The other compartment was for those who suffered a violent death which was evidently considered punishment for their sinful life. These people were neither righteous, nor were they completely sinners, and therefore they would remain in this intermediate state forever. Here we have an example of how the Jewish mind was grappling with the reality of the incomplete state of justice in this present life. In another passage, Enoch beholds the center of the earth. There, on the one hand he sees Paradise, and on the other, the accursed valley of Gehinnom, which is designated as the place of punishment of the wicked. Enoch very clearly teaches the eternity of punishment in the following passage, "And they (who will not be converted) shall be cast into the damnation of fire, and shall perish in anger and in the mighty damnation which last to eternity." The Fourth Book of the Sibylline Oracles, probably the work of Alexandrian Essenes, amplifies the punishments described by Enoch by saying, "His angels will scourge them with fiery chains, and cast them before the fierce monsters of hell, and fiery wheels will turn them round about." "They shall be consumed by fearful thirst and bitter woe, gnashing their teeth and longing for death which will never come, and it will be too late for repentance."

Another Apocalyptic book which gives information on our subject is The Testament of Abraham, which was probably written by a Jew before the birth of Christ, but later translated by a Christian whose work in translating was affected by his Christian viewpoint. It describes a vision which Abraham supposedly had. Included in this vision is a wide path leading to a wide gate, and a

narrow path leading to a narrow gate. The similarity to the teaching of Jesus is obvious. But here the exact proportion entering each gate is stated. The wide gate, leading to perdition, has 7000 entering it for every one who enters the narrow gate. As Abraham is watching the people entering these gates, the situation arises in which one soul has exactly the same weight of good and evil deeds. He is therefore consigned to remain in the middle state until the end of time. However, Abraham, seeing this man's unfortunate situation, prays for him, and as a result, he is permitted to enter Paradise. Realizing the power of his prayer, Abraham is remorseful for having allowed the others to slip into perdition so easily. So he prays to God for them, and God grants his request by restoring the dead to life again.

We see from these examples of Apocalyptic literature of the Inter-Testamental period, that the division of Sheol into Paradise and Gehenna was part of the thinking of the Jews in that time. We also note the beginnings of detailed descriptions of future punishment, as well as the belief in intercessory prayer for the dead.

3. Apocalyptic Literature of the Christian Era

Apocalyptic literature continued to be written after the coming of Christ. Although the works described here were probably written by Christians, we shall consider them at this point because they are a natural outgrowth of earlier apocalypses. These writings continued to give a large place to the descriptions of the punishment of the wicked. These descriptions grew more and more grotesque. The Apocalypse of Peter is an illustration of this feature. In this writing, we see the clear development of the idea of degrees of punishment corresponding to the types of sin which have been committed. Those who blasphemed the way of righteousness are seen "hanging by their tongues, while the flaming fire torments them from beneath." Those who perverted righteousness are seen "in a great lake of burning mire tormented by angels." "Women hang by their hair over the bubbling mire, because they adorned themselves for adultery." Adulterers are seen "hanging by their feet with their heads in the mire." Murderers are thrown into "A pit full of evil reptiles by which they were smitten and tormented while their victims stood by them and cried forth: 'O God, righteous is thy judgment.'" Women who destroyed children and caused abortion are seen "in a pit filled with gore and filth that ran down from them and rose up to their throats . . . the children who thus died . . . cried out against them." Those who persecuted the righteous are seen in "fire up to the middle of the body, scourged by evil spirits . . . their entrails devoured by worms that rested not." Similar descriptions continue for fourteen classifications of sinners. The Apocalypse of Paul is probably a compilation of the fourth century after Christ. In it the punishment of the wicked is also conceived in grotesque terms. Temeluchos is the name of the relentless being who is the keeper of the place of torment. There is wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is also darkness, moaning and groaning. There is a river of fire in which the wicked are sunk to their knees, stomach, lips, or eyelids depending on which member of their bodies committed sin. Seeing another river of fire filled with souls, the apostle weeps. An angel says, "Wherefore dost thou weep? Art thou more merciful than God?" Thereupon the apostle acknowledges his wickedness and confesses his belief in the goodness of God. The Apostle sees a third river. There sinners are tormented by the worm that dies not and by dragons. There is also a pit filled with blood that holds sorcerers, adulterers and other such sinners. Worse yet, there is a pit with seven seals, giving forth an unbearable stench, where sinners are continually cast from coals of fire to piles of snow and back again. The souls cry for mercy, and the angels join in this plea. As a result,

the Son of God grants the Sabbath as a day of respite from the punishment of hell. This peculiar idea is said to have originated in the Talmud and the Midrash, where it is written, "Every Friday, Dumah, the angel set over the dead says, 'Let the wicked here have their Sabbath rest!' "

4. The Pharisees

Jesus found it necessary to point out many of the fallacies in the ideas of the Pharisees; but it is significant that at the point of punishment after death, he was in complete agreement with them. Josephus, who was himself a Pharisee, tells us something of their beliefs on this subject. He says that the Pharisees held that all souls were incorruptible, that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.⁴ In another of his writings, Josephus says, "Souls have an immortal vigour in them, and under the earth there will be rewards and punishments according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life, and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but the former shall have power to revive and live again."⁵

5. Rabbinical Teachings 6

Immediately before the time of Christ there were two important Rabbinical schools, that of Shammai and that of Hillel. The first of these two schools divided all of mankind into three groups:

1. The perfectly righteous who are "immediately written and sealed to eternal life."

2. The perfectly wicked who are "immediately written and sealed to Gehenna."

3. An intermediate class who "go down to Gehinnom and moan, and come up again." The rabbis of the school of Shammai felt that they had Scriptural basis for this third group in Zechariah 13:9, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; and they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God," and in the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:6, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." Here we find eternal punishment for the second group, and a type of Hillel taught that sinners were tormented in Gehenna for twelve months, after which their bodies and souls were burnt up and scattered as dust under the feet of righteous. However, they also believed that certain types of sinners "go down to Gehinnom and are punished there to ages of ages." A reflection of the Rabbinical teaching of the time before Christ is found in II Maccabees. It teaches a belief in the efficacy of prayers for the dead. "Then Judas assembled his army and went to the town of Adullam. And as the next day was the seventh day, they purified themselves as they were accustomed to do, and kept the Sabbath. On the following day, as by that time it had become necessary, Judas' men went to gather up the bodies of the fallen, and bring them back to lie with their relatives in the graves of their forefathers. But on every one of the dead, under the shirt, they found amulets of the idols of Jamnia, which the Law forbids the Jews to wear; and it became clear to all that this was why they had fallen. So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden, and fell to supplication, begging that the sin that had been committed should be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, after having seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took a collection, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, each man contributing, and sent it to Jerusalem, to provide a sin offering, acting very finely and properly in taking account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected that those who had fallen would rise

again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead; or if it was through regard for the splendid reward destined for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be set free from their sin."⁷ It is probable that some type of prayers for the dead were in use during the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus and during the time of the apostles. In the first century after Christ, the Rabbis believed in eternal punishment. For example, Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, when dying, was filled with great fear, saying, "If He is angry with me, His Wrath is an Eternal Wrath, if He binds me in fetters, His fetters are Eternal fetters, and if He kills me, His death is an Eternal Death." Rabbi Elieser made the statement that the souls of the wicked were to be bound and in unrest, one angel hurling them to another from one end of the world to the other. He based this idea on 1 Samuel 25:29, "Yet a man is risen to pursue thee and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling." In the second century after Christ, however, there was a reaction against the doctrine of eternal punishment. Already toward the end of the first century, Rabbi Akiba, an influential man, had begun to propagate a doctrine of punishment of limited length. As a result, most of the Rabbis at this time turned to the idea that in the last day, the sheath of the sun would be removed, and the wicked would be burned up. One Rabbi taught that there was no hell at all, but that the wicked would be annihilated. The third century witnessed a return to former views. Rabbi Jose said that "the fire of Gehenna which was created on the second day is not extinguished forever." Rabbi Joshua ben Levi believed there were seven hells, because he found seven Biblical names for the place of punishment, namely: Sheol, Abaddon, the Pit of Corruption, the Pit of Horror, the Mire of Clay, the Shadow of Death, and the Nether Parts of the Earth. Rabbi ben Lakish taught, however, that the fire of Gehenna would not hurt Jewish sinners. In each of his seven compartments of hell, Joshua ben Levi had ten heathen nations, each presided over by one of the seven Jewish apostates: Absalom, Doeg, Korah, etc. A number of the Rabbis taught that sorrow releases a person from the punishment of hell. The Apocalypses of Peter and Paul also expressed this idea. They based this on Psalms 86:7, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me." In another rabbinical description, men are seen hanging by their hair for letting their hair grow for adornment; by their eyelids for allowing their eyes lustful looks; and those who ate on fast days are forced to eat bitter gall. In a vision ascribed to Moses in a Midrash to the Song of Solomon 2:3, Moses sees these torments, pleads with God for Israel, but is refused. As to the size of the place of punishment, some rabbis said, "The land of Egypt is four hundred farsas square, and is one-sixtieth of Ethiopia, and Ethiopia is one-sixtieth of the world and the world is one-sixtieth the garden of Eden, and the garden of Eden is one-sixtieth of Gehenna, and the whole world is as the covering of a pot to Gehenna. And some say that Gehenna has no measure, and some say that Eden has no measure."⁸ The Aristotelian School of philosophers, of which Cresas and Maimonides were leaders, opposed the generally accepted concepts and said that heaven and hell are symbols rather than localities.

6. Modern Liberal Judaism

Perhaps modern Jewish thought can best be summed up by quoting some of the conclusions of Kaufmann Kohler in his book *Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religions*. "Heaven and hell have at best merely symbolic significance."⁹ Above all, however, does our ethical view militate against the doctrine of eternal damnation."¹⁰ "The principle of justice . . . is violated by the assumption that

the sins committed by man during his brief stay on earth should condemn him to endless suffering."¹¹ "Endless joy, too, as a reward for the good is unbearable, unless it has an ennobling effect."¹² "Genuine religion fears not hell . . . and longs not for heaven."¹³

We have now traced briefly the history of Jewish concepts regarding punishment after death. Our special interest has been in that portion of the history which leads up to the time of the New Testament. However, we have included the development beyond that period for the sake of completeness, and because of the interaction between Jewish and Christian doctrines in the early centuries of the Church.

We have seen how the Israelites at first had concepts similar to the nations around them, that they believed in a continued existence after death both for the righteous and the unrighteous in a gloomy realm called Sheol. We have seen that as time passed, however, there were increasingly those who were inspired by God to hope for a more wonderful life for the godly beyond death. We noted, furthermore, how the principles of the Old Testament inevitably led, in the Inter-Testamental period, to a concept of blessedness for the righteous dead, and punishment for the unrighteous. We saw also that in this period the Jewish imagination went far beyond the Old Testament to a lurid description of these punishments. Finally, we saw that as time passed, a reaction set in, which has ended in complete skepticism amongst Jewish scholars.

7. Pagan Beliefs For the sake of completeness, we shall now briefly consider some of the concepts of the life after death amongst the pagans. The Egyptians. The Egyptian Book of the Dead is amongst the oldest literature known to scholars. Actually the Egyptians did not have an exact equivalent to our concept of "soul," but distinguished several parts of man which survived death, which they designated as Ka, Ba, etc.

Concerning the future life, Egyptians held several conflicting views. One was that the "soul" remains in the vicinity of the cemetery seeking food. This need was first supplied by the living by bringing food to the place of burial, but later in the history of the Egyptians, images of food were substituted for the food itself. To those who held to this concept, the god of the dead was Klent-amenti, the jackal-headed god. In this belief, the condition of the departed obviously depended, not so much on the life lived on earth, as on the provisions made by the relatives of the deceased. A second concept was that the dead go to the kingdom of the god, Osiris. There Osiris acts as judge and the good are admitted, but the evil are rejected and consumed by a monster (a hippopotamus) or by fire. In this kingdom, the heavenly life was very similar to life on earth. Here then, we have a belief in the annihilation of the wicked. Osiris had himself been killed and had come back to life again, and it was possible for the dead to become like Osiris, or even to lose personal identity and to be absorbed in Osiris. A third belief was that the dead join the company of the immortal gods, who float on the heavenly ocean in the boat of the sun. A boat was placed in the tomb to provide transportation to this heavenly realm. In tombs recently opened, fine specimens of these boats have been discovered. Charms were also placed in the tomb to ensure a safe journey. There were others who believed that this realm might be reached by a ladder supposedly existing in the west.

Another concept of the future life was that in which the dead were believed to be carried off by the Hathor cow or a bull in order to await a bodily resurrection. Many amulets were buried with the body, each designated to preserve a part of the body for this awaited resurrection. The idea that

there is a lower world, Twet, similar to this world with a river running through it which is like the Nile, was also prevalent. There in long passages and in deep caverns the dead dwell. The sun travels through this area during the night. The gates separating the twelve sections of Twet are guarded by serpents and demons. At a later period it was believed that the dead might share this nightly voyage of the sun if they knew the proper incantations and magical formula.

We see that in most of the Egyptian conceptions, the condition of the existence of the dead depended on the carefulness of the burial practices of their surviving relatives, rather than the morality or religiousness of the person himself. The Babylonians. For the Babylonians, life after death was existence on a far lower plane than life in this world. The place of the dead was designated as the "land of no return." It was a place of dark rooms inhabited by bats and covered with dust. There the dead were clothed in garments of feathers, and were under the domain of Nergal and Ereshikigal. When the soul arrived in this lower world after death, it was judged by Annunaki, but regarding the basis of this judgment little has been preserved. Special privileges seem to have been granted to those who had fallen in battle, for they were provided with fresh water to drink. Those who had no one to place offerings upon their graves suffered serious deprivations. In a sense, to the Babylonians, everyone suffered eternal punishment, and as with the Egyptians the degree of their condition depended not on them as much as on their descendants. The Greeks. According to the oldest Greek viewpoint, the surviving spirits were aided by the prescribed burial rituals which were very elaborate, and also by the constant provision of such things as water, wine, food and flowers. These offerings may also have been provided partly to keep the spirits of the dead from harming the living. In the Homeric poems, which reflect Greek beliefs around 1000 B.C., the soul goes to Hades whence there is no return, and, according to one view, where there is no consciousness. The rationalism of this period tended to minimize the life after death, and the rise of the greater gods of the epics tended to reduce the power of the spirits of the dead.

Later, in the mystery religions, there was a revival of emphasis on the life after death. The Orphic sect even emphasized the divinity of the soul and a blessed future life in communion with the gods.

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1. W. O.E. Oesterley, *The Doctrine of the Last Things* (London, John Murray, 1908). p. 124.
 2. Oesterley, *Immortality and the Unseen World*, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1921). p.208
 3. J. Orr, *The International Bible Encyclopedia*, II "Eschatology of the Old Testament," 978.
 4. Josephus, *Wars*, II, viii, 14.
 5. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII, i, 3.
 6. Detailed description of Rabbinical teachings on this subject may be found in Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, (1884) II, p. 791f.
 7. 2Ma 12:36-45, Goodspeed's Translation
 8. E.B. Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment* (London, James Parker and Co., 1880), p. 94.
 9. K. Kohler, *Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion* (New York, MacMillan, 1923), p.150.

10. Ibid, p. 151.

11. Ibid., p. 151.

12. Ibid., p. 152.

13. Ibid., p. 153.

03 The Teaching of the New Testament

The Teaching of the New Testament

We now turn to the New Testament with the greatest interest, for here full light is shed upon every theological subject; here the ideas that have their beginnings in the Old Testament are fully developed; here are the teachings of the Son of God himself, and of the apostles to whom Christ gave the promise that they would be led into all truth.

1. The Gospels

First then, we study the teachings of Jesus, and discover that eternal punishment is prominent in them. The fact that the loving and wise Savior has more to say about hell than any other individual in the Bible is certainly thought-provoking. As W.T.G. Shedd, whose chapter on "Hell" in his *Dogmatic Theology* is one of the best on the subject, says, "The strongest support of the doctrine of Endless Punishment is the teaching of Christ, the Redeemer of man. Though the doctrine is plainly taught in the Pauline Epistles, and other parts of Scripture, yet without the explicit and reiterated statements of God incarnate, it is doubtful whether so awful a truth would have had such a conspicuous place as it always has had in the creed of Christendom . . . Christ could not have warned men so frequently and earnestly as He did against 'the fire that never shall be quenched,' and 'the worm that dieth not,' had He known that there is no future peril to fully correspond to them. That omniscient Being who made the statements respecting the day of Judgment, and the final sentence, that are recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, could neither have believed nor expected that all men without exception will eventually be holy and happy . . . Jesus Christ is the Person who is responsible for the doctrine of Eternal Perdition. He is the Being with whom all opponents of this theological tenet are in conflict. Neither the Christian church, nor the Christian ministry are the authors of it."¹ The Christian doctrine of eternal punishment is Christ's doctrine; we believe it because he taught it. Even some of the antagonists of this doctrine will admit this. For example, Theodore Parker in his *Two Sermons* says, "I believe that Jesus Christ taught eternal punishment . . . I do not accept it on his authority."²

Since we believe in eternal punishment above all because of our Lord's teachings, nothing is more important than a careful study of what he said on the subject. The bulk of Jesus' teaching on the subject is found in the Gospel according to Matthew. The first place that Jesus mentions eternal punishment is in the Sermon on the Mount. There, speaking of the seriousness of hatred, he says, "But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:22). Shortly afterward in the Sermon, in connection with his comment on the adulterous nature of a lustful look, he says, "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30). In both of these passages, hell is a translation of the Greek word "Gehenna." It

is worth noticing that Jesus here speaks of the body going into hell, and of its condition there being so terrible that the loss of an eye or a hand for life would be far less severe. Later in the same sermon Jesus is comparing a human life to a tree, and he says, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 7:19). A few verses later, speaking of shallow professors of faith, he says that in the Judgment Day he will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). It is important to notice that separation from Christ is stated as being a part of the punishment of the wicked in the life to come. In commending the faith of the centurion, Jesus says, "But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). Hell is described in terms of exclusion from the heavenly feast, and is said to produce sorrow on the part of those excluded. This passage is omitted in the parallel account in Luke. In seeking to give his disciples courage, Jesus says, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Both body and soul are said to be destroyed in hell, the word again being a translation of Gehenna. The punishment is obviously severe, being much worse than physical death. In condemning the unbelief of his own nation, Jesus says, "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? Thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:22-24). We have the thought of difference of degrees of punishment due to greater or lesser opportunity to know the truth. Notice that Hades is the word that is used, and that it is described as the antithesis of heaven.

Matthew 12:1-50 also contains a reference to the eternal consequences of sin: "Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come" (Matthew 12:31-32). Here we learn that there is such a thing as a sin which shall never be forgiven. This passage has a parallel in Mark 3:29 where the sin is described as an eternal sin. In the Parable of the Tares, Jesus says, "As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:40-42). The punishment is described as taking place in a furnace of fire, and the sorrow produced is described by the same formula as in the passage in the eighth chapter. A few verses later, in the verses 49 and 50, in the Parable of the Net, the punishment and the resulting anguish are described in identical words. In speaking of the serious responsibility involved in dealing with children, Jesus says, "And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42). These words are found in Mark, and are a parallel to those in Matthew 18:6. Again, it is clearly stated that there is a fate worse than physical death, even if that physical death be of a most horrible kind. Jesus then adds, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye

causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48). This is again from Mark, and the parallel passage is found in Matthew 18:8-9. It is similar except that it uses the phrase eternal fire in place of unquenchable fire. Here we have another instance in which Jesus emphasizes the fact that hell is worse than the loss of a member of the body in this life. Again hell is a translation of the Greek "Gehenna" which is here described as a place of unquenchable fire. Notice also that Jesus here uses the phraseology of Isaiah 66:24 in speaking of the worm and the fire. This is the first passage which we have come to in which Jesus uses the word "eternal" to describe future punishment.

Jesus again refers to hell in terms of exclusion, outer darkness and remorse in the Parable of the Wedding Feast, "Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13).

He uses the word "Gehenna" again in his criticism of the Pharisees, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so ye make him two-fold more a son of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). Jesus here evidently refers to a hellish nature, and states that there are degrees of such hellishness. Later on in his criticism, Jesus says, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell" (Matthew 23:31)? Again the word used is "Gehenna." This phrase probably has the meaning, "from the verdict that consigns to hell" (Lenski). The Parable of the Talents repeats the familiar phrases "outer darkness" and "there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats which follows that the Talents describes this punishment in the following terms, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). A combination of separation from Christ and eternal fire are here mentioned. Notice that this fire is described as not originally intended for man. Describing the punishment of the same group, Jesus adds, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). In his pronouncement against Judas, Jesus describes the punishment of the wicked by means of another comparison. "The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him; but woe unto the man through whom the Son of man is betrayed: it were better for that man if had never been born" (Matthew 26:24). According to this passage the fate of Judas will be far worse than annihilation.

All the passages in Matthew that deal with the subject have been considered, along with parallel passages in Mark. There are passages in Mark which have no exact parallel in Matthew. Mark 12:40 states, "They that devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation." This is an illustration of the principle that there are degrees of punishment. This same passage is found in Luke 20:47. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

Luke also has a few relevant passages which have no parallels in the other Gospels. In the Parable of the Waiting Servants, we read "And that servant who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whosoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (Luke

12:47-48). This illustrates the principle that there are various degrees of punishment depending on the degree of knowledge of God's will.

Luke records the important parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). This parable so clearly teaches the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment that the opponents of the doctrine are hard pressed to know what to do with it. Hudson, one of the leading advocates of annihilationism, admits that the parable "assumes and implies a judgment, or some kind of retribution after death."³ He goes on to admit that "It teaches, further, that the retribution consists in conscious suffering The Passage teaches, thirdly, that this suffering follows death at once . . . 'there is a great gulf fixed' implies that the case of the rich man is hopeless."⁴ Another annihilationist, Whately, admits that "It seems to imply, indeed, very plainly that there is a future state of rewards and punishments."⁵ Still another, H.H. Dobney, admits that "It teaches a terrible and hopeless state for the wicked after death,"⁶ but he goes on to insist that it doesn't prove that this state is eternal. The absurd interpretations of some other scholars who try to avoid the obvious teaching of the parable are quite fantastic, and prove to what extent one must go in order to escape the true doctrine as it is so clearly set forth in this parable. For example, the annihilationists Ellis and Reed say, "In this parable, the Jewish priesthood, personated by the rich man, died, the priesthood being abolished."⁷ Blain has a similar interpretation, although he believes that it is probably the political rather than the ecclesiastical condition for the Jews which is being described.⁸ The evangelical recognizes the metaphorical nature of the language of the parable, but this in no way detracts from its clear teaching. As Bartlett, a defender of the orthodox position, says "We fail to receive literally the circumstances of dipping the tip of one's finger in water and cooling the tongue, the flame, the lying in Abraham's bosom, the gulf, and even the oral communications between Abraham and the rich man This mode of representation is employed from necessity. We have no language, nor modes of conception, with which to speak of God and heaven and spiritual beings, except the language and conceptions drawn from earth and sense."⁹ Keeping this in mind, what do we learn from this parable? One important teaching is certainly the impassability of the gulf between the lost and the saved. This is not just scenery, this is one of the fundamental points of the parable. Those who wish to believe in progressive salvation beyond death point out that the rich man now has a concern for his brothers which they believe indicates an improvement of his character. There is no evidence however that he had no concern for his brothers while he was yet in this life. More significant is the teaching of Jesus at this point that those who will not believe the testimony of Scripture would not be converted by one who returned from the dead. In other words Jesus doesn't share the optimism of those who think that men will be saved if they are only given a second chance.

There are additional relevant passages in the Gospel according to John. In John 3:16 we have the familiar words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life." Here is mentioned an awful alternative to possessing everlasting life, which alternative is described as perishing. Perishing is evidently the fate of those who do not believe in Christ. In the passage that follows, those who fail to believe are described as "judged." The idea of judgment certainly carries with it appropriate punishment. John 5:28-29 is a very clear passage, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." To the unbelieving Jews,

Jesus said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). This is another illustration of the principle that the punishment of unbelief includes exclusion and separation from Christ. Jesus adds, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). In John 15:6 we read, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is certainly an abiding form of punishment. In John 17:12 Jesus describes Judas as perishing and as being the son of perdition.

What conclusion shall be drawn from all of these passages in the Gospels? Our conclusion will depend on who we believe Jesus is. Believing that Jesus is God incarnate, that he spoke nothing but the Truth of God, that he had a perfect knowledge of what the world to come is like, we can come to only one conclusion: there is eternal punishment for the wicked. It is an inescapable fact that Jesus, without going to the grotesque extremes to which some of the apocalyptic writers went, places the stamp of his approval upon the general Gehenna concept which had developed during the Inter-Testamental period. He does not oppose this idea of punishment beyond death, he is not silent on the subject; rather, again and again he uses the popular language describing Gehenna to warn men concerning the terrible consequences of sin! Jesus certainly did not teach the doctrine because his Jewish contemporaries taught it, but the fact that Jesus did teach this doctrine proves that although his contemporaries were wrong in so many of their ideas, they were correct in believing in the existence of Gehenna. Jesus' teaching further proves that the Inter-Testamental development of the doctrine was in reality a sound extension of the beginnings of that doctrine which are found in the Old Testament. When Jesus speaks of such things as the worm and the fire, we believe he was using figurative language. This idea will be developed at greater length later, but at this point note the following observations: Figurative language is used in many places in the Bible; a number of passages can be understood only under such an assumption. Furthermore, Jesus used figurative language on a number of occasions. For example, he said, "I am the door," and "I am the vine." Another reason for considering these descriptions as figurative is that otherwise they would be contradictory. Jesus speaks of hell in terms of fire and also in terms of darkness. These cannot both be literally true. Furthermore, by the very nature of the process involved, literal fire cannot consume a literal body for eternity. The language is evidently figurative, but it stands for a terrible reality! Like the figurative language describing heaven, symbols are used because the realities are indescribably terrible on the one hand, and indescribably wonderful on the other. The teachings of our Savior may be summarized as follows: There are only two ultimate destinies, heaven and hell. The existence of the wicked in the future state is a very terrible reality and endless. Part of the punishment lies in exclusion from the presence of Jesus himself. There are degrees of punishment depending upon the kind of life lived on this earth, and upon the greatness of the opportunities which were neglected.

2. The Apostolic Teaching In the writings of the Apostle Paul we find that much less is stated about punishment in the future state than was revealed by Jesus. However, his very earnestness in pressing forward to preach the gospel can only be understood as resulting from a strong conviction regarding the serious alternatives which are involved. In Romans 2:1-29, Paul speaks of the judgment of God in these words, "So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you

toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; . . . All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law" (Romans 2:3-9; Romans 2:12).

Having spoken of the Christian as a temple, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:17, "If any man destroys the temple of God, God shall destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and that temple you are." He speaks again of the judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." According to 1 Thessalonians 5:3, there will be a judgment day which will bring destruction to some, "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape." 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 is one of the clearest passages in which Paul speaks of future punishment, "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." Notice again in this passage, as in the teachings of Christ, the element of the eternity of the punishment and of separation from Christ. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is also deeply concerned about a judgment which shall result in severe punishment to the unsaved. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard" (Hebrews 2:2-3). He considers "eternal judgment" as a fundamental of the faith, "Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments" (Hebrews 6:1-2). Of this judgment he says, "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Even as Christ taught, so also the punishment to those who reject Christ, is, to the writer to the Hebrews, something worse than death. "Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:28-31). He concludes, "But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39).

Peter, in his second Epistle, writes on the subject in very forceful language. "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be

held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment (2 Peter 2:4-9). The word "hell" here is a translation of Tartarus, the Roman and Greek equivalent of the Hebrew conception of Gehenna. A few verses later, Peter adds, "But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done (2 Peter 2:12-13a). "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them" (2 Peter 2:17). "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them" (2 Peter 2:21). In this last passage an inference is made as to the degrees of punishment based on the amount of knowledge of the way of salvation.

Jude writes, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 1:6-7). "They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 1:13-15). Notice especially in these passages the everlasting nature of the fire and the darkness. In the Revelation given to John by Jesus Christ, a great deal is said about eternal punishment. In Revelation 14:9-11, "A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11). In Revelation 20:12-15 we read, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." In Revelation 21:8 we read, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." In Revelation 22:11 we read, "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be

vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." This last passage indicates a permanence of condition. Of these passages in Revelation, Dearmer, a bitter opponent of the doctrine of eternal punishment, says, "In the splendid imagery of this great book the sharp contrast between heaven and hell is unmistakably set forth, and we can hardly wonder that the doctrine of eternal punishment was established from it in ages that imagined it to be the work of that Beloved Disciple who would reflect in a special way the most intimate thought of Christ."¹⁰

These passages from the Epistles and Revelation give evidence that the apostles follow their Master in teaching the serious alternatives of life. They teach clearly the fact of judgment, resulting in eternal life or eternal death, which is not a cessation of existence, but rather an existence in which the lost experience the terrible results of their sins. They teach that this existence is endless. The New Testament is very reserved in its descriptions of this state of punishment, especially in comparison to some other literature on the subject such as the non-canonical apocalyptic literature and also some later commentators. Nevertheless, the New Testament leaves the inescapable impression that this state is very real and highly undesirable.

Because there are so many who deny that the word "eternal" means endless, it will be profitable to make a careful study of the meaning of that word. In the Greek, it is the word *aionios* which in the Bible is rendered eternal or, less frequently, everlasting. This word in turn comes from the word *aion* meaning primarily "the age." The classical Greek writers such as Homer used it in reference to the period of a man's life. However, by Plato *aion* was used of the Eternal Being as compared with Time. Aristotle used the word to describe the ultimate principle of existence. The Hellenistic Jewish translators of the Septuagint used the word in both the older classical sense and in the later Platonic sense. Examples of the older usage are Deuteronomy 15:17, "Then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for ever," and 1 Samuel 27:12, "Achish trusted David and said to himself, 'He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever.'" The later Platonic sense is found in such passages as Micah 4:5, "For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." And Daniel 12:3, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The New Testament divides all of history into the present *aion* and the *aion* which is to come. The Greek language contains no other word which better describes the concept of endlessness. *Aionios* is used in the New Testament sixty-six times: fifty-one times of the happiness of the righteous, two times of the duration of God and his glory, six other times where there is no doubt as to its meaning being endless, and seven times of the punishment of the wicked. *Aion* is used ninety-five times: fifty-five times of unlimited duration, thirty-one times of duration that has limits and nine times to denote the duration of future punishment. A clear example of the usage of the word to express endless duration is found in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." It is true, (especially in the writing of the Apostle John), that the word is often used to describe the quality of existence, rather than as having a quantitative aspect. However, the very nature of this quality presupposes endlessness. The strongest evidence that the word *aionios* is meant to teach the endlessness of the punishment of the wicked is in the fact that the same word is used to describe the blessed life

of the godly. In a number of passages the two uses of the word lie side by side. Only a violent twisting of meaning can lead to any other conclusion than this: if aionion describes life which is endless, so must aionion describe punishment which is endless. Here the doctrine of heaven and the doctrine of hell stand or fall together. W.R. Inge says, "No sound Greek scholar can pretend that aionios means anything less than eternal."¹¹ It should also be mentioned that the endless duration of the punishment doesn't depend entirely on the translation of aionios since there are such statements in the Bible as "the fire is never quenched" and the "worm never dies." Baron von Hugel states that in the New Testament "There is everywhere an assumption or an implication of man's life here below as a choice between immense alternatives with corresponding abiding consequences."¹² He also says, "If we follow the New Testament the essence of hell lies assuredly above all in its endlessness."¹³

It must be recognized that the King James Version translated some words describing punishment in too strong a sense. For example, some places where the King James Version has "damn," the American Standard translators felt that a more accurate translation is "judged." Also "Hades," even where it has a neutral connotation, is in the King James Version, rendered "hell."

Plumptre, who would like to disprove the endlessness of hell, if possible, says of universalism, "It fails to prove that the element of duration is, as has been maintained, altogether absent from the word which defines the divine law of retribution as eternal in its issues."¹⁴ An even more significant admission is made by Dearmer, who is an opponent of the doctrine of eternal punishment. After trying to detract as much as possible from the meaning of the Greek words involved, he states, "There are however in the Synoptics, and especially in Matthew, passages which, however accurately they are translated, are inconsistent with the teachings of Christ."¹⁵ He then goes on to argue that these passages are not the words of Jesus, basing his arguments on the conjectural solutions of the synoptic problem advocated by liberal scholars. He insists that the Gospels are not to be considered inerrant. The crux of the problem here comes to view. The orthodox doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of eternal punishment stand or fall together. The only way to escape the doctrine of eternal punishment is to deny the infallibility of Scripture, and to deny that it is the one rule of faith and practice, which is historically a cardinal doctrine of Protestant churches. A man like Savage in his book "Life and Death is at least honest when he writes "If the doctrine of eternal punishment was clearly and unmistakably taught in every leaf of the Bible, and on every leaf of all the Bibles of the all the world, I could not believe a word of it. I should appeal from these misconceptions of even the seers and the great men to the infinite and eternal God, who only is God, and who only on such terms could be worshipped."¹⁶ Other opponents of the orthodox doctrine give evidence of the fact that their positions are not squarely based on Scripture. For example, C.F. Hudson describes the purpose of one of his books to be "To meet the convenience of those who rely, for their views of future life, upon their reading and interpretation of the Scripture."¹⁷ A little later, however, he admits that he doubts if an exclusively Scriptural argument will prove satisfactory to very many, however clearly it may appear to be made out.¹⁸

Let us return for a moment to Dearmer's statement that the doctrine of eternal punishment is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ. The question must be asked, "But what are the teachings of Christ?" Are they the teachings which have been recorded by the evangelists, or are they whatever parts of the record we happen to like? The second alternative is hopelessly subjective,

yet it is the premise upon which Dearmer bases his statement. This is not the place to enter into the complex subject of higher criticism. Suffice it to say that the denial of the authenticity of parts of Scripture is not based on scientific facts, but on theories, theories often influenced by the desire to deny certain teachings of the Scriptures.

Chapter 4 || Table of Contents 1. W.G.T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), pp. 675, 676, 680.

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18. Ibid., p. 21.

04 The Pre-Reformation Period

The Pre-Reformation Period 1. The Early Church The masses of Christians in the early Church certainly believed in the doctrine of eternal punishment. Gibbon considered this to be one of the five most important reasons why the Gospel spread in such amazing fashion. The testimony of the martyrs of the first centuries of the Church contained many references to the doctrine. Pusey's *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment* contains a whole series of these references. One example is the answer of Sylvanus the son of Felicitas, to his judge when he was on trial for his life, "If we fear a passing destruction, we shall incur eternal punishment. Knowing then, what rewards are prepared for the righteous, and what punishments appointed for sinners, we fearlessly despise human law, to keep the Divine commands. For they who adore daemons will be with them in destruction and in everlasting burnings."¹

One of the most outstanding martyrs was Polycarp. He said, "You threaten me with fire that burns for one hour and then cools, not knowing the judgment to come, nor the perpetual torment of eternal fire to the ungodly." These words are typical of the martyrs. It is obvious that their assured faith in the reality of eternal punishment gave them the courage to face martyrdom, as being by far the lesser of two evils. The general consensus of opinion of the Church Fathers was also in favor of the doctrine of eternal punishment. Clement of Rome (c.40-97) said nothing about hell itself in those of his writings which have been preserved, but he did state, "After we leave this world we are no longer able to confess sin, and to turn from it." In the second century, the phrase "eternal fire" is found in the writings of many of the Church Fathers, among them Ignatius (d. 117). Commenting on a verse from Ephesians, he says, "One so defiled will go into unquenchable fire, and in like manner he who heareth him." The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 115) said, "Those which fell into the fire and were burned, are those who have departed for ever from the living God; nor does the thought of repentance ever come into their hearts, on account of their devotion to their lusts and to the crimes which they committed." The Epistle of Barnabas (c. 120) includes this statement, "The way of the black one is crooked and full of curses. It is the way of eternal death with punishment." It is not certain who wrote *An Ancient Homily*, but it is generally assigned to this same period. One passage from it is as follows, "For if we do the will of Christ, we shall find rest: but if otherwise, then nothing shall deliver us from eternal punishment, if we should disobey His commandments."

Justin Martyr (c. 110-165) in his *Apology* has a clear and lengthy statement on the subject: "Plato said to the same effect: that Rhodamanthus and Minos would punish the wicked men when they came to them; we say that the same thing will take place; but that the Judge will be Christ, and that their souls will undergo an eternal punishment; and not as he said, a period of a thousand years. We believe — I would rather say — we are fully convinced — that each will suffer punishment by eternal fire, according to the demerit of his actions; and that an account will be required of everyone, in proportion to the powers which he received from God, as Christ has declared in these words, 'For unto whomsoever God has given much, of him shall the more be required.'

"We Christians (in contrast to the vices attributed by the heathen to their gods) have been taught that they only will attain to immortality, who lead holy and virtuous lives, like God; and we believe, that all who live wickedly, and do not repent, will be punished in eternal fire."

Iraeneus (135-200) mentions eternal fire many times. For example he says, "That eternal fire is prepared for those who should transgress, both the Lord openly affirmed, and the other Scriptures prove." He also said, "Good things are eternal, and without end in God, and therefore the loss of them is also eternal and never ending" and "Those who fly from the light of God . . . are themselves the cause of their inhabiting eternal darkness, destitute of all good things." Notice here the idea that the punishment includes what the sinner misses as well as a positive penalty. We also have here the idea that the punishment is the natural consequence which the sinner brings upon himself. Farrar claimed that Iraeneus was inconsistent in that he taught both eternal punishment and universal restoration, but Pusey explains these alleged universalistic passages very satisfactorily.²

Theophilus, the Sixth Bishop of Antioch (c. 168), said, "Give reverential attention to the prophetic Scriptures, and they will make your way plainer for escaping the eternal punishments, and obtaining the eternal prizes of God." At the beginning of the third century, one of the outstanding Church Fathers was Tertullian, (c. 160-230). He taught the doctrine of eternal punishment; the type of language which he used however depended on whom he was addressing. As Pusey says, "Tertullian, when not bent on producing an effect on the heathen, writes calmly of the fear of eternal punishment as keeping Christians from evil."³ Tertullian speaks of "the greatness of the punishment which continueth, not for a long time, but forever." He was the first of the Church Fathers to emphasize the idea which reappears from time to time in the history of the subject that hell would be a joyful spectacle to those who are saved. He says in his *De Spectaculis* "How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians."

Cyprian (c. 200-258) also was rather graphic in his descriptions of eternal torments. He said, "Let him fear to die, on whom, at his going away from life an eternal flame will lay pains that never cease." In his Second Epistle, he said, "Gains which sever men from the feast of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and bring them down, ill and to their ill, fattened in this world, to the punishment of hunger and thirst eternal." The famous Alexandrian school of theologians, however, denied the doctrine of eternal punishment. As Shedd says, "The principle deviation from the catholic doctrine of endless retribution was in the Alexandrian school, founded by Clement and Origen. The position taken by them was that 'the punishments of the condemned are not eternal but only remedial; the devil himself being capable of amelioration.'"⁴ Shedd goes on to say, "Origen's Restorationism grew naturally out of his view of human liberty. He held that the liberty of indifference and the power of contrary choice, instead of simple self-determination, are the substance of freedom. These belong inalienably and forever to the nature of the finite will. They cannot be destroyed, even by apostasy and sin. Consequently there is forever a possibility of a self-conversion of the will in either direction. Free will may fall into sin at any time; and free will may turn to God any time. This led to Origen's theory of an endless alternation of falls and recoveries, of hells and heavens; so that practically he taught nothing but hell. For, as Augustine (*City of God*, *XXL. xvii*) remarks in his refutation of Origen, 'heaven with the prospect of losing it is misery.'⁵ We see then that

Origen's view was the result of his anthropology. Origen himself recognized the dangerous moral consequences of universalism, and sometimes spoke of eternal condemnation and the impossibility of conversion in the world to come. He also said that in the matter of "the end or consummation" what is said "is said with great fear and caution, discussing and treating, rather than laying down anything as certain and defined." In his discussions of the subject he constantly began statements with the term "perhaps." Jerome said, "Origen himself, in an epistle which he wrote to Fabian, Bishop of Rome, expressed regret for having written such things, and threw the blame upon Ambrose, who made public what he had written privately." Origen called the doctrine of eternal damnation a "beneficial deception" by God. In other words, he himself believed in universalism, but he believed in teaching eternal damnation to the masses of men as a deterrent to sin. This in itself is an admission of the fact that the denial of eternal punishment undermines morals, and therefore places a serious question over against the claim that such denial could correspond to reality. The Eastern Church formally condemned the heresies of Origen in a synod at Alexandria convened by Theophilus, and one at Cyprus convened by Epiphanius. These teachings of Origen were also condemned by Anastasius, Bishop of Rome. After some Origenist monks had stirred up some trouble in Palestine, the Emperor Justinian (who liked to delve into theology) had the matter brought up to the Fifth General Council, where Origenism was condemned.

Among the words of Basil (c. 330-379) are these, "For they who have done evil shall arise to reproach and shame, seeing in themselves the foulness and the marks of their evil deeds. And perhaps more fearful than darkness and the eternal fire in that shame, which sinners will have as their companion in eternity, having ever before their eyes the traces of that sin in the flesh, as a dye which cannot be washed out, abiding forever in the memory of their souls.

"Let no one deceive thee with vain words; for sudden destruction will come upon thee, and the overthrow shall overtake thee, like a whirlwind. The dark angel will come, carry away by force, and dragging thy soul bound with sins, often turning back to the things here and mourning voicelessly, the organ of lamentation being now closed For there is no liberation from those things after death, nor any device or means of escaping those bitter poisons." We note in Basil an emphasis on the psychological result of sin rather than on the literal aspects of the punishment.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 331-396) at times followed the teachings of Origen, but at other times made statements such as the following: "And this will be the complete effacement of wickedness, when all are called up to life by the resurrection; the just being removed to the portion above, those held fast by sins being delivered over to the fire of Gehenna." Commenting on this statement by Gregory, Pusey says, "The above clear and explicit preaching to his people, shows what was the faith of Saint Gregory. Whatever be the explanation of the mist of Origenism, which at times, floated over his own imaginative mind, or that of his saintly sister, Saint Macrina, to whom he owed so much, nothing but a want of conviction of the truth of the speculations could have made him preach the exact contrary."

Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329-389) said, "There is not to those who depart to Hades, confession or amendment. For God hath concluded here life and action, but there the sifting of what has been done. That sentence, after which is no appeal, no higher judge, no defence through subsequent works, no oil, from the wise virgins or from those who sell, for the failing lamps; no repentance of a

rich man wasting in the flame and seeking amendment for his relations; no appointed time of transformations; but one last fearful judgment, even more just than formidable, yea rather the more formidable, because it is also just." Note here the Biblical basis for Gregory's statements.

It was during this period, the fourth century, that the article of the Apostle's Creed, "He descended into hell," received acceptance. This article is important in the study of our subject because the advocates of the "larger hope" claim that this article refers to the fact that Jesus preached to the dead, thus bringing salvation to some who had before this time been lost. This article was slow in being accepted into creedal statements. It was absent from the statements of the first four Ecumenical Councils, Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. The first formal creed in which it had a place was that of the Arian party at the council of Ariminum (359). Even after that, there were many creeds from which it was omitted. Furthermore, once it was admitted, it was interpreted in a great variety of ways. The article of the Creed in itself certainly does not give any detailed description of Christ's activities while in "hell."

Athanasius (293-373) is best known for his defense of the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ in the controversy with the Arians. His writings contain several references to the doctrine of eternal punishment, but his position on the subject is not clear. He quoted passages on punishment from Matthew, but he also made the statement: "While the devil thought to bind one he is deprived of all. Cast out of Hades, and sitting by the gates he sees all the fettered beings, led forth by the courage of the Saviour." This would seem to imply a belief in universalism.

Hilary (d. 367), sometimes called "the Athanasius of the West", stated that the heathen will have material bodies suitable for living in flames. He said, "An eternity of the body is destined for the heathen too, so that there shall be in them eternal matter for the eternal fire, and in all being everlasting, everlasting punishment shall be put in force."

Ambrose (c. 340-379) was another of the Church Fathers who is best known for his part in the conflict with the Arians. He taught that the sufferings of the damned were not material. He said, "There is no gnashing of corporeal teeth, nor any perpetual fire of corporeal flames, nor is the worm corporeal — the fire is that which the sadness over transgressions generates, because the sins pierce with compunction the mind sense of the irrational soul of the guilty, and eat out, as it were, the bowels of conscience; which sins are generated like worms out of each other, as it were from the body of the sinner . . . the gnashing of teeth also indicates the feeling of one indignant because each repents too late, is too late wroth with himself, groans over himself too late, that he offended with such obstinate wickedness."

Jerome, (340-420) said, "Therein shall the sinner be cursed, that, his body being uncorrupt he shall suffer eternal punishment." He also said, "The worm which will never die and the fire which never will be quenched is by very many (plerisque) understood of the conscience of sinners, which tortures them when under punishment, why through their own fault and sin, they missed the good of the elect." He then adds, "Yet not as to deny the eternal punishment of those who deny the Lord."

Jerome rejected the extreme emphasis on punishment which was advocated by the Pelagians, yet he said, "But if Origen says, that no rational creature will be lost, and ascribes repentance to the devil, what is that to us, who say that the devil and his hosts and all ungodly and transgressors

perish for ever, and that Christians, if overtaken (by death) in sin, will be saved after punishment?" The latter part of the statement is, of course, a reference to a purgatorial experience, to which many of the other Church Fathers also made a great deal of reference. Jerome also said, "All God's enemies shall perish, not that they shall cease to exist but cease to be enemies." This is a rather ambiguous statement, but in the light of other passages from his works it cannot mean that he believed in universalism.

Jerome clearly held to the doctrine of eternal punishment, yet at the same time he had a tolerant view toward those who denied it. In commenting on Isaiah 24:1-23, "post multos dies visitabuntur" he says, "This seems to favour those friends of mine who grant the grace of repentance to the devil and to demons after many ages, that they too shall be visited after a time." He goes on to explain that the text mentioned doesn't necessarily mean this, but then he adds, "human frailty cannot know the judgment of God, nor venture to form an opinion of the greatness of His punishment."⁶

Augustine (354-430) stood uncompromisingly for the doctrine of eternal punishment. As with many other doctrines, his advocacy of this position tended to cause it to become the accepted doctrine of the church for the centuries that followed. In dealing with the subject he avoided the coarseness of the descriptions of some of the scholars who lived in his era. He took his position not only because it was Biblical but also because the fear of hell had had a salutary effect in his own experience. He says, "Thy right hand was continually ready to pluck me out of the mire, and to wash me thoroughly, and I knew it not; nor did anything call me back from a yet deeper gulf of carnal pleasures, but the fear of death and of thy judgment to come; which, amid all my changes, never departed my breast."⁷ We shall never know how many others have been kept from plunging more deeply into sin by the fear of hell. This is certainly not the highest motive for morality, but it has helped to restrain evil. That the doctrine of eternal punishment was not the only position held with regard to what happens to the ungodly after death is shown by Augustine's statement concerning the very many in his day who "though not denying the Holy Scriptures, do not believe in endless torments." On the same subject he says, "For in vain certain, or rather very many, with human feelings compassionate the eternal punishment of the doomed, and their eternal torments without intermission, and so believe not that it will take place, not indeed in the way of opposing themselves to the divine Scriptures, but by softening, according to their own feelings, all the hard sayings, and by turning unto a more gentle meaning such things, as they think to be said rather to execute terror than as though true."

Augustine pointed out that *aionios* must have the same meaning when it refers to punishment as when it refers to reward. He considered separation from God to be the worst part of the punishment of the lost. He said that beyond the degrees of suffering involved in eternal punishment "Alienation from the life of God, which would be common to all, would be greater than any suffering whatever." He allows each individual the freedom to choose whether he believes in the more sensuous or the more spiritual forms of punishment, but he himself thought it best to believe that there will be a combination of the two. In his *City of God*, Augustine devotes the entire Twenty First Book with its 27 brief chapters to the subject of hell. He begins the first chapter of the book by writing: "We are now to proceed (by the help of God) in this book, with the declaration of the punishment due unto the devil and all his confederacy. And this I choose to do before I handle the glories of the blessed, because both these and the wicked are to undergo their sentences in

body and soul, and it may seem more incredible for an earthly body to endure undissolved in eternal pains, than without all pain, in everlasting happiness. So that when I have shown the possibility of the first, it may be a great motive unto the confirmation of the latter."⁸ In brief chapters in this Book, he then goes on to discuss "Whether an earthly body may possibly be incorruptible by fire," and "Whether a fleshly body may possibly endure eternal pain." He then goes on to give what he considered some of Nature's testimonies that bodies may remain undiminished in fire. In Chapter IX, entitled "Of hell, and the qualities of the eternal pains therein," he quotes several of Jesus' sayings on the subject, and then he says, "O whom would not this thunder from the mouth of God strike a chill terror into, sounding so often? Now, as for this worm and this fire, they that make them only mental pains do say that the fire implies the burning of the soul in grief and anguish, that now repents too late for being severed from the sight of God: after the manner that the apostle says: 'Who is offended and I burn not?' And this language may be meant also by the worm say they, as it is written 'As the moth is to the garment, and the worm to the wood, so does sorrow eat the heart of a man.' Now such as hold them both mental and real, say that the fire is a bodily plague to the body, and the worm a plague of conscience to the soul. This seems more likely."⁹ He then goes on in brief chapters to discuss "Whether the fire of hell if it be corporeal, can take effect upon the incorporeal devils," and "Whether it be not justice that the time of the pains should be proportioned to the time of the sins and crimes."

Chapter XVII is entitled "Of some Christians that held that hell's pains should not be eternal." We quote this chapter in full because of its direct bearing upon our subject: "Now must I have a gentle disputation with certain tender hearts of our own religion, who think that God, who has justly doomed the condemned unto hell fire, will after a certain space, which His goodness shall think fit for the merit of each man's guilt, deliver them from that torment. And of this opinion was Origen, in far more pitiful manner, for he held that the devils themselves after a set time expired, should be loosed from their torments, and become bright angels in heaven, as they were before. But this, and other of his opinions, chiefly that rotation and circumvolution of misery and bliss which he held that all mankind should run in, gave the Church cause to pronounce his anathema: seeing he had lost this seeming pity, by assigning a true misery, after a while, and a false bliss, unto the saints in heaven, where they (if they were true) could never be sure of remaining. But far otherwise is their tenderness of heart, which hold that this freedom out of hell shall only be extended unto the souls of the damned after a certain appointed time for everyone so that all at length shall come to be saints in heaven. But if this opinion be good and true, because it is merciful, why then the farther it extends the better it is; so that it may as well include the freedom of the devils also, after a longer continuance of time. Why then ends it with mankind only, and excludes them? nay, but it dares go no farther. they dare not extend their pity unto the devil. But if any one does so, he goes beyond them, and yet sins in erring more deformedly, and more perversely against the express word of God, though he thinks to show the more pity herein."¹⁰

Augustine based his belief in eternal punishment on the Scriptures. For example he says, "Wherefore there is no reason either stronger or plainer to assure our belief that the devil and his angels shall never more return to the glory and righteousness of the saints, than because the Scriptures, that deceive no man, tell us directly and plainly, 'that God hath not spared them, but cast them down into hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, there to be kept unto the condemnation in the just judgment, then to be cast into eternal fire, and there to burn for evermore'

. . . Shall the word of God, spoken alike both to men and devils, be proved true upon the devils, and not upon the men? So indeed would man's surmises be of more certainty than God's promises."¹¹

Augustine obviously gave a great deal of thought to the subject, and his conclusions had a great influence upon the thinking of the Church.

Chrysostom (c. 345-407) had a great influence on the Church both because of his outstanding ability as a preacher, and because he did a great deal of writing. He seems to have been in favor of much in Origen's thinking, but in spite of that, to have believed in eternal punishment himself. Farrar makes the charge that "the doctrine of accommodation" which was prevalent amongst the Church Fathers was practiced by Chrysostom at this point. In other words, Farrar says that Chrysostom did not believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment, but taught it to accommodate himself to the convictions of his hearers. However as we turn to the clear language that Chrysostom used, we find this hard to believe. Besides, what other evidence do we have concerning what he believed than the record of what he said and wrote?

Commenting on a passage in Matthew, Chrysostom said, "And some even say that it (the saying 'But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.') was spoken rather hyperbolically. But I fear lest, when we have deceived ourselves with words here, we may in deeds there suffer that extreme punishment."¹² Commenting on a passage in Romans, he says, "Where then are they who, with all this great exactness in view, yet will not allow that there is a hell?"¹³ In another sermon, he said, "All these things let us speak as in pity for the deceased, and as depreciating things present; in order that by fear and by pity we may soften the cruel word. And when we see men shrinking into themselves at these narrations, then, and not till then, let us introduce to their notice also the doctrine of hell, not as terrifying these, but in compassion for others. And let us say, But why speak of these things present? For far indeed will our concern be from ending with these: a yet more grievous punishment will confront all such persons; even a river of fire, and a poisonous worm, and darkness interminable, and undying tortures."¹⁴ Commenting on a verse in 1 Thessalonians he says, "For it is no small advantage to be persuaded concerning hell. For the recollection of such discourses, like bitter medicine, will be able to clear every vice, if it be constantly settled in our mind."¹⁵ In another passage he says, "For indeed my heart is troubled and throbs, and the more I see the account of hell confirmed, the more do I tremble and shrink through fear, but it is necessary to say these things, lest we fall into hell."¹⁶ He also said, "I could wish also myself, that there were no punishment . . . But it cannot be, that there is not punishment and hell. What can I do?"¹⁷ In yet another passage he calls the denial of hell "Satanic reasoning."¹⁸ He had hopes that the preaching of the doctrine might have a powerful influence, for he said, "For this cause did God threaten hell, that none may fall into hell, that all may obtain the Kingdom, for this cause, we too make mention continually of hell."¹⁹

Just a few of the most prominent of the Church Fathers have been quoted to illustrate the conceptions held in the early Church. Except for a few, notably Origen, the most influential of the Fathers held to the doctrine of eternal punishment, and in fact proclaimed it more or less vigorously.

2. The Middle Ages In the Middle Ages a great deal of attention was focused on the doctrine of eternal punishment. There is also a noticeable increase in the crudeness of the description of hell.

This is especially true of the many visions on the subject which are recorded as having been seen in this age. The most famous of such visions in the early part of the Middle Ages was that of the Venerable Bede (673-735) in which he described a man in torments, "the flames of fire gushed out from his ears and eyes and nostrils and at every pore." There were also, however, in this period saner discussions on the subject. For example, John Damascene (c. 700-754), considered by many the most authoritative theologian of the Eastern Church, says "After death there is no longer turning, no longer repentance, not that God wouldn't accept repentance, for He cannot deny Himself, nor doth He cast away His compassion; but the soul is no longer converted."²⁰

John Scotus Erigena (c. 815-877) was both a controversial and an original thinker. Although his position is not entirely clear, he seems to have denied the endlessness of punishment and the material aspects of hell. In one passage he spoke of hell as the conscience, but in another place he spoke of hell fire. He spoke of evil being abolished as a kingdom, but not abolished in individuals. Of Erigena's position, J.M. Deutsche says, "Evil is nothing substantial, it had no place in primordial cause, it is only instability of will which is an accident attendant upon God-created natures. Since the changes outlined above produce a will fully sanctified and united with God, the will is in full accord with the divine will; there is then no cause of evil. The consequences of evil likewise vanish, since that which is only an accident cannot assume the form of substance; at the end of world-history evil in every form is to be annihilated. This is the necessary consequence of the system of Scotus, to which he gave extended discussion. According to his system, it was impossible that a nature, something created by God, could suffer eternally, and he attempted to show how a vice could attach to a pure nature without corrupting it, also how it might be punished, though in itself nothing, otherwise than in the nature possessed by it; his demonstration, however, is unsatisfactory. How the bad will can continue to exist while the nature is completely pure is not made clear, and this difficulty is the greater because Scotus regarded the will not as an accident but as an essential. Yet Scotus has (x. 38) a sentence which should be noticed. He says that practically all authors agree that as many men attain to the heavenly kingdom as there are angels who have fallen, and remarks that, if that is correct, then must the number of men who eventually are born equal that of angels, or else not all men attain to the purpose of their creation, which last is contrary to the reasons already given for the salvation of all men in Christ. In that case only demons and the devil are doomed to eternal condemnation."²¹ In this reference there is obviously a great deal of speculation, rather than thought based on Biblical revelation.

One of the lesser theologians of this era, Theophylact (c. 1077) said, "The worm and the fire, which punish sinners, is the conscience of each, and the memory of the foul deeds committed in this life, which prey upon him like a worm, and scorch him like fire."

Peter Lombard (c. 1105-1160), famous for his *Sentences*, followed Tertullian in considering hell to be a beautiful sight to the redeemed. He said, "The elect shall go forth . . . to see the torments of the impious, and seeing this they will not be affected with grief, but will be satiated with joy."

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) who set the pattern for all later Roman Catholic thought, agreed with Tertullian and Lombard when he said, "that the saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly and give more abundant thanks to God, a perfect view of the punishment of the damned is granted to them." He considered that the torments included useless repining and mourning. In his system "guilt and punishment correspond to each other; and since the 'apostasy

from the invariable good which is infinite' fulfilled by man, is unending, it merits everlasting punishment."22 He made an important contribution to Roman Catholic thought by developing the idea of a separate place for unbaptized children, the Limbus Infantum. The most famous of the many visions of heaven and hell are those of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). He describes hell in his poem *Inferno*. According to the poem, in April of 1300, Dante finds himself wandering in a gloomy forest. Leaving the forest, he attempts to climb a hill, but is driven back by three ravenous beasts. He is met by Virgil who promises to conduct him through hell and purgatory. On the evening of Good Friday, April 8, they enter the gate of hell and pass through its successive circles. What Dante sees there is then described in great vividness. Hell is supposedly shaped like an inverted cone with its apex at the center of the earth. The upper circle is that of the Elysian Fields where the noble pagans dwell. Venial sins are punished in the next few circles; and deadly sins are punished in those circles nearest the center where there is a frozen lake in which Lucifer himself punishes traitors. The following are a few illustrative passages from the *Inferno*:

First we see the description of the entrance to Hell:

"Through me the way is to the city of woe;

Through me the way unto eternal pain;;

Through me the way unto the lost below.

Justice commoved my high Creator, when Made me Divine Omnipotence, combined With Primal Love and Wisdom Sovereign.

Before me nothing was of any kind Except Eterne, and I eterne abide:

Leave, ye that enter in, all hope behind!"23 One of his descriptions of the lost is as follows:

"But all those spirits, so forworn and stark, Change color, and their teeth are chattering, As soon as they the cruel accents mark.

God they blaspheme, and their own sires, and fling Curses on race and place and time and law Both of their birth and their engendering."24 At sight of the noble pagans in hell Virgil speaks:

"Askest thou not," resumed the Master good, "What spirits these may be thou dost behold?

Now ere thou go, I wish it understood, Though these sinned not, their merit manifold Doth not, for want of Baptism, signify — The portal of the faith which thou dost hold —

They worship God but through idolatry, Seeing they were to Christian ages prior; And among such as these myself am I."25 Another vivid description of the condition of the lost is found in Canto V:

"And now the notes of woe begin to smite The hollow of mine ear; now am I come Where I am pierced by wailings infinite.

I came into a place of all light dumb, Which bellows like a sea where thunders roll And counter winds contend for masterdom. The infernal hurricane beyond control Sweeps on and on with ravishment malign Whirling and buffering each hapless soul. When by the headlong tempest hurled supine, Here are the shrieks, the moaning, the laments;

Here they blaspheme the puissance divine.²⁶

It is difficult to know whether or not Dante considered hell to be literally as he described it or whether he was deliberately using metaphorical language, but it is easy to see how less poetic souls who read his words would picture hell.

Richard Rolle de Hampole (c. 1290-1349), an English mystic, stated that the torments of hell are unimaginable, but spent one thousand lines of his *Stimulus Conscientiae* trying to describe them. The subject of hell was very popular in this period. Heinrich Suso (c. 1300-1366), the German ascetic, devoted a whole chapter to it in one of his books. The *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, a poem of uncertain authorship, written at the beginning of the fourteenth century, had much to say about hell. It spoke of the body being deformed in proportion to the sin committed, of punishment for sin being unending because the sinner will never repent, and it also spoke of the worm of conscience. Some of the writings of this period were accompanied by the most grotesque pictures which no doubt made a deep impression on the illiterate masses. The *Kalendrier des Bergiers* gave a terrifying description of hell supposedly related by Lazarus.

Chapter 5 || Table of Contents

1. Note: The quotations from the martyrs and Church Fathers are all taken from Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*, unless other references are given.

2. Pusey, *Op. Cit.*, p. 182.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

4. Shedd, *Op. Cit.*, p. 669.

5. *Ibid.* p. 669.

6. Hieron, in *Esai*, xxiv.

7. Augustine, *Confessions*, vi. 16, p. 105 Oxf. Tr.

8. Augustine, *The City of God*, II Trans. by J.H. (London, Griffith Farran Okeken and Welsh, first published in 1610), p. 292.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 303, 304.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 310, 311.

11. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXI, Chapter XXIII.

12. Chrysostom, *Hom. XVI on Matthew 5:22*, p. 241, Oxf. Tr.

13. *Ibid.*, *Hom. XXXI on Romans 16:16*, p. 495.

14. *Ibid.*, *Hom. XI on 1 Corinthians 4:5*, p. 146.

15. *Ibid.*, *Hom. VIII on 1 Thessalonians 4:18*, p. 425.

16. *Ibid.*, *Hom. IX on 1 Corinthians 3:1-2*, p. 115.

17. *Ibid.*, *Hom. VIII on 1 Thessalonians 4:18*, pp. 424-425.

18. Ibid., Hom. VIII on 1 Thessalonians 4:18, p. 418.
19. Ibid., Hom. VI on Php 2:5-8, p. 73.
20. John Damascene, Dialogue Against the Manicheans.
21. S.M. Deutsch, in The New Schaff Herzon Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, X, "Scotus Erigena, Johannes" (Grand Rapids, Baker Book-house, 1950), 306, 307.
22. R. Seeburg, in the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, XI, "Thomas Aquinas," 425.
23. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno" in H.W. Robbins and W.H. Coleman, Western World Literature (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1938), Translation by Melville Best Anderson, p. 339.
24. Ibid., p. 340.
25. Ibid., pp. 340, 341.
26. Ibid., p. 342.

05 Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought

Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (To The Nineteenth Century) The Reformers were not especially interested in the doctrine of eternal punishment. In fact, they were not interested in eschatology in general, except for the doctrine of purgatory. As Quistorp, an authority on the subject says, "The theology of the reformers is not primarily concerned with questions of eschatology."¹ The Reformers accepted the Medieval conceptions of hell, although, as with all doctrine, they returned to an emphasis on the Biblical teaching rather than human speculation. In the period following the Reformation, however, a great interest in the subject continued both in the Roman Catholic and in the Protestant Churches.

Luther's position is not entirely clear. He believed in hell; in fact it was an overwhelming fear of hell which caused his entrance into the monastery, which was one of the most important turning points of his life. However, Luther also made a statement in which he left room for salvation after death. He said, "God forbid that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depth of the Divine mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future."² Those who believe in an opportunity for salvation beyond death make a great deal of this statement. However, it is commonly recognized that Luther was not as clearly a consistent thinker as Calvin, and this statement is evidently a passing hope rather than an integral part of Luther's creed. That this is the case is revealed in such passages of Luther's writing as, "By the doctrine of purgatory they are brought to trust in a false security so that they think they can put in store their salvation and delay things until the day of their death; they try to assume repentance and sorrows and escape purgatory by means of covenants, masses for the soul, and testaments, but doubtless, they will then discover the truth."³ Now to be logical, this same reasoning would hold for a doctrine of salvation beyond death, in fact, the argument would be even stronger than that against the doctrine of purgatory. Quistorp says, speaking of Luther's denial of purgatory, "The special reason which he gives for rejecting it is the character of decision which marks the whole of our present life in time: each hour may be the hour of our death and therefore we must decide for faith here and now and constantly live in the hope of the hereafter."⁴ Quistorp comes to this conclusion: "Both reformers hold fast to a two-fold issue — either acceptance to an eternity of bliss or rejection to eternal damnation, and are opposed to any neutralizing tendency which would dissolve the decisive significance of the gospel and of the faith."⁵ In regard to the intermediate state Luther seems to have held to a position nearly akin to soul sleep. The Jehovah's Witnesses take great delight in quoting him as proof that he held their position at that point. Luther did make statements such as this, "We must accustom and discipline ourselves to despise death in faith and to regard it as a deep, strong, and sweet sleep."⁶ The writings of Calvin contain a number of references to the subject. His view is expressed in the following section from the Institutes:

Moreover, as language cannot describe the severity of the divine vengeance on the reprobate, their pains and torments are figured to us by corporeal things, such as darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth, inextinguishable fire, the ever-gnawing worm (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Mark 9:43; Isaiah 66:24). It is certain that by such modes of expression the Holy Spirit designed to

impress all our senses with dread, as when it is said, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: he has made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it," (Isaiah 30:33). As we thus require to be assisted to conceive the miserable doom of the reprobate, so the consideration on which we ought chiefly to dwell is the fearful consequence of being estranged from all fellowship with God, and not only so, but of feeling that his majesty is adverse to us, while we cannot possibly escape from it. For, first, his indignation is like a raging fire, by whose touch all things are devoured and annihilated. Next, all the creatures are the instruments of his judgment, so that those to whom the Lord will thus publicly manifest his anger will find that heaven, and earth, and sea, all beings, animate and inanimate, are, as it were, inflamed with dire indignation against them, and armed for their destruction. Wherefore, the Apostle made no trivial declaration, when he said that unbelievers shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," (2 Thessalonians 1:9). And whenever the prophets strike terror by means of corporeal figures, although in respect of our dull understanding there is no extravagance in their language, yet they give preludes of the future judgment in the sun and the moon, and the whole fabric of the world. Hence unhappy consciences find no rest, but are vexed and driven about by a dire whirlwind, feeling as if torn by an angry God, pierced through with deadly darts, terrified by his thunderbolts and crushed by the weight of his hand; so that it were easier to plunge into abysses and whirlpools than endure these terrors for a moment. How fearful, then, must it be to be thus beset throughout eternity! On this subject there is a memorable passage in the ninetyeth Psalm: Although God by a mere look scatters all mortals, and brings them to nought, yet as his worshippers are more timid in this world, he urges them the more, that he may stimulate them, while burdened with the cross to press onward until he himself shall be all in all."⁸

Calvin's view can also be gleaned from his comments on those portions of Scripture which deal with eternal punishment. In a lengthy comment on Matthew 3:12, he makes his position clear: "Many persons, I am aware, have entered into ingenious debates about the eternal fire, by which the wicked will be tormented after the judgment. But we may conclude from many passages of Scripture, that it is a metaphorical expression. For, if we must believe that it is real, or what they call material fire, we must also believe that the brimstone and the fan are material, both of them being mentioned in Isaiah, 'For Tophet is ordained of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it' (Isaiah 30:33). We must explain the fire in the same manner as the worm, (Mark 8:44, 46, 48) and if it is universally agreed that the worm is a metaphorical term, we must form the same opinion as to the fire. Let us lay aside the speculations, by which foolish men weary themselves to no purpose, and satisfy ourselves with believing, that these forms of speech denote, in a manner suited to our feeble capacity, a dreadful torment, which no man can now comprehend, and no language can express."⁹

Commenting on Matthew 8:12 Calvin says, "By darkness Scripture points out that dreadful anguish, which can neither be expressed nor conceived in this life."¹⁰ On Matthew 13:42 "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire," he says, "This shall cast them into a furnace of fire," he says, "This is a metaphorical expression; for, as the infinite glory which is laid up for the sons of God so far exceeds all our senses, that we cannot find words to express it, so the punishment which awaits the reprobate is incomprehensible, and is therefore shadowed out according to the measure of our capacity. From ignorance of this, the Sophists have tortured themselves, to no

purpose by fruitless disputes, as we have already hinted on a former occasion."¹¹

Commenting on the phrase "into everlasting fire" in Matthew 25:41, he says, "Under these words, therefore, we ought to represent to our minds the future vengeance of God against the wicked, which, being more grievous than all earthly torments, ought rather to excite horror than a desire to know it. But we must observe the eternity of this fire, as well as of the glory which, a little before, was promised to believers."¹²

Especially enlightening are Calvin's comments on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus found in Luke 16:1-31. He believes this to be the narration of an actual incident, rather than a parable, yet he says, when commenting on the words "And, lifting up his eyes in hell": "Though Christ is relating a history, yet he describes spiritual things under figures, which he knew to be adapted to our senses. Souls have neither fingers nor eyes, and are not liable to thirst, nor do they hold such conversations among themselves as are here described to have taken place between Abraham and the rich man; but our Lord has here drawn a picture, which represents the condition of the life to come according to the measure of our capacity. The general truth conveyed is, that believing souls, when they have left their bodies, lead a joyful and blessed life out of this world, and that for the reprobate there are prepared dreadful torments, which can no more be conceived by our minds than the boundless glory of the heavens. As it is only in a small measure — only so far as we are enlightened by the Spirit of God — that we taste by hope the glory promised to us, which far exceeds all our senses, let it be reckoned enough that the inconceivable vengeance of God, which awaits the ungodly, is communicated to us in an obscure manner, so far as is necessary to strike terror into our minds.

"On these subjects the words of Christ give us slender information, and in a manner which is fitted to restrain curiosity. The wicked are described as fearfully tormented by the misery which they feel; as desiring some relief, but cut off from hope, and thus experiencing a double torment; and as having their anguish increased by being compelled to remember their crimes, and to compare the present blessedness of believers with their own miserable and lost condition. In connection with this a conversation is related, as if persons who have no intercourse with each other were supposed to talk together. When the rich man says, Father Abraham, this expresses an additional torment, that he perceives, when it is too late, that he is cut off from the number of the children of Abraham."¹³

Commenting on "a vast gulf lieth" in verse 26, Calvin says, "These words describe the permanency of the future state, and denote, that the boundaries which separate the reprobate from the elect can never be broken through. And thus we are reminded to return early to the path, while there is yet time, lest we rush headlong into that abyss, from which it will be impossible to rise."¹⁴ On Romans 11:32, "that he may have mercy on all," Calvin says, "Nothing can equal the gross conception of those madmen, who infer from this passage the salvation of the whole human race: Paul simply means, that Jews and Gentiles obtain salvation from no other cause than the mercy of God, that he may leave no ground for any one to complain."¹⁵

1 Corinthians 15:28 says, "That God may be all in all." On this Calvin says, "Others infer from this that the Devil and all the wicked will be saved — as if God would not altogether be better known in the Devil's destruction, than if he were to associate the Devil with himself, and make him one with himself. We see then, how impudently madmen of this sort wrest this statement of Paul for

maintaining their blasphemies."16

We take as a final example from Calvin's Commentaries that on 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "Everlasting destruction from the face . . ." where he says, "He shews, by apposition, what is the nature of the punishment of which he had made mention — destruction without end, and an unending death. The perpetuity of the death is proved from the circumstance, that it has the glory of Christ as its opposite. Now, this is eternal, and has no end. Accordingly, the influence of that death will never cease. From this also the dreadful severity of the punishment may be inferred, inasmuch as it will be great in proportion to the glory and majesty of Christ."17

It would have been well if those who followed Calvin in his orthodoxy had followed him in his sanity of interpretation, particularly in recognizing the metaphorical nature of the language used in the Bible in describing eternal punishment. If they had all done so, there would have been a much less reactionary denial of the doctrine.

Quistorp's conclusion as to Calvin's position on the fate of the ungodly is: "This defeat, however, does not mean annihilation but eternal death. The eternal glorification of God is the whole meaning and purpose of eternal damnation. Calvin's descriptions of the ultimate fate of the godless are only brief in comparison with his account of the eternal salvation of the elect."18 On the Roman Catholic side, the outstanding figure in this period was Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) who founded the Jesuits. Of his famous Spiritual Exercises, the Fifth Exercise is a meditation on hell: "The first part will be to see with the eye of the imagination those great fires, and those souls as it were in bodies of fire. The second to hear with the ears lamentations, howlings, cries, blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against all his Saints. The third, with the sense of smell, to smell smoke, brimstone, refuse, and rottenness. The fourth, to taste with the taste bitter things, as tears, sadness and the worm of conscience. The fifth, to feel with the sense of touch how those fires do touch and burn souls." In this same century, the Confession of Augsburg in 1530, in its Seventeenth Article stated very clearly, "Ungodly men and the devils shall he condemn into endless torments." This confession was prepared by Melancthon, approved by Luther, and signed by the evangelical princes of Germany. In the Church of England, in 1553 Cramner and his fellow Reformers formulated the Forty-Two Articles. The Forty-Second Article stated: "They are also worthy of condemnation (damnatione digni) who endeavor at this time to restore the dangerous (periculosam) opinion that all men, be they never so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pains for their sins a certain time appointed by God's justice." However, in 1563, this article, along with several others, was abolished, thus leaving the question outside the scope of the official doctrine of the Church of England. But, according to Pusey, the reason for this was not that there was a strong opposition to the doctrine of eternal punishment, but, quite the contrary, that it was considered that this heresy was a dead issue. This conclusion comes from the fact that the other articles dropped at this time were those which had been primarily aimed at the Anabaptist heresy, which by 1563 had ceased to be of importance. Whatever the reason, the dropping of this article had profound effect on English theology because it left the door wide open to all sorts of speculations on the subject. During this period, however, the generally accepted doctrine was that of eternal punishment. The non-conformist groups as well as the Church of England preached the doctrine. For example, Henry Smith (c. 1550-1591), a Puritan who was known as the "silver-tongued preacher" whose sermons passed through at least seventeen editions, said in one of them, "All the fires of hell leap upon his heart like a stage, Thought calleth

to Fear; Fear whistleth to Horror, Horror beckoneth to Despair and saith, 'Come and help me torment this sinner.' " The creedal statements of the Reformed Churches were also written during this period and contain several references to the subject. The Belgic Confession written in 1559 by Guido de Bres, in Article XXXVII "Of the Last Judgment" says, "And therefore the consideration of this judgment, is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect: because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labour and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." In the Heidelberg Catechism, written by Olevianus and Ursinus in 1563 we read, "Q. 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished? By no means: but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment, temporally and eternally, as he hath declared, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' "

"Q. 11. Is not God then also merciful? God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore his justice requires that sin, which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment both of body and soul." The Seventeenth Century An indication of prevalent thought in the seventeenth century is revealed to us by the following examples of the works of otherwise unknown writers. A little known preacher named Greenwood published a sermon in 1614 entitled *Tormenting Tophet* giving a description of hell. This sermon was so popular that it reached fourteen editions. In 1620 a book called *Decker's Dream* gave a vivid description of hell. Antonius Rusca made the statement that hell waxes at the center of the earth, that the fire and serpents were material and that the fire produced coldness as well as heat. John Drexel in his book on hell sought to bring to the imagination the idea of eternity. He asked his readers to think of a million to the tenth power number of years, and then he went on to say that this period is a second of time in hell. Among his many other descriptions of eternity was this one: Suppose one flea or ant drinks its fill from the ocean, in time the world would become dry, but eternity would still not be ended. The English bishop, Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), in his *Contemplations on the State of Man*, which some think was a translation of a Jesuit book, gives fifty pages to the description of the sufferings in hell. He himself, however, seemed to waver in his thinking on the subject. He writes, "The pains of the damned are infinitely too fiery to pass lightly upon persons who cannot help themselves, and who, if they were helped with clearer revelations, would have avoided it."¹⁹ "Concerning this doctrine of theirs, so severe and yet so moderate, there is less to be objected than against the supposed fancy of Origen; for it is strange consideration to suppose an eternal torment to those to whom it was never threatened, to those who never heard of Christ . . ." "It is certain that God's mercies are infinite, and it is also certain that the matter of eternal torments cannot be understood; and when the schoolmen go about to reconcile the Divine justice to that severity, and consider why God punishes eternally a temporal sin or a state of evil, they speak variously and uncertainly, and unsatisfyingly."²⁰ It is well to point out that Jeremy Taylor is not here denying the fact of eternal punishment but rather expressing his concern with the problem of special cases such as that of the heathen who have never heard the gospel.²¹ Taylor goes on to speak of the punishments of the wicked in the old traditional tone,

recalling his interpretation of the "second death," and explains it as meaning "a dying to all felicity," a being "miserable for ever." The main English groups of non-conformists were believers in eternal punishment. Christopher Love (1608-1651), a Presbyterian martyr, wrote a treatise in 1651 called *Heaven's Glory, Hell's Terror* (350 pp. 1653), in which he mentioned among other things the idea that the elect will enjoy the spectacle of the torment of the lost. John Bunyan (1628-1688) the famous Baptist allegorist also wrote about hell. In his *Last Remains*, almost thirty-five pages are devoted to the subject. His *Sighs from Hell, or Groans of a Damned Soul* went into twenty editions. Bunyan, in this book, says that the following will go to hell: hunters, dancers, those who paint their faces, those that follow plays and sports, singing drunkards, and such as for fear of rain, or wind are loath to leave their chimney-corner and go to church. An exception among the non-conformists seems to have been Peter Sterry (d. 1672) who had tendencies toward universalism. However, other of his writings seem to contradict this position. He probably had an influence on Maurice who played an important part in the controversies on this subject later in English history. The poetry of John Milton (1608-1674) contains vivid descriptions of hell. For example:

"At once as far as angels ken he views
The dismal situation waste and wild:
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serveal only to discover sight of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades,
Where peace and rest can never dwell,
hope never comes That comes to all;
but torture without end Still rages,
and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed."²²

Whether Milton thought of hell as being literally what he described it to be is an unanswered question, but it is certain that the concept of hell which emphasized its physical aspects was reinforced by Milton's poetry.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691), one of the greatest English theologians and pastors, in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, has two chapters devoted entirely to the misery of those who lose the blessing of everlasting rest. He lists as included in their punishment the following: the loss of a personal perfection of the saints, the loss of God himself, the loss of all delightful affections toward God, and the loss of the blessed society of angels and glorified spirits. He states that this loss will be aggravated by the fact that those who are lost will have their understanding cleared and enlarged, their consciences brought to a true and close application, their affections more lively and their memories strengthened. He mentions as further cause for sorrow the fact that they will lose all those things which they enjoyed in this world.

Baxter then speaks at length of the torments of hell itself. He shares the extreme statements of his age on the subject, saying "The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and when they have there burned through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which is befallen them. Woe to the soul that is thus set up as a butt, for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at; and as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy, and never be consumed."²³ He also shared the strange idea, which is prevalent in the history of thought on the subject, that Satan will be the executioner of the divine wrath. He makes the very interesting statement, "They were wont to think sermons and prayers long; how long then will they think these endless torments."²⁴ He also makes the following thought-provoking statements: "Let me ask once more, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it?"²⁵ "This kind of preaching or writing is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause

is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true I would heartily join with thee against any that fright people without a cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou, that wilt not hear it, and consider it."²⁶ "Preaching heaven and mercy to thee, is entreating thee to seek them and not reject them; and preaching hell, is but to persuade thee to avoid it. If thou wert quite past hope of escaping it, then were it in vain to tell thee of hell; but as long as thou art alive, there is hope of the recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy."²⁷

Francois Fenelon (1651-1715) was an outstanding French mystic. In his *Telemaque*, a book read throughout Europe, he states his conviction that the punishment of hypocrites will be more severe than of those who murder their own mothers. Lewis du Moulin, a professor of history at Oxford, wrote a treatise in 1680 in which he sought to prove that not one in one hundred thousand people is saved.

There were also creedal statements made in the seventeenth century which included articles on the subject. The Westminster Confession, still the official creed of the Presbyterian churches, was written in 1646, and spoke of "others foreordained unto everlasting death." The Larger Catechism, written at the same time, stated that "The punishments of sin in the world to come are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire forever." The Baptist Confession of 1677, adopted by the General Assembly in London in 1689 said that the lost "shall be cast into everlasting torments, and punished with everlasting destruction." The closing years of the seventeenth century, also produced new ideas which were very different from the orthodox positions that had been prevalent in the past. For example, in England Coward taught that man utterly perishes in the grave, but at the last day Christ will raise up the believers again. This position was similar to that of the Psychopannychians against whom Calvin had written a long time before. Many men were engaged on both sides of the resulting controversy. The so-called Cambridge Platonists brought about a revival of Universalism at this time. Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683), one of their leaders, was well acquainted with Peter Sterry, by whom he was probably influenced. Some extracts from Whichcote's *Sermons* (1698) will give some idea of his thinking: "Hell arises out of a man's self. Hell's fuel is the guilt of a man's conscience." "Where there is wisdom and goodness in the assent all punishment is for instruction, reformation, and bettering of the offender, for example to by-standers, not for the revenge upon the party." The Eighteenth Century The eighteenth century witnessed an increasing revolt against the orthodox position. The peculiar doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) contained lengthy descriptions of hell which are a combination of the most weird ideas with some very penetrating thoughts on the subject. According to Swedenborg, "Hell, the same as heaven, is divided into societies."²⁸ "There are three hells."²⁹ Swedenborg believed that the Biblical words Devil, Satan, and Lucifer are actually names for each of the three hells. As to those who inhabit hell, "All who are in hells . . . are from the human race . . . Those who have gone there from the beginning of creation to this time amount to myriads of myriads, and every one of them is a devil in accord with his opposition to the Divine while he lived in the world."³⁰ As to how men get to hell, "He (God) casts no one into hell and is angry with no one."³¹ "Evil in man is hell in him, for it is the same thing whether you say evil or hell . . . He is led into hell, not by the Lord but by himself."³² The faces and bodies of spirits in the life to come will be an exact expression of the inward being. "In general their faces are hideous and void of life like those

of corpses, the faces of some are black, others fiery like torches, others disfigured with pimples, warts, and ulcers; some seem to have no face, but in its stead something hairy or bony, etc."³³

According to Swedenborg, it is misdirected love which is the cause of hell. "These two loves, the love of self and the love of the world rule in the hells and constitute the hells; as love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor rule in the heavens and constitute the heavens."³⁴ Picture to yourself a society of such persons, all of whom love themselves alone."³⁵ Infernal fire is the lust and delight that springs from these two loves as their organs."³⁶ He speaks of the fact that there are restraints on evil in this life, such as that of law and hope of gain, honor and reputation. But in the life to come these are all removed and a man becomes what he really is internally. As to the position of hell in the universe, according to Swedenborg the hells are in the lowest parts of the spiritual world. "The hells are every where, both under the mountains, hills and rocks and under the plains and valleys."³⁷ "In the milder hells there is an appearance of rude huts . . . In some of the hells there are nothing but brothels . . . There are also deserts where all is barren and sandy."³⁸ "In the most remote hells in that quarter are those that had belonged to the Catholic religion, so called, and that had wished to be worshipped as gods."³⁹ "There are likewise hells beneath hells. Some communicate with others by passages and more by exhalations, and this is in exact accordance with the affinities of one kind of one species of evil with others."⁴⁰

Later in the eighteenth century, no less a person than William Law (1686-1761), best known for his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, made the statement that "As for the perfection of all human nature . . . I fully believe it." Joseph Butler (1692-1752), Bishop of Durham, in his famous *Analogy* also expressed some unorthodox ideas. He was not a universalist, but left room for some to obtain salvation in the world to come. The pertinent statement is: "Virtue, to borrow the Christian allusion, is militant here, and various untoward accidents contribute to its being often overborne; but it may combat with greater advantage here after, and prevail completely, and enjoy its consequent rewards in some future states. Neglected as it is, perhaps unknown, perhaps despised and oppressed here, there may be scenes in eternity lasting enough, and in every way adapted to afford it a sufficient sphere of action; and a sufficient sphere for the natural consequences of it to follow in fact . . . And, one might add, that suppose all this advantageous tendency of virtue to become effective amongst one or more orders of vicious creatures in any distant scene or period throughout the universal kingdom of God; this happy effect of virtue would have a tendency, by way of example, and possibly in other ways, to amend those of them who are capable of amendment and being recovered to a just sense of virtue. If our notions of the plan of Providence were enlarged in any sense proportionable to what late discoveries have enlarged our views with respect to the material world, representations of this kind would not appear absurd or extravagant."⁴¹ But the century also had its able advocates of the traditional belief. In 1744, Matthew Horbury wrote his *Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine Concerning the Duration of Future Punishment*. He wrote this as the orthodox answer to the peculiar views of Whiston. Certainly one of the most fervent preachers of the doctrine of hell was the very influential Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). He shared the belief that hell would be a source of happiness to the saints. In fact, he said that the doctrine of election of sinners to eternal damnation was "exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet." In his famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (published in Boston in 1741 and frequently republished) — he tries to get his listeners to imagine being in a great furnace, where the pain is much greater than that experienced when accidentally touching a

coal, to imagine what that would be like for a quarter of an hour, how after one minute how awful it must be to think of fourteen more, to imagine an hour of such suffering, twenty-four hours, one year, 1000 years and after millions and millions of ages to be no nearer to the end. Of Edwards' statements, James Orr says, "There is hardly anything in literature more appalling, for example, than the sermon of Jonathan Edwards on this subject, nor is it easy to explain how so spiritual and gracious a man — one so penetrated by the thought of the love of God — could allow himself to write as he did of the dealings of the Almighty even with the condemned."⁴¹

There are those however who feel Edwards is misunderstood. For example, F. H. Foster says that those who severely criticize Edwards "fail to regard the character and condition of the persons to whom it was preached."⁴² Strong says, "It is sometimes fancied that Jonathan Edwards, when, in his sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,' he represented the sinner as a worm shriveling in the eternal fire, supposed that hell consists mainly of such physical torments. But this is a misinterpretation of Edwards. As he did not fancy heaven essentially to consist in streets of gold or pearly gates, but rather in holiness and communion with Christ, of which these are the symbols, so he did not regard hell as consisting in fire and brimstone, but rather in the unholiness and separation from God of a guilty and accusing conscience, of which the fire and brimstone are symbols. He used the material imagery because he thought that this best answered to the methods of Scripture. He probably went beyond the simplicity of the Scripture statements, and did not sufficiently explain the spiritual meaning of symbols he used; but we are persuaded that he neither understood them literally himself, nor meant them to be so understood by others."⁴³

Edwards' disciple, Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), stated that for every degree of misery the damned feel, the happiness of saints shall be increased millions of millions of degrees. The Roman Catholic Church also produced some very descriptive literature in this era. The book of the Jesuit F. Pinamonti was translated from the Italian. It was a meditation for each day of the week entitled Hell Opened to Christians. It was illustrated with seven vivid woodcuts. It was one of the many books illustrating the demons enjoying their work as torturers. In his written description, Pinamonti goes so far as to analyze the awful odor of hell as a combination of the stench of all the filth on earth plus that of burning brimstone and that of decaying carcasses. Then he refers the reader to Saint Bonaventura for further details.

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06 Post-Reformation Thought

Post-Reformation Thought (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries) The Nineteenth Century The nineteenth century witnessed an increasing rebellion against the doctrine of eternal punishment. As Orr says, in his *Progress of Dogma*, "All this of necessity provoked a reaction. We see already a decided weakening of the doctrine in Arminians like Limborch. Deism and the easy-going theology of the illuminist period, with their lighter views of sin, protested against the orthodox view. Then the stronger intellect and conscience of the nineteenth century took up the opposition. The general enlargement of knowledge, the better acquaintance with other civilizations and religions, reflection on the unnumbered millions of the heathen world who had never heard of Christ, the stronger feeling of the complexity of the problem of responsibility awakened by discussions on heredity, operated in the same direction of fostering doubt and provoking inquiry."¹ The influential German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), was a universalist. In one of his books, he says, "Through the power of Redemption there will result in the future a general restoration of all human souls."² In another book he gives the following reasons for his position: "(a) Christ's words in Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:44, John 5:29, are figurative. (b) The passage in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 teaches that all evil shall be overcome. (c) Misery cannot increase, but must decrease. If it is bodily misery, custom habituates to endurance, and there is less and less suffering instead of more and more. If, on the other hand, it is mental suffering, this is remorse. The damned suffer more remorse in hell than they do upon earth. This proves that they are better men in hell than upon earth. They cannot therefore grow more wretched in hell, but grow less so as they grow more remorseful. (d) The sympathy which the saved have with their former companions, who are in hell, will prevent the happiness of the saved. The world of mankind, and also the whole universe, is so connected that the endless misery of a part will destroy the happiness of the remainder."³ Schleiermacher also objected to the disproportion between the finite offense and the infinite punishment. He felt that if the whole family of God were not restored, it would be a defeat of the divine purpose. The German Mediating School in general questioned eternal punishment and considered a further chance of salvation after death as possible.

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) believed that the capacity of wicked men diminished by a natural law until they might possibly waste away completely at some remote time. Lyman Abbott (1835-1922) a Massachusetts pastor, taught annihilation. The Andover School taught continued probation, at least for those who have not rejected the gospel.

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1849) probably did more than the writings of any theologian of his time to break down belief in the historic doctrine of eternal punishment and to popularize universalism. Some of his lines which apply to the subject are:

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That no one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

Behold, we know not anything;

I can but trust that good shall fall At last — far off — at last, to all, And every winter change to spring. The wish, that of the living whole No life may fail beyond the grave, Derives it not from what we have The likest God within the soul.

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope, And gather dust and chaff, and call To what I feel is Lord of all, And faintly trust the larger hope." At this time there was a great deal of controversy in England revolving around the so-called "Damnatory Clause" in the Athanasian Creed. The clause is Article 43 and reads as follows: "And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire." This is followed by the concluding article, Number 44, "This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." The leaders of the Broad Church movement in the Church of England rejected the traditional doctrine. Richard Whately (1787-1863), Archbishop of Dublin, who was heterodox with regard to other doctrines as well, held to a position of annihilationism or conditional immortality. F. D. Maurice (1805-1872) emphasized the idea that the New Testament word for "eternal" referred to quality rather than duration. As a result of his casting "an atmosphere of doubt about the word 'eternal' " he was expelled from his position in King's College. He himself, however, denied that he had intended to cast such doubt, and denied being a universalist. H.B. Wilson (1803-1888) expressed the hope that infants would grow up after death and that the perverted would be restored. He was brought to court for his larger hope. In considering the case, the Judicial Committee referred to the withdrawal of the Forty-second Article to which we have already referred. The controversy continued sporadically, and when the Episcopal Church in the United States separated from that in England it ratified the Prayer Book in 1789, but in so doing deliberately omitted the Athanasius Creed as a standard of faith. In England, Dr. Hey and Dr. Thomas Arnold fought vigorously against the Damnatory Clause, and the orthodox side was represented by Dr. Lidden and Dr. E.B. Pusey (1800-1882). The latter's book *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment* (1880), is one of the classics in defense of the orthodox position. In reality, however, Pusey practically depopulated hell by stressing the fact that many are saved whom we do not recognize as saved, and that many turn to God in their dying moments without our knowing it. In a sermon *Everlasting Punishment*, preached in Oxford University in 1864, Pusey said, "Gather in one in your mind an assembly of all those men or women from whom whether in history or in fiction your memory most shrinks . . . Conceive the fierce fiery eyes of hate, spite, phrenzied rage, ever fixed on thee, glaring on thee, looking thee through and through with hate . . . "

Frederick William Farrar (1831-1903) replied to Pusey in the book *Eternal Hope*, the most important of his many volumes of sermons, published in 1877, and in the book *Mercy and Judgment* in 1881. Farrar was not a Universalist, but contended that there was room for repentance beyond the grave, and that eventually the majority of men will be saved. He admitted the possibility of some being lost. "I cannot tell whether some souls may not resist God for ever, and therefore may not forever be shut out from His presence, and I believe that to be without God is 'hell'; and that in this sense there is a hell beyond the grave; and that for any soul to fall even for a time into this condition, though it be through its own hardened impenitence and resistance of God's grace, is a very awful and terrible prospect; and that in this sense there may be for some souls an endless hell."⁴ One interesting statement that Farrar made on the subject was, "I would here, and now, and kneeling on my knees, ask that I might die as the beasts that perish, and for ever cease to be, rather than that my worst enemy should endure the Hell described by Tertullian,

or Minutius Felix, or Jonathan Edwards, or Dr. Pusey, or Mr. Furniss or Mr. Moody, or Mr. Spurgeon, for one single year." Actually, this extremely grotesque concept of hell was not held by those on either side of this controversy.

There were also other German theologians besides the disciples of Schleiermacher who denied eternal punishment in this period. Carl Nitzsch taught restorationism. He said, "The thought of an eternal condemnation (Mark 9:44; Matthew 25:41; Matthew 25:46) is so far a necessary one that there can be in eternity no constrained holiness, no happy unholiness. But there is no ground for saying that the truth of God's word of God's kingdom necessitates the existence of beings eternally condemned, or that God perpetuates any personal existence only to deprive it of the possibility of becoming holy and therefore happy."⁵ On the basis of 1 Peter 3:19, which mentions "preaching to the spirits in prison," and Hebrews 11:39-40, "These received not the promises," he says. "There are traces of a capacity in another state of existence for comprehending salvation, and for a change and purification of minds": to which he later adds, "It is the Apostolical view, that for those who were unable in this world to know Christ in his truth and grace, there is a knowledge of the Redeemer in the other state of existence which is never inoperative, but is either judicial or quickening."

Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-1884), a Danish bishop, took a similar view. He states, "The kingdom of the dead is a kingdom of subjectivity, a kingdom of calm thought and self-fathoming, a kingdom of remembrance in the full sense of the word, in such a sense, I mean, that the soul now enters into its own inmost recesses, resorts to that which is the very foundation of life, the true substratum and source of all existence. Hence arises the purgatorial nature of this state . . . they continue spiritually to mould and govern themselves in relation to the new manifestation of the Divine will now first presented to their view."⁶

Richard Rothe (1799-1867) taught that the impenitent wicked would be annihilated, that is, that there was for them an extinction of self consciousness.⁷

Julius Muller (1801-1878) seems somewhat contradictory in his statements. His general position, however, seems to be that he believed in hope beyond the grave, but not in Universalism. He says, "The way of return to God is closed against no one who does not close it against himself; therefore those who have not yet closed it against themselves, in that the means of salvation, the redemption in Christ, has not yet been offered to them, will indisputably hereafter, when beyond the bounds of this earthly life, be placed in a condition to enter upon this way of return to God if they choose. And this of course also refers to those to whom, although belonging to the outer sphere of the Christian Church, the real nature of the Gospel has nevertheless not been presented; indeed we may venture to hope that between death and the judgment of the world many deep misunderstandings, by which numbers were withheld from the appropriation of the truth, will be cleared away."⁸ He also states, however, "The doctrine of an universal restoration is decisively excluded by the declaration of Christ under our consideration respecting the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost."⁹

Isaak August Dorner (1809-1884) in his Christian Doctrine, comes to these conclusions, "We must be content with saying that the ultimate fate of individuals, namely, whether all will attain the blessed goal or not remains veiled in mystery." "There may be those eternally damned, so far as the abuse of freedom continues eternally, but in this case man has passed into another class of

beings."

Frank Delitzsch (1850-1922) did not believe that immortality is inherent in human nature but that it is a future gift of God, yet he considered annihilation as an extreme improbability. He believed in opportunity for salvation for the dead up until the judgment day, but not thereafter.

Samuel Cox (1826-1893), an English Baptist, was one of the leading universalists of the time. His *Salvator Mundi, or Is Christ the Saviour of all Men?* a defense of restorationism, was his best known book. He also wrote *The Larger Hope, a Sequel to Salvator Mundi* (1883). He stated very dogmatically, "While our brethren hold the Redemption of Christ to extend only to the life that now is, and to take effect only on some men, we maintain to the contrary, that it extends to the life to come, and must take effect on all men at the last." In 1877, Cox made this statement: "Few of the more thoughtful and cultivated preachers of the Gospel now hold the doctrine of everlasting torment."

Whether or not this last statement was true we hold to be questionable. John Henry Newman (1801-1896) certainly held that belief. He said in a sermon in 1871, "The poor soul struggles and wrestles in the grasp of the mighty demon which has hold of it and whose every touch is torment. 'Oh, atrocious!' it shrieks in agony."

John Charles Ryle (1816-1900), Bishop of Liverpool, certainly believed in it. He said, "Let others hold their peace about hell if they will — I dare not do so. I see it plainly in Scripture, and I must speak of it. I fear that thousands are on that broad road that leads to it, and I would fain arouse them to a sense of the peril before them. What would you say of the man who saw his neighbor's house in danger of being burned down, and never raise the cry 'Fire'? Call it bad taste, if you like, to speak of hell. Call it charity to make things pleasant and speak smoothly, and soothe men with a constant lullaby of peace. From such notions of taste and charity may I ever be delivered. My notion of charity is to warn men plainly of their danger. My notion of taste is to declare all the counsel of God. If I never spoke of hell, I should think I had kept back something that was profitable, and should look on myself as an accomplice of the devil."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon assuredly believed the doctrine. In a sermon, *The Bridgeless Gulph*, he stated: It is labor in the fire, but no ease, no peace, no sleep, no calm, no quiet; everlasting storm; eternal hurricane; unceasing tempest. In the worst diseases there are some respites . . . there is no peace in hell's torment." He once delivered a sermon entitled *Heaven and Hell* to an audience of twelve thousand persons at Hackney. Some impression of how Spurgeon preached on the subject may be gathered from the following quotations from that sermon: "The second part of my text is heart breaking . . . Here is a dreary task to my soul, because there are gloomy words here."¹⁰ "There are some ministers who never mention anything about hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation, 'If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to that place which it is not polite to mention.' He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words."¹¹ "The angel, binding you hand and foot, holds you one single moment over the mouth of the chasm. He bids you look down — down — down. There is no bottom; and you hear coming up from the abyss, sullen moans, and hollow groans, and screams of tortured ghosts."¹² "Ye are to be cast 'into outer darkness;' ye are to be put in the place where there will be no hope. For, by 'light', in Scripture, we understand 'hope'; and you are to be put 'into outer darkness', where there is no light — no hope."¹³ "They are forever — forever — forever —

lost! On every chain in hell, there is written 'forever.' In the fires, there blaze out the words, 'forever.' "14 In a sermon, God the All-Seeing One, Spurgeon says, "Where hell is, and what its miseries, we know not; except 'through a glass darkly,' we have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown, God has put somewhere, far on the edge of his dominions, a fearful lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."15 "Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments of the lost, without at once becoming mad."16 "Whilst they lie in their chains, they look upward, and they see ever that fearful vision of the Most High; the dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders, and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls, with horrors deeper than despair."17 In another sermon, Woes to Come, Spurgeon says, "You cannot compare the pains of this life with the agonies to be endured hereafter. Could all the misery that ever startled the keepers of our hospitals be conceived, it could not convey the least idea of the pains of the spirits that are doomed to dwell in eternal fire and everlasting burning. The woe, however, will act its terrible part on the soul. The memory aghast — hope and fear, thoughts and imaginations, conscience and judgment, all will be racked, every one be stretched on a bed of fire, every nerve strained to its utmost, every vein made a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on."18 "Many of you are hanging over the mouth of hell by a solitary plank, and that plank is rotten! O think, when you come into the place of torment, what will you say then as you lie in the mighty heat?"19 One can well imagine what an impression such preaching left on the people as well as what a reaction it produced in the minds of others.

Even liberal thinkers at this time believed in a form of hell. Schilder gives as examples James Martineau (1805-1900), in *Types of Ethical Theory*, Theodore Kaftan, R. Seeburg, and Girgensohn. Schilder also quotes Bahels as saying, "Believe me, people, that eternity isn't going to be as easy as you think it is, that eternity is going to be difficult."

New confessional statements were less plentiful in the nineteenth century, but an important one, the Wesleyan Methodist Catechism, states:

"What sort of place is hell? A dark and bottomless pit, full of fire and brimstone.

How will the wicked be punished there? Their bodies will be tormented with fire, and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God.

How long will their torments last? The torments of hell will last for ever and ever." This passage, however, was toned down somewhat in 1925. In the nineteenth century there were those who could not subscribe to any of the major theses regarding the subject of the fate of the wicked after death. For example, E.H. Plumptre (1821-1891), after setting forth what he believed to be the teachings of the New Testament supporting universalism, and also those supporting eternal punishment, says, "I do not attempt to formulate a reconciliation of the two contrasted views which I have endeavored to set forth faithfully, as each of them finding an adequate, or at least an apparent, support in the teaching of the New Testament. We seem landed, as in other questions, God's fore-knowledge and man's free-will, God's predestination and man's responsibility, in the paradox of seemingly contradictory conclusions. I do not say that any such reconciliation is for our faculties and under our conditions of thought possible. We must, it may be, be content to rest in the belief that each presents a partial aspect of the truth which may one day be revealed in its completeness. We may at least tolerate, as the Church of the third and fourth centuries tolerated,

those who hold either to the exclusion of the other. We may endeavor to appropriate to ourselves whatever is profitable in the way of encouragement or warning, of hope or fear, in each."²⁰ One wonders, however, how there can be any real encouragement or any real warning in such a sea of uncertainty as that suggested by such a position. In general, the Roman Catholic Church continued to propagate an extremely physical version of hell. Bishop Challoner in 1843 said, "The very fire that burns there contrary to the natural property of that element is black and darksome and affords no light." "The dismal music with which the poor wretches shall be forever entertained in this melancholy abode which shall be no other than dreadful curses and blasphemies, etc." Father Furniss, whose Books for Children are said to have sold four million copies, gives this description of a child in hell in Book X, "The Sight of Hell": "The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It hurts its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven." He also says, "Little child, if you go to hell there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute for ever and ever without stopping." *The Twentieth Century*

We now turn to our own century. Within the Protestant Church, there are three main groups: those who believe in eternal punishment, those who believe in universalism, and those who hold to annihilationism. These positions will be discussed in subsequent chapters. We conclude our historical study with a summary of the present day Roman Catholic teaching, and that of neo-orthodoxy. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the location of hell is unimportant. Her theologians say that the nature of the punishment is twofold. There is the pain of loss (*poena damni*) and the pain of sense (*poena sensus*). The first is the worst part of the suffering of hell; it consists in the fact that the damned are deprived of the highest good, the vision of God. The second part of the punishment comes from wicked passions, remorse, despair, and external circumstances. The Roman Catholic Church has never defined officially whether or not the fires of hell are literal flames or not, and therefore there is a difference of opinion at that point. The Neo-orthodox are here, as in all other doctrines, paradoxical in their position. In a recent book, "Eternal Hope," Emil Brunner (1889-1966) discusses the subject.²¹ He points out the necessity for a final judgment, else God's relationship to the world would become irrelevant. But Brunner goes on to say: "Yet in the repugnance to the traditional interpretation of judgment, with its antithesis of the blessed and accursed — so familiar to us in medieval art — there comes to expression a highly significant insight even though it be perhaps only by way of dim surmise. This static symmetry picturing the two opposites, apparently in complete conformity with the words of Jesus about a last universal judgment, is somehow essentially false. While the picture-symbol shows inevitably this symmetry, the intention of the words of Jesus is quite different. The picture suggests: there are these two alternatives, the one and the other, the salvation of the blessed, the damnation of the accursed; but the Word of Jesus is a summons calling for a decision, a Word exhorting to penitence and promising grace. In contrast to the plastic representation, the living Word just does not know this symmetry — notice the linguistically unsymmetrical treatment of those on the left hand and those on the right. The fundamental intention of the Word of Jesus is utterly asymmetrical and anti-static. It is a dynamic Word, a Word implying God's movement towards Him. The meaning is not: these are the two realities. Rather it is: come forth from perdition unto salvation."

Brunner goes on to point out that in his opinion the purpose of the Biblical teaching of the final judgment is not to produce a sense of security in the hearts of the impious.

He then says: "It is therefore not surprising that the doctrine of forgiving Grace — the doctrine of justification — finds its crown in a proclamation of universal redemption. God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. 'For it pleased the Father that He, Christ, should reconcile all to Himself through the blood of His Cross, whether it be things on earth or things in heaven.' 'To Him, Christ, has He given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the honor of God the Father.' That is the revealed Will of God and the plan for the world which He discloses, a plan of universal salvation, of gathering all things into Christ. We hear not one word in the Bible of a dual plan, a plan of salvation and its polar opposite. The Will of God has but one point, it is unambiguous and positive. It has one aim, not two."

Brunner then continues by stating that because of the sovereignty of God no one can ultimately resist Him. He considers that the fact of hell would mean an incomplete victory for an omnipotent God, which is to him unthinkable.

Brunner goes on to say: "Thus it is understandable that the aim not to obscure this unmistakable ground-tone of Biblical revelation by any subordinate harmonies leads to the attempt to qualify all affirmations about the last judgment by making the latter an interim affair after which alone that which is truly the ultimate will come. Hence the expressions by which the New Testament emphasizes apparently the finality of the last judgment and of the damnation of the reprobate are so interpreted as to impart to judgment the character of a transitional stage, of a pedagogic cleansing process. Aionios does not mean eternal, but only eschatological; the inextinguishable fire, the worm, that dieth not, the apoleia, the destruction, the second death, etc., all these quite unequivocal expressions in themselves are subjected to such a protracted process of exegetical chemistry that they lose the definiteness of their ultimate character . . .

"What then is our conclusion to be — the word concerning judgment and separation, heaven and hell, or the message of universal redemption? Both aspects remain juxtaposed in their harsh incompatibility. We cannot even assign them to their respective witnesses. They stand in the same epistle, in fact in the very same chapter. And the one, by its very absoluteness, logically excludes the other. Which of them is the ultimately valid point of view?

"Our answer is: both voices are the Word of God. But God's Word — and this we must repeat over and over again to the point of satiety — is a Word of challenge, not of doctrine."

After considering such words we are forced to conclude that here we have what appears to be double talk which, however, lands us in as complete a universalism as any position which ignores judgment completely. Brunner's concept of God's sovereignty evidently destroys the meaning of human decision. Here we have also a clear proof that in spite of his lip service to the Bible, the neo-orthodox theologian is basically subjective in his interpretation. While Brunner appears to be basically a universalist, he severely criticizes Barth for his apparent universalism. He disagrees with Barth's position because he says it would mean that "we cannot speak at all about being lost. There is then no possibility of damnation, and therefore no divine final judgment."²² Brunner considers Barth's position at this point to be absolutely opposed to the teaching of the New

Testament.

Reinhold Niebuhr's (1892-1971) position is at least expressed more simply and is apparently a little closer to the historic position of the Christian faith. A few quotations from his writings will give us some idea of his attitude:²³ "It is unwise for Christians to claim any knowledge of either the furniture of heaven or the temperature of hell." "Literalistic conceptions of the allegedly everlasting fires of hell have frequently discredited the idea of a final judgment." "It is prudent to accept the testimony of the heart, which affirms the fear of judgment."

Karl Barth (1886-1968) is almost impossible to understand at this point. He holds to the universal election of all men in Christ. He believes in the absolute sovereignty of God and seeks to avoid the slightest trace of synergism. He believed that the covenant embraces all, the only difference among men being that all do not yet know of this saving fact. At the same time he refuses to go on to the doctrine of apokatastasis (the reconciliation of all men). How he can hold to the one without the other is impossible to understand. On the one hand he speaks of the answer of unbelief to the gospel message as "fatally dangerous," and on the other hand he speaks of the reality of unbelief as ontologically impossible. According to Barth, we are not to concern ourselves with this paradox, for he says, "To reflect today with unseemly seriousness about the possibility of the eternal damnation of this one and that one, and tomorrow with an equally unseemly cheerfulness about the ultimate reconciliation of one and all is one thing: another (and that is the charge that has been given to the Christian Church) is to regard oneself obliged to witness with Christian word and deed to Jesus Christ as Lord not only but as the Redeemer of the world and, as such, its future."²⁴ This is still not a satisfactory explanation, and once again we are left with the feeling that we are confronted with double-talk, and basically with universalism.²⁵

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) also comes close to universalism. In fact, D.E. Roberts says, speaking of Tillich, "By means of his doctrine of participation, he arrives at a form of universalism."²⁶ Tillich's position will be clarified when the final volume of his Systematic Theology is published.

Another influential thinker of our own day, Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948), an existentialist within Russian Orthodoxy, has much to say on the subject of hell.²⁷ He states that the modern rejection of hell makes life too easy and superficial. On the other hand he feels that belief in hell makes moral life meaningless because all that man does out of fear of hell and not out of the love of God has no religious significance. He says that if hell exists, disinterested love of God is impossible. Therefore belief in hell turns men into hedonists and utilitarians. However, it is easy to deny hell only if men deny freedom and personality. According to Berdayaev, hell is necessary not for the triumph of justice but to prevent forcing men into heaven. On the other hand, for him it is impossible to reconcile the idea that God created the world if he foresaw hell. To admit hell would be to deny God. Hell is subjective, not objective, it means complete self-centeredness, it is a denial of eternity, it seems endless in subjective experience. If the light of God ceases, torment of hell ceases, and there will be return to non-being. Divine light is the source of torments because it is a reminder of man's true calling. Hell is not inflicted by God, but by man himself. The wholeness of personality disappears in hell in consequence of self absorption. The "wicked" create hell for themselves, the "good" for others. Berdyaev believes that the doctrine of eternal punishment is based on gospel texts without consideration for the metaphorical. He thinks that the new Christian consciousness is worried about the gospel words about hell. However, if out of pity we admit the

universal nature of salvation, we must deny human freedom. Freedom demands hell, but rebels against it, this antimony is indissoluble. There is no justice in punishing by eternal torments, since sins are committed in time. "True believers" send "heretics" to hell in accordance with human, not divine justice. Hell is nothing other than complete separation from God. "The horror is to have my fate left in my own hands." "If there is no Christ and no change of heart connected with Christ, hell in one form or another is inevitable." "There was a time when the intimidating idea of hell retained the herd-man within the church; but now this idea can only hinder people from entering the church." Berdyaev's final conclusion: "A higher and maturer consciousness cannot accept the old-fashioned idea of hell; but a light-hearted sentimental optimistic rejection of it is equally untenable. Hell unquestionably exists . . . but it . . . is temporal." Berdyaev's position is therefore: although the way of the sinner is exceedingly hard, the final result is annihilation.

Very recently, the first book on the subject in many years written by a well known author was published. John Sutherland Bonnell is the author, and his book is entitled Heaven and Hell. However, only one chapter deals with hell. In this chapter Bonnell summarizes the three main positions. He describes the doctrine of everlasting punishment in a less favorable light than the other two positions, but his final conclusion is: "Which, then, of these three concepts of the fate of the impenitent shall we accept? Happily, we are not compelled to choose any one of them, for none has the right to demand our exclusive allegiance. In this matter, as in many another, the Christian is entitled to maintain an open mind. There are points of merit and demerit in all three of them. Our wisest course, as we contemplate this awful mystery, is to leave the issue in the hands of a just and merciful God."²⁸ In concluding the historical portion of our study, here is a brief summary of the trends which have manifested themselves down through the centuries with regard to the doctrine under consideration. The Church Fathers held various opinions regarding future punishment, but most of them favored the idea of eternal punishment. The theologians of the Middle Ages were unanimous regarding eternal punishment, and in general presented it in very extreme forms. The Reformers believe in the doctrine, as did both Protestants and Roman Catholics for some time after the Reformation. In the eighteenth century a rebellion against the doctrine started. Caused in part by the extreme forms in which the doctrine was sometimes propagated by its adherents, this rebellion swelled into a mighty revolt in the nineteenth century, a revolt which continues to the present day. At the same time, many continued and still continue to hold the traditional doctrine, although rarely in the grotesque forms in which it was held during the Middle Ages.

Chapter 7 || Table of Contents 1. Orr, Progress of Dogma, p. 347.

2. F. Schleiermacher, Der Christl. Glaube, ii, p. 506.

3. F. Schleiermacher, Glaubenslehre, 163, Anhang.

4. F.W. Farrar, Mercy and Judgment, p. 485.

5. Carl Nitzsch, Christliche Lehre, p. 376.

6. H. Martensen, Christian Dogmatics, p. 460.

7. R. Rothe, Dogmatics, II, ii 46-49, 124-131.

8. Julius Muller, On the Christian Doctrine of Sin, p. 483.

9. Ibid., p. 481.
10. C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons*, I. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan), 309.
11. Ibid., p. 309.
12. Ibid., p. 313.
13. Ibid., p. 314.
14. Ibid., p. 314.
15. Ibid., IV, p. 166.
16. Ibid., p. 166.
17. Ibid., p. 167.
18. Ibid., XIII, 96.
19. Ibid., p. 97.
20. E.H. Plumptre, *The Spirits in Prison* (London, Isbister and Co., 1898).
21. Emil Brunner, *Eternal Hope* (Translated by Harold Knight, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1954).
22. E. Brunner, *Dogmatik*, I, 376.
23. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. II *Human Destiny* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 294.
24. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV 1, p. 129.
25. Note: For a thorough discussion of Barth's position see G.C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, and especially Chapter X, "The Universality of the Triumph" (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).
26. G. W. Kegley, and R.W. Bretall, edit., *The Theology of Paul Tillich* (Macmillan Co., New York, 1952), David E. Roberts "Tillich's Doctrine of Man," p. 129.
27. N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (Charles Scribners' Sons, New York, 1937), p. 338f.
28. J.S. Bonnell, *Heaven and Hell* (Abingdon Press, New York, 1956), p. 40.

07 Denials and Their Answers

Denials and Their Answers In the preceding chapter we have noted several positions which stand in opposition to the doctrine of eternal punishment. Basically they can be summed up under two headings: universalism and annihilation. At this point we shall consider each of these positions and point out the fallacies in the arguments used to support them.

Universalism A simple statement of this doctrine is that those who hold it believe that sooner or later all will be saved. They believe in an opportunity for salvation beyond this life which will eventually be completely successful. It must be acknowledged that there are also those who believe that many or all men will have a chance to be saved in the life to come, but that not all will be saved.

There are several arguments used by the universalists: a. Scripture proof. They hold that certain passages teach universalism. For example, they refer to Acts 3:21, "Whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"; John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"; and Romans 11:32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." But Mackintosh,¹ who obviously desires to avoid the doctrine of eternal punishment if possible, says, "In the logical discussion just noted — Fairbairn is an exception — the question is generally argued as one of NT interpretation. The present writer does not think that hopeful. He sees no ground for challenging the old doctrine on exegetical lines. Words often applied to the universalist hope — apokatastasis, 'restitution of all things,' Acts 3:21 (cf. Matthew 17:11, Acts 1:6) — do not really bear the supposed meaning. One passage teaches probation after death (1 Peter 3:19), but it hardly falls within the limits of this article. Eternal punishment had come to be the doctrine of the synagogue, and it passed into the NT with perhaps even sharper definition, as a witness to the unspeakable evil of sin. True, the doctrine was not rigorously formulated, and it is a question among interpreters whether St. Paul's teaching is eternal punishment or rather a certain type of conditional immortality doctrine. But generally the NT is clear, even the language used by Christ; although we note that what is freshest and most personal is our Lord's words (Luke 12:47-48) goes to modify the dreadful wholesale dogma, and foreshadows, at however remote a time, the ultimate challenging of the letter of this article of the theological creed. Again, as a matter of exegesis, we cannot claim either the Johannine teaching of our Lord (John 12:32), or the culminating point in St. Paul's argument (Romans 11:32) as asserting universal salvation." A telling argument against the use of Acts 3:21 to support the universalists' argument is that just two verses later we read, "And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from the among the people." With regard to John 12:32, as Orr points out, it is not stated what Christ will do with men when he draws them to himself: he may condemn them!

Other passages which are quoted to support universalism are: Ephesians 1:10, "Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens,

and the things upon the earth, in him, I say," and Colossians 1:20, "And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." Hodge answers this: "The question is, who or what are the all, who are to be reconciled unto God? The answer to this question depends upon the nature of the thing spoken of, and to the analogy of Scripture. 'All' cannot mean absolutely 'all things,' the whole universe, including sun, moon, and stars, for how can such inanimate objects be reconciled to God. For the same reason it cannot mean all sensitive creatures, including irrational animals. Nor can it mean all rational creatures, including the holy angels; for they do not need reconciliation. Nor can it mean all fallen rational creatures, for it is specifically taught in Hebrews 2:16 that Christ did not come to redeem fallen angels. Nor can it mean all men, for the Bible teaches in other passages that all men are not reconciled to God; and Scripture cannot contradict Scripture; for that would be for God to contradict Himself. The 'all' intended is the 'all' spoken of in the context; the whole body of the people of God; all the objects of redemption." The passages which are argued in favor of universalism can all be explained fairly in other ways. It is obvious in many passages of Scripture that the word "all" is used in a relative sense; for example, when the wise men came, we read of Herod, "He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Certainly there must have been some people who were indifferent to the situation. The word "all" is surely not used here in the absolute sense. Or again, concerning John the Baptist we read, "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan." Surely we are not to believe that every single individual in this whole territory visited John at the Jordan.

Furthermore, the fact that God will reign over all doesn't necessarily mean that all will be saved. God will have sovereign control over all in hell, both evil spirits and lost men. All active opposition to him will be ended. Furthermore, while there are a few passages which might possibly be interpreted in favor of universalism, there are a great many clear passages which teach eternal damnation.²

Lastly, the universalists have no right to lay strong weight upon proof texts because, almost to a man, they do not believe in the infallibility of Scripture. If they are honest they will admit that their position is based on human reasoning, not on divine revelation. As Shedd says, "Universalism has a slender exegetical basis. The Biblical data are found to be unmanageable, and resort is had to human sentiment and self interest. Its advocates quote sparingly from Scripture. In particular, the words of Christ relating to eschatology are left with little citation or interpretation." "The chief objections to the doctrine of Endless Punishment are not Biblical, but speculative. The great majority of students and exegetes find the tenet in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Davidson,³ the most learned of English rationalistic critics, explicitly acknowledges that 'if a specific sense be attached to words, never-ending misery is enunciated in the Bible. On the presumption that one doctrine is taught, it is the eternity of hell torments. Bad exegesis may attempt to banish it from the New Testament Scriptures, but it is still there, and expositors who wish to get rid of it, as Canon Farrar does, injure the cause they have in view by misrepresentation. It must be allowed that the New Testament record not only makes Christ assert everlasting punishment, but Paul and John. But the question should be looked at from a larger platform than single texts; in the light of God's attributes, and the nature of the soul. The destination of man, and the Creator's infinite goodness, conflicting as they do with everlasting punishment, remove it from the sphere of rational belief. If

provision be not made in revelation for a change of moral character after death, it is made in reason. Philosophical considerations must not be set aside even by Scripture' (Last Things, 133, 136, 151)."⁴ Here we have the clearest admission that the basis of the doctrine is not Scriptural. b. A Just God Would Not Give Infinite Punishment for Finite Sin. This is a very popular argument of the universalist. To this it may be replied: Sin against God is a very serious matter. As Shedd so well explains: "Those who deny the position that sin is an infinite evil forget that the principle, upon which it rests is one of the commonplaces of jurisprudence: the principle, namely, that crime depends upon the object against whom it is committed as well as upon the subject who commits it. The merely subjective reference of an act is not sufficient to determine whether it is a crime. The act may have been the voluntary act of a person, but unless it is also an offence against another person, it is no crime. To strike is a voluntary act; but to strike a post or a stone is not a culpable act. Furthermore, not only crime, but degrees of crime depend upon the objective reference of a personal act. Estimated only by the subjective reference, there can be not only no culpability, but no difference in culpability. Killing a dog is no worse than killing a man, if merely the subject who kills, and not the object killed, is considered. Both alike are voluntary acts, and of one and the same person. If therefore the gravity of the act is to be measured solely by the nature of the person committing it, and not by that of the thing against whom it is committed, killing a dog is as heinous as killing a man.

"Now this principle of jurisprudence is carried into theology by the theologian. The violation of the moral law is sin and guilt, only when viewed objectively in reference to God primarily, and to man secondarily."⁵ In other words, sin is committed against an infinite God, and therefore it is not unreasonable or unjust that its punishment should be infinite. Shedd also says, "The objection that an offense committed in a finite time cannot be an infinite evil, and deserve an infinite suffering implies that crime must be measured by the time that was consumed in its perpetration. But even in human punishment, no reference is had to the length of time occupied in the commission of the offence. Murder is committed in an instant, and theft sometimes requires hours. But the former is the greater crime, and receives the greater punishment."⁶ The fact is that sin can and does have lasting effects. It may permanently harm others, it may permanently affect one's own character, and it may be the seed of further sin which in turn produces still more sin ad infinitum. Individual acts of sin produce habits, habits produce character, and character tends to permanence. As W.E. Orchard points out, "Modern psychology doesn't encourage the optimism of universalist theology. It shows a tendency toward fixity of character. It also reveals the irrepressibility of conscience, and the infallibility of memory thus showing what hell may really be."⁷ As William James says in his famous chapter on Habit, "The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, for good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate

drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work."8 Viewed from the psychological viewpoint, endlessness of punishment is consistent with what has been discovered about the human mind. This fact is further confirmed by Dr. Heman Lincoln who speaks of two great laws of nature which confirm the doctrine of eternal punishment. He says: "The tendency of habit is toward a permanent state. The occasional drinker becomes a confirmed drunkard. One who indulges in oaths passes into a reckless blasphemer. The gambler who has wasted a fortune, and ruined his family, is a slave to the card-table. The Scripture doctrine of retribution is only an extension of this well-known law to the future life." The second law he mentions, is "Organism and environment must be in harmony. Through the vast domain of nature, every plant and tree and reptile and bird and mammal has organs and functions fitted to the climate and atmosphere of its habitat. If a sudden change occurs in climate, from torrid to temperate, or from temperate to arctic; if the atmosphere changes from dry to humid, or from carbonic vapors to pure oxygen, sudden death is certain to overtake the entire fauna and flora of the region affected, unless plastic nature changes the organism to conform to the new environment. The interpreters of the Bible find the same law ordained for the world to come. Surroundings must correspond to character. A soul in love with sin can find no place in a holy heaven. If the environment be holy, the character of the beings assigned to it must be holy also. Nature and Revelation are in perfect accord."9

Universalism must also face the problem of free will at this point. This is a very difficult problem in many respects. But even the strongest Calvinist does not believe that God forces men to be saved. There is an area in which man is free to choose, and if a man persists in his rejection of the gospel in spite of many opportunities, what assurance do we have that he would accept it if he had further opportunity in the world to come? Even such men as Plumptre, as advocate as we have seen of the larger hope, recognize this. He says, "The hindrances to the reception of the theory as true are, to say the least, very serious. It dwells with a passionate eagerness exclusively on the loving purpose of God, and turns its eyes from the terrible, inalienable prerogative of man's freedom, by which that purpose may be, and daily is, frustrated."10

There are those who will argue that there will be punishment in the life to come, but that this punishment will in turn lead men to repentance. But what certainty is there that punishment will have such an effect, especially that it will have such an effect on every single individual? As Plumptre further admits, "All experience shows that if punishment, accepted as the chastisement of a righteous Father, may lead men to repentance, it may also harden them into the sullen resistance of the rebellious slave."11 Thus it is in this life; what assurance is there that it will be any different in the life to come?

Hodge presents a striking argument against the objection that hell is contrary to justice when he says, "If it be inconsistent with the justice of God that men should perish for their sins, then redemption is not a matter of grace, or undeserved mercy. Deliverance from an unjust penalty, is a matter of justice. Nothing, however, is plainer from the teaching of Scripture and nothing is more universally and joyfully acknowledged by all Christians than that the whole plan of redemption, the mission, the incarnation, and the sufferings and death of the Son of God for the salvation of sinners is a wonderful exhibition of the love of God which passes knowledge. But if justice demands that all men should be saved, then salvation is a matter of justice, and then all the songs of gratitude and praise from the redeemed, whether in heaven or on earth, must at once cease."12

c. A Good God Wouldn't Send Men to Hell. We must confess that this argument is touching. It is usually stated in terms such as this: "A good man surely wouldn't punish anyone forever, how can a good God do such a thing?" It was James Stuart Mill who especially popularized this line of reasoning. To this argument it must be replied: But God is not a man! His task is to judge the whole earth. He has the right and the duty to inflict punishments which the individual has no right to inflict, even as all will admit that the state has a right and a duty to punish in ways which the individual has no right to punish. If that is true of the state administered by frail human beings, how much more true it is of God. A human judge who fails to punish the wrong-doer is not a good judge. Furthermore, the argument proves too much. If God's goodness demands that no one suffer for eternity, then that same goodness demands that he do something to prevent all suffering here and now. He obviously permits great suffering in this life; in a way beyond our understanding, this is consistent with his goodness. Future suffering then also can be consistent with his goodness.

One of the most serious arguments against universalism is that it is morally dangerous. As Macintosh points out: "Measured and limited ill-consequence is in no sort of proportion to the infinite evil of wilful wickedness; and the rhetoric of universalism in the minds of those who 'eddy round and round' is the lazy and lying assurance, 'It will come to the same thing in the end.' God cannot brook this. He must needs threaten sin with its wages; and we have no right to affirm that the most awful of all threats is but an empty or ideal possibility."¹³

John Baillie does not accept the position of eternal punishment, yet he says, "But if we decide for universalism, it must be for a form of it which does nothing to decrease the urgency of immediate repentance and which makes no promises to the procrastinating sinner. It is doubtful whether such a form of the doctrine has yet been found."¹⁴

Shedd says, "The French people, at the close of the last century, were a very demoralized and vicious generation, and there was a very general disbelief and denial of the doctrines of the Divine existence, the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and future retribution. And upon a smaller scale, the same fact is continually repeating itself. Any little circle of business men who are known to deny future rewards and punishments are shunned by those who desire safe investments. The recent uncommon energy of opposition to endless punishment, which started about ten years ago in this country, synchronized with great defalcations and breaches of trust, uncommon corruption in mercantile and political life, and great distrust between man and man. Luxury deadens the moral sense, and luxurious populations do not have the fear of God before their eyes. Hence luxurious ages, and luxurious men, racalcitrate at hell, and 'kick against the goads.' No theological tenet is more important than eternal retribution to those modern nations which, like England, Germany, and the United States, are growing rapidly in riches, luxury, and earthly power. Without it they will infallibly go down in that vortex of sensuality and wickedness that swallowed up Babylon and Rome. The bestial and shameless vice of the dissolute rich, that has recently been uncovered in the commercial metropolis of the world, is a powerful argument for the necessity and reality of 'the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.'"¹⁵ As Emory Storr once said, "When hell drops out of religion, justice drops out of politics."¹⁶ In our own generation even in our own nation we have witnessed moral corruption and the denial of eternal punishment go hand in hand. We have had another example in the awful atrocities committed by the Communists in other lands which have followed from their denial of the existence of God and of the punishment

of the sinner.

Another strong argument against universalism is that its denial of eternal punishment is inevitably connected with the denial of other important Christian doctrines. As Shedd says, "None of the evangelical churches have introduced the doctrine of Universalism, in any form of it, into their symbolical books. The denial of endless punishment is usually associated with the denial of those tenets which are logically and closely connected with it: such as original sin, vicarious atonement, and regeneration. Of these, vicarious atonement is the most incompatible of any with universal salvation; because the latter doctrine, as has been observed, implies that suffering for sin is remedial only, while the former implies that it is retributive."¹⁷ The way in which one doctrine is inevitably dependent on another, and how the denial of one easily leads to the denial of another is pointed out by Strong. "But, if there be no eternal punishment, then man's danger was not great enough to require an infinite sacrifice; and we are compelled to give up the doctrine of atonement. If there were no atonement, there was no need that man's Saviour should himself be more than man; and we are compelled to give up the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and with this that of the Trinity. If punishment be not eternal, then God's holiness is but another name for benevolence; all proper foundation for morality is gone, and God's law ceases to inspire reverence and awe. If punishment be not eternal, then the Scripture writers who believed and taught this were fallible men who were not above the prejudices and errors of their times; and we lose all evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible. With this goes the doctrine of miracles; God is identified with nature, and becomes the impersonal God of pantheism."¹⁸ Annihilation (Conditional Immortality) This idea takes various forms, but in general it claims that after a period of punishment those who remain in rebellion cease to exist. The proponents of this theory quote various passages of Scripture which speak of the destruction of the wicked, and the fact that they perish. Among others, this is the official position of the Seventh Day Adventists. As Spicer, one of their writers, says: "The positive teaching of Holy Scripture is that sin and sinners will be blotted out of existence. There will be a clean universe again when the great controversy between Christ and Satan is ended." This is also the position of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their denial of hell is obviously a strong point in winning converts since many people are happy to find an explanation by which they can avoid the doctrine of eternal punishment.¹⁹ As Dr. J.M. Gray says, "its theory of the future life" is "that which chiefly gives 'Millennial Dawnism' its popularity with the natural heart, and constitutes its greatest harm." The Jehovah's Witnesses' position is based on the belief that man is so constituted that he would be unable to suffer eternal punishment, and that Scripture does not teach the existence of such a place of torment. They teach that death means total destruction, that Sheol or Hades should in every instance be translated the grave, and that the fire of Gehenna is an emblem of annihilation. All of their arguments are supposedly based on passages of Scripture, but in reality they are based on their own arbitrary interpretation of these passages, and the exclusion of other passages.

There are several strong arguments against the claim that Bible passages which speak of destruction mean total annihilation. a. The very same words which the annihilationists claim can only mean complete cessation of existence are in fact used in the Scriptures themselves to mean something very different than annihilation. For example, the Hebrew word for perish is "abadh." This is the word which is used in many passages to speak of the fact that the wicked perish, but it is also used in Isaiah 57:1 which states, "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart."

The same word in other instances obviously means lost, and is so translated. For example, "And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. . . . And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them: for they are found" (1 Samuel 9:3; 1 Samuel 9:20). It is obvious that Kish's donkeys were not annihilated.

Another phrase supposedly teaching annihilation is the phrase "cut off." It is a translation of the Hebrew "karath." We read "For evil doers shall be cut off" (Psalms 37:9). And we also read, "And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and will have no one" (Daniel 9:26). Surely the Messiah was not annihilated.

Another example is the word translated "destroy." We read, "All the wicked will he destroy" (Psalms 145:20). But we also read that Job said, "He hath destroyed me on every side" (Job 19:10), and that God said through the prophet Hosea, "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help" (Hosea 13:9). Another example of the fact that the word "destroy" doesn't necessarily mean annihilate is this: "And Pharaoh's servants said unto him . . . Knoweth thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed" (Exodus 10:7)? The proponents of annihilationism also point to the use of the word "consume." "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth" (Psalms 104:35), but the same word is used in Ezekiel 13:1-23 to tell of a wall being consumed by hailstones, and in Ezekiel 35:12 to tell of mountains being consumed by the enemies of Israel. Certainly the material of which this wall and these mountains consisted did not cease to exist. There is also the phrase "was not." Of the wicked, the Psalmist says, "Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea I sought him, but he could not be found" (Psalms 37:36). But the same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 5:24, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

These examples clearly show that the primary argument of the annihilationists, that the Biblical words used must mean annihilation, is completely undermined by the usage of these very words in the Bible itself. Many more instances can be found in J.W. Haley's *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. b. The annihilationist places a great emphasis on the fact that the figure of "fire" is used in the Bible to describe future punishment; and fire, they point out, always destroys. In fact, dramatic preachers of this doctrine have sometimes burned pieces of paper in their pulpits to prove that fire causes that which it attacks to vanish to nothingness. But the fact is that when you burn something it is not annihilated, it simply changes form. It becomes ashes and gaseous matter, but it certainly does not cease to exist. c. The passages cited from the Bible teach that destruction is a serious punishment. But if annihilation follows a period of torment, then that annihilation is not punishment, but a happy relief from punishment. d. With regard to the use of the word "death," a careful study of the Bible clearly shows that "life" as it is often used in the Scriptures means something more than mere existence, and conversely that death means an existence without the possession of this "life." "Life" is existence in a right relationship with God, and death is existence out of that right relationship with God. e. Annihilationism undermines morality just as universalism does. Hastings, himself an annihilationist, protests the doctrine that there will be no resurrection with these words, "The results of that opinion (in France) are a matter of history . . . A mother after her youthful daughter had been associating with a preacher who taught this doctrine, told me how they drew inferences of impunity in sin and security in impenitence which they could mention and act upon, though he might not be affected by them." In other words, often the highly ethical scholars who propound such doctrines are not led into immorality by them, but their less moral listeners find it easier to sin because of them.

We conclude this chapter on the theories opposed to the doctrine of eternal punishment and our answers to them with this significant statement by a Roman Catholic theologian, who, pointing to the fact that many of these theories make room for further opportunity for salvation in the life to come, says "Protestants, who began by rejecting Purgatory . . . (are now) . . . giving up their belief in Hell, and taking refuge in some sort of Purgatory."

Chapter 8 || Table of Contents 1. Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 785 2. See previous chapter on "The Teachings of the New Testament."

3. He refers to Samuel Davidson.

4. Shedd, Op. Cit., p. 714.

5. Ibid., p. 740 6. Ibid., p. 741.

7. Inge and others, Op. Cit., "Hell: A Theological Exposition."

8. W. James, Principles of Psychology (New York, Henry Hold, 1890).

9. In an article on Future Retribution, Examiner, April 2, 1885.

10. Plumptre, Spirits in Prison.

11. Ibid.

12. Hodge, Op. Cit., p. 878.

13. Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 786.

14. John Baillie, And the Life Everlasting (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933, New York), p. 294.

15. Shedd, Op. Cit., p. 745.

16. Shedd, Op. Cit., p. 1055.

17. Shedd, Op. Cit., p. 670.

18. Strong, Op. Cit., p. 1055.

19. See Appendix III.

08 Present-Day Conservative Position

Present-Day Conservative Position As has been pointed out repeatedly, the denial of hell has gone hand in hand with the denial of the infallibility of the Scriptures. It is the desire of the conservative Bible student to accept the whole Bible as the Word of God, and to make it, rather than human reason, the final authority for faith. We have seen in our study that the Bible clearly teaches the fact of eternal punishment. This is our reason for believing in the doctrine. To this solid ground of Scripture may be added the fact, already mentioned, that a theological system without hell is morally dangerous. For these reasons, we ought to stand as defenders of this doctrine without apology.

It is no coincidence that our present age which laughs at the idea of hell is an age of gross immorality. As Sheila Kaye-Smith says, "Every significant religious revival has been accompanied by a quickening sense of the danger and terror of hell."¹ A further argument for the doctrine is set forth by W.R. Inge. "The greatest saints, who knew what the loss would be if God turned his face away from them"² have been the ones who have believed in the fact of hell.

Furthermore some of the greatest sinners have been conscious of the reality of hell. To deny hell is to fail to be realistic, it is to be ignorant of the depths of sin into which many in the human race have fallen. A famed preacher of Wolverhampton, England was called late one night to the bedside of a dying disreputable woman. He had departed from many of the orthodox doctrines, and sought to console the woman with statements of the goodness and kindness of God. The woman seemed dissatisfied and kept saying, "But, Pastor, I want to get in." The minister assured her "God will take you in." "But my sin" replied the poor unfortunate, "I'm a bad woman and I'm afraid I'll go to hell unless I'm forgiven!" The liberal preacher answered, "Don't be foolish woman. There is no hell. God is kind. He'll look after you." The woman asked, "Are you the minister?" "Yes," he answered. "And you say there is no hell." Then she almost shouted, "Aye there is a hell, and my feet are slipping into it now! Can't you help me, Pastor!" In desperation the preacher returned to his old theology of One who died on the cross to save sinners. To the consciousness of many a sinner hell has been very real.

We believe in this doctrine because it is Biblical, it is morally sound, and it is realistic in an obviously sinful and suffering world. At the same time the present day conservative position repudiates the extremes of past ages. The grotesque literalism of the Middle Ages has been one of the greatest factors in driving thinking men away from this doctrine. As Sheila Kay-Smith says, "We cannot put down the loss of Hell's prestige to mere indifference. I should feel inclined to attribute it in the first place to its own exaggerations. Calvin and Wesley made of hell a nightmare . . . Early Christian doctrine of hell was comparatively mild."³ Although our own study of Calvin doesn't bear out this statement, the general idea is sound; extremists have not helped the cause of truth. As James Moffatt says, "The current dislike for the church's doctrine of Hell has a certain justification in crude and one-sided expressions which have excited proper reprobation. They are due largely to a medieval inheritance from the Latin Church."⁴ Herein lies the value of the

historical study of this subject. It shows us one of the reasons for its denial, the reason being that this denial is a reaction against the extreme forms in which the doctrine has often been propagated. We must clearly and boldly proclaim the doctrine of hell, at the same time avoiding this pitfall which will only produce further reaction.

Many of the opponents of the doctrine in the present day are really tilting against windmills. They often fight a form of the doctrine which very few conservatives hold today. Much of their distaste for this truth stems from the fact that the word "hell" brings to their minds physical bodies writhing in literal flames, but this is not the position of most conservatives. As Hodge says, "There seems no more reason for supposing that the fire spoken of in Scripture is to be literal fire, than that the worm that never dies is literally a worm. The devil and his angels who are to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, and whose doom the finally impenitent are to share, have no material bodies to be acted upon by elemental fire."⁵

Dr. Pieters holds a similar position; he says, "Much ingenuity has been expended upon these words of Christ to make them mean something less than they seem to say, but in vain. That the form is that of parables is clear, but the essence of the teaching is also clear. 'The outer darkness,' 'The fire that is not quenched,' 'The worm that does not die,' etc., are symbols, not literal realities, but they are symbols of spiritual realities that are more terrible than their symbols, not less so."⁶

Strong speaks in a similar vein when he says, "In preaching this doctrine, while we grant that the material images used in Scripture to set forth the sufferings of the lost are to be spiritually and not literally interpreted, we should still insist that the misery of the soul which eternally hates God is greater than the physical pains which are used to symbolize it. Although a hard and mechanical statement of the truth may only awaken opposition, a solemn and feeling presentation of it upon proper occasions, and in its due relation to the work of Christ and the offers of the gospel, cannot fail to accomplish God's purpose in preaching, and to be the means of saving some who hear."⁷

Schilder enters into a lengthy discussion of the ways in which the opponents of the orthodox position misunderstand that position at this very point. He says, "Do we still have to tell you that no man who has any reverence for the Scripture understands this literally? Did you think that we Reformed folk did not know that all this gruesomeness, is to be understood not simply symbolically but essentially symbolically? Let's quit denying these words of Scripture a true reality, in the face of those tirades which over-simplify the Reformed views. Really, the truly Reformed man laughs at the caricature presentations of our understanding of this doctrine, as for instance if an ordinary man describes nature and says of a place, 'It's pitch dark here, it's worse than the darkness of hell.' Who takes him literally? For surely truly Reformed have long since broken with the ridiculous and therefore deeply profane and in essence godless declaration of real flames, of real worms, or 'pitchdarkness' and the like."

"Thus, the worm, according to this our conception, becomes the symbol of inner selfconsumption." "And thus the 'fire' becomes the prophecy of anxiety which makes existence unbearable. The worm is the symbol of the dissolving power working from within, and the fire is the illustration of a deadly power coming from without. You have death in you, and you have death on you, that is indeed the awful reality. Naturally we must never forget that being dead in the Bible is something entirely different from not existing."

"Then as we hear of gnashing of teeth we naturally think of self-condemnation and self-loathing, which is therein plastically preconfigured, or when there is mention made of darkness also this word is a figure of standing outside of cosmic life, giving the tormenting certainty that he who sacrificed heaven for the earth has lost both and has seen both drop away from him forever."⁸

Here then is an important point in the present day conservative position; Hell is a reality, but the concepts such as fire mentioned in the Scriptures must be taken symbolically, as symbols of a very real and very serious spiritual fact. The liberal must recognize that he fails to understand our position when he thinks we take these symbols literally. On the other hand, the ultra conservative literalist must be made to understand that we have in no way abandoned the belief in eternal punishment when we advocate such a symbolical interpretation.

Another point at which it ought to be recognized that our position differs from many in the past is that we do not look on the suffering of hell as a cause for joy on the part of the believer. The conservative can sympathize with those who rebelled against the doctrine when it was presented in those terms. It is with great sadness that we realize that many people will spend eternity in hell. The conservative does not exult over the enemies of the Church who will have this as their destiny. He realizes that but for the Grace of God he too would be destined for hell. He agrees with Robert Murray McCheyne who said that a preacher ought never to preach on the subject except with the greatest sadness.

Christians in heaven are not omniscient. They do not necessarily see men in hell. The fact that there is a hell will surely make Christians appreciate God's grace and mercy, but the saved will not rejoice over those in torment. Neither will the inhabitants of heaven be sad; but they will be satisfied with the perfect justice of God. This is one of the points which we now see through a glass darkly, but that is no reason for thinking that it cannot be so.

Another part of our position which helps to make hell understandable to the modern mind is the fact that there will be degrees of punishment there, as well as degrees of blessedness in heaven. The Scriptural basis for this idea is the justice of God, as well as those texts which speak of the final judgment according to works, and specifically the passage where Jesus says, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48). One of the reasons people rebel against the doctrine is that when the word "hell" is mentioned, they conceive of all the lost boiling together in a common fire. But there will be nothing arbitrary about God's judgment, all will be according to his perfect justice. The Bible teaches that there is every reason to believe that the fate of a Hitler on the one hand, and that of a typical American who had sincere humanitarian spirit but who neglected the gospel, will be considerably different, although both will go to hell. The fate of each one will be exactly what he deserves, each man will be for eternity exactly what his conduct on earth has merited. But since all men are sinners, to receive perfect justice will mean to be punished. The only reason the fate of those in heaven will be different is by the intervention of divine grace. When viewed from this perspective, it should be further recognized that God would have been perfectly just with men if he had let all go their own way to their own condemnation. Men ought not to criticize God for sending some to hell, but rather

praise God for lifting some above that fate which they absolutely deserved, and giving them the gift of eternal life. The fact is that the unredeemed man would not enjoy heaven if he got there. We may even say that for the unredeemed to go to heaven would be a more terrible fate than to go to hell. This is illustrated by the dislike even amounting to loathing and hate which many have for the worship and the praise of God and fellowship with his people here in this world. As Shedd says, "That endless punishment is reasonable is proved by the preference of the wicked themselves. The unsubmitive, rebellious, defiant, and impenitent spirit prefers hell to heaven. Milton correctly represents Satan as saying: 'All good to me becomes bane, and in heaven much worse would be my state'; and, also, as declaring that 'it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven.' This agrees with the Scripture representation, that Judas went 'to his own place' (Acts 1:25).

"The lost spirits are not forced into a sphere that is unsuited to them. There is no other abode in the universe which they would prefer to that to which they are assigned, because the only other abode is heaven. The meekness, lowliness, sweet submission to God, and love to him, that characterize heaven, are more hateful to Lucifer and his angels, than even the sufferings of hell. The wicked would be no happier in heaven than in hell. The burden and anguish of a guilty conscience, says South, is so insupportable, that some 'have done violence to their own lives, and so have fled to hell as a sanctuary, and chose damnation as a release.' This is illustrated by facts in human life. The thoroughly vicious and ungodly man prefers the license and freedom to sin which he finds in the haunts of vice, to the restraints and purity of Christian society. There is hunger, disease and wretchedness, in one circle; and there is plenty, health, and happiness in the other. But he prefers the former. He would rather be in the gambling-house and brothel than in the Christian home."⁹

One further difference between our modern position and that which the Church held centuries ago is with regard to the locality of hell, and heaven too, for that matter. Those who based their doctrine on an overly literalistic interpretation of Scripture were shaken when astronomers discovered the facts concerning the shape of the earth, its motion, and its place in the universe. The fact that the directions up and down are not as simple as men once thought need not in the least disturb our conception of heaven and hell. There is still a moral and spiritual "up" and a moral and spiritual "down." There is still a heaven and a hell although we do not know their precise physical location in God's great universe. The doctrine of eternal punishment is Biblical, therefore we proclaim it unashamed. Our only apology is for the misconceptions which the Church has sometimes helped to create in the past. Remove the grotesque figures, and the spirit of exultation that some have had concerning the doctrine, recognize that there will be degrees of punishment and that men will be in hell exactly what they have made of themselves, then only those who deliberately reject truth can rebel against the doctrine.

One final word with regard to the preaching of this doctrine. It must be preached, for it is our duty to proclaim the whole counsel of God. But it need not surprise us that its preaching is not as effective as in the days of Jonathan Edwards. We cannot turn back the clock, we live in a different world than that of Jonathan Edwards. In general, the attitudes of men being what they are today, most ungodly men remain unshaken by threats of hell. We temper this statement by reminding ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit to use God's Word. We should also recognize that the effectiveness of preaching this doctrine will depend partly on the background of our audience. At this point it is interesting to note what Billy Graham says, "I am conscious of the fact that the

subject of hell is not a very pleasant one. It is very unpopular, controversial, and misunderstood. In my campaigns across the country, however, I usually devote one evening to the discussion of this subject."¹⁰ This doctrine must be preached with prayer that it will awaken the unconverted, but perhaps its preaching will be more effective in another way; that is, as a means to awaken God's people to the urgency of evangelistic and missionary endeavors. In general, the modern evangelical church has been all too silent on the subject. We ought more often to hold before our people the terrible fact that many all around us are slipping into eternal condemnation, and impress upon them their duty as Christians to do all in their power to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Those who are not saved now in the few years we have to work with them will be lost forever, they will spend eternity in hell, separated from God, as His Word so plainly teaches. Therefore, Ye Christian Heralds, go proclaim Salvation through Emmanuel's Name; To distant climes the tidings bear, And plant the Rose of Sharon there.

Appendix 1 || Table of Contents 1. Inge and others, Op. Cit., Eternal Hell, p. 104.

2. Ibid., What We Mean By Hell, p. 14.

3. Ibid., "Eternal Hell," p. 105.

4. Ibid.

5. Hodge, Op. Cit., III, 868.

6. A. Pieters, The Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1946), pp. 55, 56.

7. Strong, Op. Cit., p. 1056.

8. Schilder, Op. Cit.

9. Shedd, Op. Cit., pp. 741, 742.

10. Graham, Peace With God (Doubleday and Co., Inc. Garden City, New York, 1953), p. 73.

09 Infant Salvation or Damnation

Infant Salvation or Damnation The special case of those who die in infancy is worthy of our careful consideration. There are no passages of Scripture which deal specifically with the subject. In the earliest days of the church, there is no evidence that the question was discussed. Augustine, however, clearly taught the damnation of infants. He spoke of their sufferings though eternal, as being of the mildest character. Later a special annex to hell, the Limbus Infantum, was assigned to them by the theologians. The Council of Trent refused to commit itself on the subject. Since then, some Catholic theologians follow Peter Lombard in saying that those dying in infancy are punished for original sin, while others, like Cardinal Celestino Sfondrati, say they enjoy as much happiness as their limited capacity permits. Perrone held that they suffer only the lack of the beatific vision.

Turning to the Protestant Church, we find that Zwingli denied the necessity of baptism for infant salvation, and taught that all who die in infancy are elect, and therefore saved.

Calvin said, "As to infants, they seem to perish, not by their own fault, but by the fault of another. But there is a double solution. Though sin does not yet appear in them, yet it is latent; for they bear corruption shut up in the soul, so that before God they are damnable." "That infants who are to be saved (as, certainly, out of that age some are saved) must be previously regenerated by the Lord is clear."¹ He seems to be teaching here by implication that some but not all infants are saved. The Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619) state, "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his word (which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with their parents, are comprehended), godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy."² Here we note that no assurance is given to ungodly parents. The Westminster Confession (1648) contains the following pertinent statements: "The grace promised (in baptism) is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infant) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."³ "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth."⁴ In 1903, however, this last phrase was supplemented by the Presbyterians in America with the following statement: "It is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how he pleases."

Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990) says, "Most Calvinistic theologians have held that those who die in infancy are saved. The Scriptures seem to teach plainly enough that the children of believers are saved; but they are silent or practically so in regard to those of the heathens. The Westminster Confession does not pass judgment on the children of heathens who die before coming to years of accountability. Where the Scriptures are silent, the Confession, too, preserves silence. Our outstanding theologians, however, mindful of the fact that God's tender mercies are over all his works, and depending on his mercy widened as broadly as possible, have entertained a charitable

hope that since these infants have never committed any actual sin themselves, their inherited sin would be pardoned and they would be saved on wholly evangelical principles.

"Such, for instance, was the position held by Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, and B.B. Warfield."⁵

Arminians hold to salvation of all infants, while Lutherans and others who teach baptismal regeneration, when logical, teach that the unbaptized are lost. The position of at least some within the Church of England is expressed by John Henry Blunt, a High-churchman, "It can hardly, I think, be doubted, that they do sustain a loss, of whatever kind. In the Institutions of a Christian Man, the Church of England declares, 'Insomuch as infants and children dying in their infancy shall undoubtedly be saved thereby (i.e., by baptism), else not.' In the last revision of the Prayer-book is read, 'It is certain by God's word that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved': in other words we are certain of the future happiness of the baptized, but have no assurance of the salvation of the unbaptized infant. The question must thus be left in obscurity, as we have no sufficient warrant to go beyond the cautious statement of our Church."⁶ The popular attitude toward the subject is expressed by Daniel Poling in a recent magazine article. To the question: "Is there anything in the Bible that directly states that babies, with or without baptism, will be saved?" he answers, "Of course they will be saved. If they are not saved, I don't want to be! And of course I want to be. In 2 Samuel 12:23, David said that he would go to his infant child who had died. Also it was evident that he expected to know his child. Read Matthew 18:10 for the words of Jesus and also what He said about the Kingdom of Heaven and a little child in Matthew 19:14."⁷ The subject is certainly a perplexing one. Where Scripture is silent we hope for the best. We can be sure that the children of God's people certainly will be saved, whether or not there has been opportunity for baptism. As to the children of unbelievers, we cannot be certain. Of this we can be sure, God will not punish them unjustly, but whether or not they will experience the joy of heaven, we cannot say with certainty. There is something unrealistic about universal infant salvation. It means that Herod, who killed the infants of Bethlehem was their great benefactor; on the other hand, it would seem to indicate that medical missionaries who save the lives of the children of the heathen are thus increasing their chances of going to hell. We stand confronted by a mystery which we must leave in the hands of our loving heavenly Father, who is far wiser than we are.

Appendix 2 || Table of Contents 1. Calvin, Institutes, iv, xvi, 17.

2. First Head of Doctrine, art. xvii.

3. xxxviii. 6

4. x. 3.

5. L. Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1941), p. 143.

6. Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology (London, 1870), p. 346, note 1.

7. The Christian Herald, May 1955, p. 4.

10 The Heathen Who Have Not Heard The Gospel

The Heathen Who Have Not Heard The Gospel

Another problem which requires special consideration is the fate of the heathen who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel. The claim that it would be unfair that such should go to hell is one of the strongest pleas of the universalists and especially of those who claim that there is opportunity for salvation beyond the grave. With regard to this problem, there are certain Scripture passages which are pertinent. Especially noteworthy are Romans 2:12, "As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law;" and Romans 10:13-14, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" These passages certainly seem to imply that those who have never heard the gospel are lost. The Westminster Confession makes this statement on the subject: "Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess."¹

Boettner says, "The Christian Church has been practically of one mind in declaring that the heathens as a class are lost."² After quoting the above Scripture passages and several others, he adds, "The Scriptures, then, are plain in declaring that under ordinary conditions those who have not Christ and the Gospel are lost."³ Our conclusions with regard to this question inevitably affect our missionary zeal. As one studies the lives of men like Hudson Taylor and David Brainerd it is obvious that they were driven forward by a deep conviction that the heathen who did not hear and accept the gospel message were utterly lost. If they had not had this conviction their work and the great inspiration produced by their work on each succeeding generation would have been lost. To the degree that we share their conviction we too will be zealous for missions, and to the degree that our conviction at this point is weakened, to that degree our missionary zeal will evaporate. As Boettner points out, "In fact the belief that the heathens without the Gospel are lost has been one of the strongest arguments in favor of foreign missions. If we believe that their own religions contain enough light and truth to save them, the importance of preaching the Gospel to them is greatly lessened. Our attitude toward foreign missions is determined pretty largely by the answer which we give this question."⁴ The unwillingness of many to believe that the heathen are really lost is based largely on the crude conception of hell which we attacked in our final chapter. If we have a conception (as many of the opponents and some of the advocates of the doctrine have) that all men who are lost will roast for eternity in a sort of common frying pan, we might well question how it is possible that those who have never had an opportunity will yet end up in such a condition. But as we have pointed out, the modern evangelical position need not be, and is not such a conception. Hell will be the natural and penal consequence of each man's sinful life on earth (and all are sinners according to God's Word), whether he has heard the gospel or not. The man who has not heard the gospel will not have committed the sin of rejecting it, and therefore his condition will not be nearly as terrible as the man who has heard. As the Word of God says, "And

that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48). But though their fate will not be as serious as the man who heard and rejected, still it will be a condition of eternal lostness. Let us then catch the missionary zeal of the pioneer missionaries who, believing the heathen were lost, dedicated themselves completely that they might proclaim to them the gospel which alone has the power to save.

Appendix III || Table of Contents

1. x, 4.
2. Boettner, Op. Cit., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 119.
4. Ibid., p. 119.

11 Denial By The Cults

Denial By The Cults

One of the common characteristics of the modern cults is their denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment. This is obviously one of the reasons for their popular appeal. Their success is a witness to the dislike of this doctrine on the part of the natural man. Since in the main section of our study we have limited ourselves to beliefs within the main stream of the Christian Church, we here briefly present the viewpoints of the modern cults.

1. Christian Science. There is no hell in the traditional sense. Rather hell is "mortal belief; error; lust; remorse; hatred; revenge; sin, sickness, death, suffering, and self-imposed agony, effects of sin, that which worketh abomination or maketh a lie."¹ There is no such thing as annihilation, but at death, man passes to another plane of existence where there is further opportunity to overcome erroneous thinking, and thus attain salvation.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses. In his early youth Charles Taze Russell was nurtured in the Presbyterian Church. The traditional belief in hell was one reason why he turned against historic Christianity. He became a skeptic, but was later deeply influenced by Seventh-Day Adventism, from which he borrowed the doctrines of soul sleep and the annihilation of the wicked. Russell spoke very strongly against what he called "the nightmare of eternal torture."

Russell's successor, Joseph Franklin Rutherford, was equally vehement in his opposition to hell. "It was written of him that he went to hell. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell' (Psalms 16:10). If hell is a place of endless torment and Jesus went there, he could not have been released. The fact that he did not remain in hell is proof conclusive that hell is not a place of eternal torment."² "Eternal torture is void of the principle of love. 'God is love.' A Creator that would torture his creatures eternally would be a fiend, and not a God of love."³

3. Mormonism. Mormons believe in hell, but they do not believe that it is everlasting. Braden, who has made a careful study of the cults, says, "Mormonism believes that salvation is universal and that there is still a chance beyond the grave To the many who have died, having deliberately refused to accept the gospel, must be added innumerable others who died never having heard the gospel. What provision is there for them? The former are not to be punished 'beyond the time requisite to work the needed reformation and to vindicate justice, for which ends alone punishment is imposed.' And it would be blasphemous, Talmadge asserts, to believe that God would condemn a soul under any law not known to him. It becomes plain, then that the gospel must be preached in the spirit world where these dead dwell."⁴

4. New Thought. Hell is "the torment of experiencing that which contradicts the truth."⁵ Says Braden, "What is perfectly clear is that the older stress upon another worldly heaven and hell of eternal reward or punishment is rejected and this is a pleasing thought to many who grew up under the older orthodoxy, but no longer find it possible to believe it, for many reasons."⁶

5. Spiritualism. Braden says, "The Spiritualists completely repudiate the traditional concepts of heaven and hell, and of course all idea of 'everlasting' punishment or reward. In the literature there is frequent report of the surprise of those who have recently passed over at not finding themselves in heaven or hell. Yet there is something approximating the idea of both heaven and hell of a temporary nature. The lower spheres to which those of evil character and a low state of development go at death constitute a sort of purgatory, at least, where they must remain until they have developed to a higher degree. If not punitive it is at least purgative, and the soul remains at this level until it merits promotion to a higher sphere."⁷ The following statements from outstanding spokesmen for Spiritualism give us further understanding of their position.

A. Conan Doyle says, "Hell, I may say, drops out altogether, as it has long dropped out of the thoughts of every reasonable man. This odious conception, so blasphemous in its view of the Creator, arose from the exaggeration of Oriental phrases, and may perhaps have been of service in a coarse age when men were frightened by fires, as wild beasts are scared by the travelers. Hell as a permanent place does not exist. But the idea of punishment, of purifying chastisement, in fact of Purgatory, is justified by the reports from the other side."⁸

Colville says, "It (the ancient Egyptian view of trans-migration) is immeasurably superior to any view of endless useless torment such as many benighted Christian theologians have proclaimed — a conception for which there is neither rational explanation nor apology."⁹

Sir Oliver Lodge says, "There is nothing that can properly be called Hell in the medieval sense of eternal hopelessness; but yet Hell is very truth in so far as they suffer the pangs of remorse when their rebellious spirit is broken, and when in their felt poverty of soul they begin to long to return to the Father."¹⁰

6. Theosophy. This cult also denies eternal punishment. Annie Besant, one of the leaders of the movement, says, "If this (Luke 13:23-24) be applied in the ordinary protestant way to salvation from everlasting hell-fire, the statement becomes incredible, shocking. No Savior of the world can be supposed to assert that many will seek to avoid hell and enter heaven, but will not be able to do so. But as applied to the narrow gateway of Initiation and to salvation from rebirth, it is perfectly true and natural."¹¹

Leadbeater, another leader of the movement, says that the astral life "corresponds to what Christians (Catholic) call purgatory; the lower mental life, which is always entirely happy, is what is called heaven" . . . Hell is "only a figment of the theological imagination."¹²

7. Unity. Speaking of Fillmore, the founder of Unity, Braden says, "Nowhere that the writer has discovered, does he enlarge extensively on the idea of heaven, and it will be noted that here only by silent inference is there any reference to any opposite state, corresponding to the distressing dreams of the anxious, troubled sleeper."¹³ Speaking of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Fillmore himself says, "The material avenues are lost to the outer, and the soul finds itself in a hell of desires without the flesh sensations with which to express itself . . . the body consciousness, the peace of union for all the attributes of man, has been removed, producing in the life consciousness a great gulf or chasm that cannot be crossed, except by incarnation in another body."¹⁴ Unity's official "creed" says, "We believe that the dissolution of spirit, soul and body, caused by death, is annulled by rebirth of the same spirit and soul in another body here on earth. We believe the

repeated incarnations of man to be a merciful provision of our loving Father to the end that all may have opportunity to attain immortality through regeneration, as did Jesus."15

Thus we see that the cults, in one way or another, deny the doctrine of eternal punishment. Could it be that if all who held the orthodox position had been more careful in their statement of the doctrine, avoiding the excesses which we have noted to have been all too prevalent in past ages, then some of these cults would never have arisen? Certainly if all who propounded the doctrine had not gone beyond a sane interpretation of the Scripture many who have done so would not have turned from orthodox Christianity to the cults.

Table of Contents 1. M.B. Eddy, Science and Health, 588; 1-4.

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3. Rutherford, World Distress, p. 40.

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8. A.C. Doyle, The New Revelation, p. 68.

9. Colville, Universal Spiritualism, p. 82.

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11. A. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, p. 42.

12. Leadbeater, Textbook of Theosophy, p. 64.

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14. Fillmore, Talks on Truth, p. 156-157.

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