

Staying Sharp on the Doctrine of Eternal Destiny

Gregory C. Strand
Director of Biblical Theology and
Credentialing
Allegheny District
February 16-17, 2012



-
- I. Introduction – Contemporary Issues
 - II. Biblical
 - III. Historical
 - IV. EFCA
 - V. Exegetical
 - VI. Theological
 - VII. Pastoral

2




I. Introduction



CONTEMPORARY SCENE

4





Jeffrey L. Sheler, “Hell’ s Sober Comeback,”
U. S. News & World Report, March 25,
1991, 56-63.

- ▣ 60% believed in some sort of hell.
- ▣ 4% believed they might go there.



5




George Barna, “Americans Describe Their
Views About Life After Death,” Barna
Group, October 21, 2003

[http://www.barna.org/barna-update/
article/5-barna-update/128-americans-
describe-their-views-about-life-after-
death?q=heaven+hell](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/128-americans-describe-their-views-about-life-after-death?q=heaven+hell)

K. Connie Kang, “Next Stop, the Pearly
Gates . . . Or Hell?” *Los Angeles Times*,
October 24, 2003.



6

- 
-
- ▣ 76% believed in a heaven.
 - ▣ 71% believed in a hell.
 - ▣ ½ of 1% believe they may go there, i.e.
less than 1 out of 100.



7



Though polls are challenging to analyze,
they do tell us something:

- ▣ More Americans believed in hell in 2003
than they did in 1991.
- ▣ Fewer Americans believed they might go
there.

(These references and figures from Morgan
and Peterson, *What is Hell?* (P & R, 2010)



8

“The bow of God’s wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligations at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.”

Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the hands of an angry God,” sermon preached in Enfield, Connecticut, 8 July 1741.



9

“What bothered me was the realization that this was a sermon I would never be game to preach – even allowing for some cultural transposition and differences in communication style. And it occurred to me that the reason for this was not high-minded and theological but very carnal. I am more frightened of being thought of as a redneck ‘fire and brimstone’ preacher than I am of God’s awful wrath. I care more about the high opinion of others than their eternal damnation in the fires of hell.”

Tony Payne, “A bit afraid of hell,” *the eBriefing* 381 (June 2010), 3.



10

Don Piper, *90 Minutes in Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004).
Bill Wiese, *23 Minutes In Hell: One Man’s Story About What He Saw, Heard, and Felt in that Place of Torment* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2006).
Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die* (Chicago: Moody 2007).
Don Piper, *Daily Devotions Inspired by 90 Minutes in Heaven: 90 Readings for Hope and Healing* (Berkeley Trade, 2009).
Todd Burpo, *Heaven Is For Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).
Kevin Malarkey, *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven: A Remarkable Account of Miracles, Angels, and Life beyond This World* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2010).

On the one hand, there are those who go beyond what the Bible teaches about heaven. On the other hand, there are those who are denying the reality of hell as eternal conscious punishment.



11

Skye Jethani, “Hello, Rob Bell, an interview,” *Out of Ur* (February 8, 2012):

http://www.outofur.com/archives/2012/02/hello_rob_bell.html



12

You've obviously gotten a lot of attention for your thoughts about eschatology in the last year. How does one's vision of the future impact their work in the present?

13



The gospel is an embodied announcement about this world: it is good, and we're home, and the word took on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. Heaven and earth are, in fact, coming together. We're home. Soil is good, and so is wine, and sex, and music, and muscle, and arranging things, and building things, and getting hungry people the food they need, and jobs that empower people to make better lives for themselves.

What you believe about where the story is headed deeply impacts how you live now and what you believe matters, now. We're not trying to help people evacuate. That's a denial of the gospel truth that Jesus is reclaiming everything.

14



Amy Sherman, in her recent book *Kingdom Calling*, argues that popular eschatology has eroded the Christian understanding of vocation. She writes, "If we (mistakenly) believe that at the end, the earth will be completely destroyed and that just our souls will live on forever, it's a bit hard to imaging being passionate for such things as environmental stewardship or cultural reformation.... If it's all going to be burned up, isn't our labor here on earth in vain?" How do you respond to Christians holding this view?

15



The truth is, people who hold these escapist views usually throw crap parties, because they're essentially waiting for things to end so they can go somewhere else. Jesus shows up at the party, turns water into wine, and then essentially says "Oh we are just getting started..."

16



Mark Galli, *God Wins: Heaven, Hell, and Why the Good News Is Better than Love Wins* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2011).

Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle, *Erasing Hell: What God said about eternity, and the things we made up* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2011).

The authors of these books lean towards annihilationism, not eternal conscious punishment, claiming that the biblical witness leaves us with “agnosticism.”

Here is the excerpt from Mark Galli’s interview with his questions (**bold**) followed by Francis Chan’s responses:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/julyweb-only/francis-chan-hell.html>

17



In your book you seem agnostic as to whether hell is a conscious eternal torment or annihilation.

That was one of the things I was a little surprised by: the language. I would definitely have to say that if I leaned a certain direction I would lean toward the conscious torment that’s eternal. But I couldn’t say I’m sure of that, because there are some passages that really seem to emphasize a destruction. And then I look in history and find that’s not really a strange view. There are some good, godly men—and maybe even the majority—that seem to take the annihilation view. I was surprised because all I was brought up with was conscious torment. And I see that. I see that in Scripture and I would lean more that way but, I’m not ready to say okay I know it’s this one. So say here “Here are a couple of views.” I don’t even remember if I wrote that I lean towards that, but maybe it comes across.

I’m still open. And I hope that’s because of my study and not because I’d rather have the annihilation view. I don’t know what was harder, researching or keeping a check on my heart and making sure there are no weird, ungodly motives in everything I wrote.



I hadn't thought about it that much, but I probably leaned toward annihilationism and probably still do. But I read Randy Alcorn's book on heaven again and he made such a strong case for eternal conscious punishment I had to revise one chapter to give that view stronger resonance. In the end, I'm with you: I'm agnostic. I probably lean toward annihilationism, but I'm open to hearing a good argument from either side.

19



There is a bit of a push in this direction among some evangelicals, as it is a “benevolent impulse” of the heart. But it undermines the nature of God and what He has revealed of Himself in the Bible. Additionally, it is rooted in a mistaken notion of what the term “destruction” means in the Bible.

Cf. Stan Guthrie, “How to Talk About Hell: And why we must,” *Books & Culture: A Christian Review* 18/1 (January/February 2012), 18. Regarding these two works, and this interview in particular, Guthrie writes, and I agree,

However, I find the authors’ discussion of the possibility of annihilation – largely based on the biblical word for *destruction* – to be unconvincing. Destruction need not imply nonexistence. After all, a wrecking ball can destroy a building – leaving a large pile of rubble where the structure once stood – without vaporizing it. Couldn’t God also destroy sinners without making them disappear?



In a footnote Guthrie concludes,

Galli and Chan both express a “leaning” toward belief in annihilation rather than conscious eternal punishment while agreeing that the biblical witness leaves us with “agnosticism” on this point.



21

Doug Moo (“Paul on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 104-105, 108), helpfully explains the Pauline notion of “destruction”:

But what is the nature of the judgment that they suffer? . . . The words need not mean “destruction” in the sense of “extinction.” In fact, leaving aside for the moment judgment texts, none of the key terms usually has this meaning in the old and New Testaments. Rather, they usually refer to the situation of a person or object that has lost the essence of its nature or function. . . . In other words, these key terms appear to be used in general much like we use the word “destroy” in the sentence, “The tornado destroyed the house.” The component parts of that house did not cease to exist, but the entity “house,” a structure that provides shelter for human beings, ceased to exist.

We conclude that annihilationism finds no clear support in the teaching of Paul and that, indeed, the language of 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 (not to mention other passages) tends to undercut the notion. The wicked, Paul suggests, do not simply cease to exist; they undergo “eternal ruin,” punishment, and exclusion from God’s presence as long as the new age shall last.



22

Al Mohler notes there are “Interrelated cultural, theological, and philosophical changes that explain the contemporary answer to the question, What happened to evangelical convictions about hell?” (Mohler, “Modern Theology: The Disappearance of Hell,” *Hell Under Fire*)



23

The first issues is a changed view of God.
A second issue is a changed view of justice.
A third shift in the larger culture concerns the advent of psychological worldview.
A fourth shift concerns the concept of salvation.

Essentially, our concept of God and the gospel are at stake. What could be more important? . . . Hell may be denied, but it will not disappear.



24

The contemporary person's question: Would a loving God really send good people to hell?

Paul's perpetual and universal question: How could a just and holy God ever declare guilty sinners to be righteousness in his sight?



25

The first question is distorted in three ways: First, God is defined only in terms of love. God is not less than loving; he is more than loving. He is also holy, just and good. His wrath toward sin is just and is a proper display of his holiness and goodness.

The second distortion is that people are described as "good" in the question. But "no one is righteous, not even one."

Third, the question also distorts the portrait of God by portraying him as the one sending people to hell as if he happily does so. But Paul puts the blame on our shoulders⁶.



The right question, the one that Paul answers in Romans is, "How can a loving and just God declare the guilty to be right with him?" or "How can those who deserve hell go to heaven?"

Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson,
What is Hell?



27

THE MAIN ISSUE AND A TAXONOMY OF POSITIONS



28

“Hell Under Fire: Part 1 of our Interview
with Christopher Morgan”

<http://www.koinoniablog.net/2011/03/hell-interview.html>

29



“So, in a sense, the historic doctrine of hell stands for everything the contemporary culture rejects – that God’s love is not sentimental but interconnected to his holiness and justice, that humans are universally guilty and pervasively corrupt, that Jesus is the only substitute/representative/sacrifice for human sin, that faith in Christ is the only means to receive the benefits of his saving work, and that God’s ultimate victory does not mean the elimination of all sin from the universe, but the appropriate and final punishment of it.”

30



“I would suggest that though hell is not the point of the biblical story, it plays an important role as a backdrop, much like sin. It is not as critical as the deity of Christ or his being the only Mediator, but it is inescapably linked to such key doctrines – God, sin, and Christ’s saving work.

Further, I would also suggest that one’s doctrine of hell rarely drives the other aspects of a person’s theology. Instead, I submit that the reverse is true. A person’s view of hell is often the corollary to other more central doctrines – the love of God, the justice of God, the nature of God’s victory, guilt and corruption in Adam, and so on.”



“This means that a shift in a person or group’s view of hell is often an indication that these other beliefs have shifted as well. Unlike some, I do not see modifications related to hell as a slippery slope, but more like a thermometer.”

32



“Toward a Better Understanding of Hell”
Collin Hansen interview with Christopher
Morgan

[http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/
2011/03/18/toward-a-better-
understanding-of-hell/](http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/03/18/toward-a-better-understanding-of-hell/)



33

“The traditional way to categorize the major views concerning hell is eternal punishment, annihilationism, and universalism. These differ as to the nature of hell. Eternal punishment, the historic view of the church, holds that hell is a place of eternal, conscious, and final punishment, banishment, and death.”



34

“The second view, annihilationism, and is sometimes known by one of its forms, “conditionalism.” It maintains that the wicked will ultimately be exterminated and cease to exist. In this view, hell is temporary.”



35

“The third view, universalism, contends that in the end all persons will experience the love of God and eternal life. All will be ultimately saved and none will be finally lost.

Historically, the church has regarded both annihilationism and universalism as significant errors, with universalism being very serious, even heretical.”



36

“Relating to Other Religions”

Collin Hansen interview with Christopher Morgan

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/03/19/relating-to-other-religions/>



37

“*Exclusivism* (sometimes called “particularism”) is the position that Jesus is the unique Savior, the only hope of reconciliation with God. *Inclusivism* posits a variety of possible ways of salvation, including Jesus as well as various religions. *Pluralism* concludes that all paths equally and validly lead people to wholeness/salvation, however one may understand it.”



38

“What About Those Who Haven’t Heard?”

Collin Hansen interview with Christopher Morgan

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/03/19/what-about-those-who-havent-heard/>



39

-
1. Church Exclusivism – “No, outside the church there is no salvation.”
 2. Gospel Exclusivism – “No, they must hear the gospel and trust Christ to be saved.”
 3. Special Revelation Exclusivism – “No, unless God chooses to send them special revelation in an extraordinary way – by a direct revelation from the Lord, dream, vision, miracle, or angelic message.”



40

-
4. Agnosticism (as to the fate of the unevangelized) – “We cannot know for certain the answer to this question.” (pessimistic [sound like exclusivists] and optimistic [Stott])
 5. General Revelation Inclusivism – “Yes, they can respond to God through seeing enough of who he is in general revelation.” (This is traditional inclusivism.)
 6. World Religions Inclusivism – “Yes, they can respond to God through general revelation or their religion, since their religion contains truth from general revelation and possibly remnants of special revelation.”



-
7. Postmortem Evangelism – “Yes, those who have never heard the gospel will have an opportunity to trust Christ after death.” (This is traditionally called “postmortem evangelism.”)
 8. Universalism – “Yes, everyone will ultimately be saved.”
 9. Pluralism – Yes, those who have never heard may experience ‘salvation’ as they understand it because each embraces their version of the real, but the question is erroneous because it assumes Christianity is ultimate.”



42

“Historically, the church has primarily taught church exclusivism, gospel exclusivism, special revelation exclusivism, or pessimistic agnosticism. They have typically regarded optimistic agnosticism as problematic, general revelation inclusivism as an error, and world religions inclusivism, postmortem evangelism, universalism, and pluralism as very serious errors.”



43

Hell is present, difficult existence, e.g. rape, AIDS, starvation, genocide, etc.

But, what does the Bible teach? Anything that we experience in this life, as horrible and horrific it is, it really nothing compared to the real, eternal hell.



44

Hell is self-exclusion from God, i.e. it is self-chosen and though God acknowledges this self-chosen destiny, He is passive.

Though accurate, it is not all there is to say. Hell is also God's active response to and exclusion of us.



45

THEOLOGY AND LIBERALISM



46

-
- Scripture
 - Creeds
 - Historical theology
 - Bible while being unbiblical
 - E.g. JW, open theists, Rob Bell



47

Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 51-52.

There are five common features or characteristics of liberal theology.

Like Schleiermacher, the liberals were committed to the task of reconstructing Christian belief in the light of modern knowledge. They believed that certain developments in culture since the Enlightenment simply could not be ignored by Christian theology, but had to be assimilated into it in a positive way.

A second characteristic of liberal theology was its emphasis on the freedom of the individual Christian thinker to criticize and reconstruct traditional beliefs. Negatively this entailed the rejection of the authority of tradition or church hierarchy to control theology.



48

Third, liberal theology focused on the practical or ethical dimension of Christianity.

Fourth, most liberal theologians sought to base theology on some foundation other than the absolute authority of the Bible. They believed that the traditional dogma of the supernatural inspiration of Scripture had been hopelessly undermined by historical-critical research.

Finally, and perhaps unconsciously underlying the other features, liberal theology continued the drift toward divine immanence at the expense of transcendence begun by the Enlightenment and continued by the great German thinkers of the early nineteenth century.



49

Liberal theology's essence is anthropocentrism – man is at the center of it all.

The ethos of the liberal movement has been captured by one of its leading students who says that all of its adherents “would have agreed on the necessity of giving renewed strength and currency to Protestant Christianity by adapting it to the spiritual wants of the modern man, even if much that the past had accepted without demur would have to be discarded.”



50

Al Mohler, “Air Conditioning Hell: How Liberalism Happens,” *9Marks eJournal* 7/1 (January/February 2010), 13-15. This is how one “slides” into liberal theology:

First, a doctrine simply falls from mention.

Second, a doctrine is revised and retained in reduced form.

Third, a doctrine is subjected to a form of ridicule.

Fourth, a doctrine is reformulated in order to remove its intellectual and moral offensiveness.



51

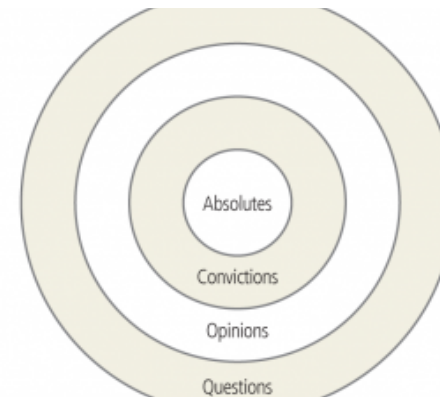
ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE



52

Theology, or our understanding of God, is more like a sweater than a smorgasbord. We can't logically walk up to the Bible buffet and load up on the teachings we like while skipping the ones we don't: give me an extra helping of love but hold the stuff about wrath. Instead, our beliefs about God and the Christian life are intertwined like the strands of yarn in a cable-knit sweater. When we tug on one, the others tend to come, too.

Michael Wittmer, *Christ Alone*, 2.



Essential vs. Peripheral Doctrine

Erik Thoennes, *Life's Biggest Questions: What the Bible Says about the Things That Matter Most* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 35-36.

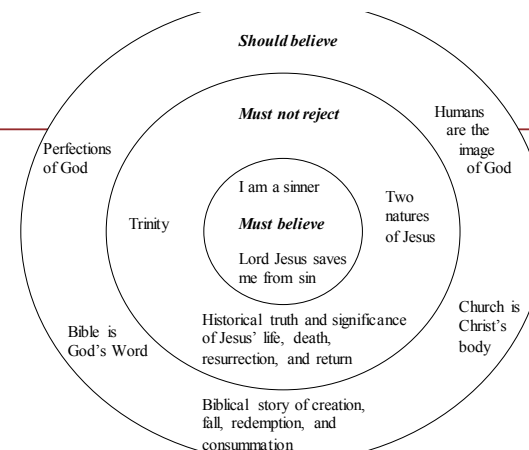


The relative importance of theological issues can fall within four categories:

1. *absolutes* define the core beliefs of the Christian faith;
2. *convictions*, while not core beliefs, may have significant impact on the health and effectiveness of the church;
3. *opinions* are less-clear issues that generally are not worth dividing over; and
4. *questions* are currently unsettled issues.

Where an issue falls within these categories should be determined by weighing the cumulative force of at least seven considerations:

1. biblical clarity;
2. relevance to the character of God;
3. relevance to the essence of the gospel;
4. biblical frequency and significance (how often in Scripture it is taught, and what weight Scripture places upon it);
5. effect on other doctrines;
6. consensus among Christians (past and present);
7. effect on personal and church life; and
8. current cultural pressure to deny a teaching of Scripture.



Must Believe; Must Not Reject; Should Believe

Michael Wittmer, *Don't Stop Believing: Why Living Like Jesus Is Not Enough* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 40-44.



First, Second Third-Order Doctrines

Albert Mohler, “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity”:

<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>

- *first-order doctrines* - a denial of which represents the eventual denial of Christianity itself;
- *second-order doctrines* - upon which Bible-believing Christians may disagree, but they create significant boundaries between believers, whether as distinct congregations or denominations; and
- *third-order doctrines* - upon which Christians may disagree, but yet remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations.

57



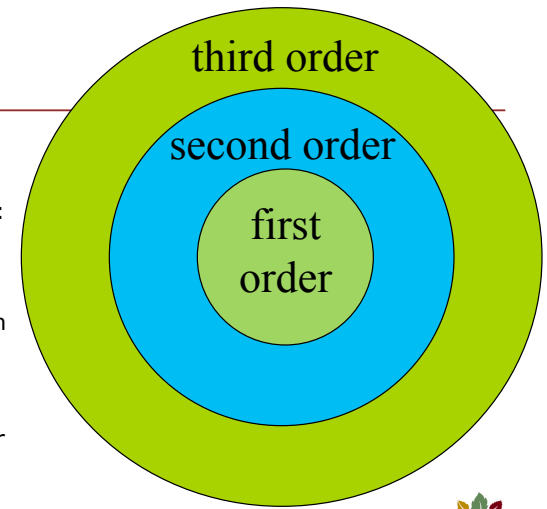
Theological Triage

First-order doctrines: must believe, cannot deny

Second-order doctrines: may disagree, creates significant boundaries.

Third-order doctrines: may disagree, remain in close fellowship.

- Doctrinally - you move from the center to the outer circles.
- Relationally/ Fellowship - you move from the outer circles towards the inner.



Mike Andrus: “Drawing Doctrinal Lines: Where? And How?”
How do we distinguish between the Essentials and the Non-essentials of the Faith?

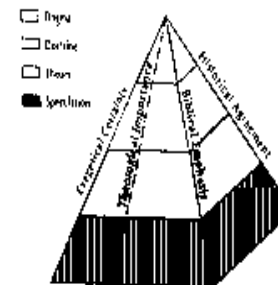
Four Levels of Theological Thought

1. Dogma (scientific law)
2. Doctrine (scientific principle)
3. Theory (scientific theory or hypothesis)
4. Speculation (scientific speculation)

Four Factors To Determine Priority of Theological Views

1. Exegetical certainty
2. Theological Importance
3. Biblical Emphasis
4. Historical Agreement in the Church

59



60

The apex of the pyramid represents theological dogma; i.e., those truths which have the highest exegetical certainty, the greatest theological importance, the strongest biblical emphasis, and the most uniform historical agreement. The next slice of the pyramid would represent doctrine, the next theory, and the bottom speculation.



If we are going to *demand agreement* on a certain issue of faith, then it must be exegetically certain, it must be theologically important, the Bible must give emphasis to it (by where it appears or the number of times it is emphasized), and it must be affirmed throughout the history of the church.

61



Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 178-179.

62



A	B	C	D	E
truth	mistaken opinion	isolated error	systemic error	heresy

63



-
- B. Mistaken Opinion – quibbles about minor details pertaining to church government and eschatology.
 - C. Isolated Error – a theological mistake that does not affect other matters of faith.
 - D. Systemic Error – a theological mistake that does affect other matters of Christian doctrine.
 - E. Heresy – error so serious that holding it leads one to damnation. Heresy is denial of the cardinal doctrines of the faith, such as the deity of Christ.

64



II. Biblical



“ten biblical passages that I believe teach that the wicked will suffer eternal conscious punishment.”

Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* (Spectrum) (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), 120. The following references come from the chapter “The Foundation of the House: Scripture.”

66



1. Undying Worm and Unquenchable Fire (OT)

Isaiah 66:22-24

For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.

And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For *their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.



67

2. Everlasting Life/ Everlasting Contempt

Daniel 12:1-2

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to *everlasting life*, and some to shame and *everlasting contempt*.



68

3. Eternal Fire/The Fire of Hell

Matthew 18:6-9

Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into *the eternal fire*. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into *the hell of fire*.

69



4. Eternal Punishment/Eternal Life

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” . . . Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into *the eternal fire* prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these will go away into *eternal punishment*, but the righteous into eternal life.”

70



5. Undying Worm and Unquenchable Fire (NT)

Mark 9:42-48

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to *hell*, to *the unquenchable fire*. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into *hell*. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, “*where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.*”

71



6. Everlasting Destruction

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer *the punishment of eternal destruction*, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

72



7. The Punishment of Eternal Fire

Jude 7

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a *punishment of eternal fire*.

73



8. Blackest Darkness Reserved Forever

Jude 13

[These people are] wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom *the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever*.

74



9. The Smoke of Their Torment Rises For Ever and Ever

Revelation 14:9-11

If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be *tormented with fire and sulfur* in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. *And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.*

75



10. The Lake of Fire

Revelation 20:10, 14-15

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into *the lake of fire and sulfur* where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be *tormented day and night forever and ever*. . . . Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

76



III. Historical



EARLY CHURCH

78



Primarily taken from Gregg Allison's *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), "The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment," and a couple of references taken from Peterson's *Two Views*, "The Road to Traditionalism: History."

79



The Didache

'After that, all humankind will come up for their fiery trial; multitudes of them will stumble and perish, but such as remain steadfast in the faith will be saved by the Curse.'

80



Polycarp

‘All things in heaven and earth have been made subject to Him; everything that breathes may give Him homage; He comes to judge the living and the dead, and God will require His blood at the hands of any who refuse Him allegiance’

‘The other said again, “If you do not recant, I will have you burnt to death, since you think so lightly of wild beasts”. Polycarp rejoined, “The fire you threaten me with cannot go on burning for very long; after a while it goes out. But what you are unaware of are the flames of future judgement and everlasting torment which are in store for the ungodly. Why do you go on wasting time? Bring out whatever you have a mind to” ’. (Martyrdom of Polycarp)



81

Tertullian

“If therefore, any one shall violently suppose that the destruction of the soul and the flesh in hell amounts to a final annihilation of the two substances, and not to their penal treatment (as if they were to be consumed, not punished), let him recollect that the fire of hell is eternal – expressly announced as an everlasting penalty; and let him then admit that it is from this circumstance that this never-ending “killing” is more formidable than a merely human murder, which is only temporal.”



82

Irenaeus

“He has prepared darkness suitable to persons who oppose the light, and He has inflicted an appropriate punishment upon those who try to avoid being subject to Him. . . He has prepared the eternal fire for the ringleader of the apostasy—the devil—and for those who revolted with him. The Lord has declared those who have been set apart by themselves on His left hand will be sent into this fire.”



83

Hermas

“Neither the righteous nor sinners are distinguishable in this world, but they are alike. For this life is winter to the righteous, and they cannot be distinguished, because they live with the sinners. For just as in winter the trees, having shed their leaves, are all alike, and it is not apparent which are withered and which are living, so also in this world neither the righteous nor the sinners can be distinguished, but all are alike.



84

Athanasian Creed

Christ “will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will rise again with their bodies and will give account for their own works. Those who have done good will go into eternal life, and those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.”

85



Justin Martyr

“But if you pay no regard to our prayers and frank explanations, we will suffer no loss. For we believe that every man will suffer punishment in eternal fire according to the merits of his deed. . . . Sensation remains to all who have ever lived, and eternal punishment is laid up.”

86



Barnabas

“The way of the black one is crooked and completely cursed. For it is a way of eternal death and punishment.”

87



Cyprian

vividly described the misery awaiting the wicked: “The damned will burn forever in hell.. Devouring flames will be their eternal portion [reward]. Their torments will never decrease or end. Their lamentations will be vain and entreaties ineffective. Their repentance comes too late. They will have to believe in an eternal punishment, as they refused to believe in the eternal life.”

88



Athenagoras

specifically denied the idea of annihilationism – that after death people cease to exist – explaining that “God has not made us as sheep or beasts of burden, a mere by-product, and that we should perish and be annihilated.”



89

Hippolytus

“For all, the righteous and the unrighteous, shall be brought before God the Word. For the Father has committed all judgment to him; and in fulfillment of the Father’s counsel, he comes as Judge whom we call Christ....He, in administering the righteous judgment of the Father to all, assigns to each person what is righteous according to his works. And being present at his judicial decision, all, both men and angels and demons, shall utter one voice, saying, ‘Righteous is your judgment.’ The justification of this voice will be seen in the awarding to each person that which is just. To those who have done good will be justly assigned eternal blessing and to the lovers of wickedness shall be given eternal punishment. And the fire which is unquenchable and without end awaits these latter.”



90

Augustine

“If both destinies are ‘eternal,’ then we must either understand both as long-continued but at last terminating, or both as endless. For they are correlated: On the one hand, punishment eternal; on the other hand, life eternal. And to say in one and the same sense, ‘life eternal will be endless, punishment eternal will come to an end,’ is the height of absurdity. Therefore, as the eternal life of the saints will be endless, so too the eternal punishment of those who are doomed to it will have no end.”



91

Origen – the exception

Believed in the preexistence of souls – “Before the creation of this present world, there existed a spiritual world populated by spirit beings, all of whom possessed free will that they abused so as to fall into sin. Divine punishment – figuratively presented in Scripture as ‘fire’ – serves to rehabilitate these fallen beings. From this, Origen concluded that the action of God is designed to ‘thoroughly cleanse away the evil that is intermingled throughout the whole soul’ and thus purify these sinful beings...Given this view of the restoration of all things, Origen appeared to embrace universal salvation and was charged with denying the church’s belief in the eternal punishment of the wicked.”



92

Synod of Constantinople

Ultimately, a church council held in Alexandria, Egypt, in 400 condemned Origen's doctrine of universal salvation. The pronouncement of condemnation of his view by the synod of Constantinople in 543 was very clear: 'If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of wicked people is only temporary, and will one day have an end, and that a restoration will take place of demons and of wicked people, let him be anathema [cursed].' The church would not tolerate any view denying the reality of a future eternal punishment for the wicked.



93

MIDDLE AGES



94

Fourth Lateran Council

“Christ will render to every man, be he damned or elect, according to his works. The damned will go into eternal punishment with the devil, and the elect will go with Christ into eternal glory.” (1215)



95

Anselm

“eternal unhappiness for the soul that rejects the supreme essence.” “Man's soul is created such that it will suffer eternal unhappiness if it disdains to love the supreme essence. Love will enjoy eternal reward, but disdain will suffer eternal punishment. Love will taste unalterable abundance, but disdain unassuageable indigence.”



96

Thomas Aquinas

Reason for eternal punishment: “so that by the fear of eternal punishment others may cease to sin.” Beyond this, eternal punishment serves the justice of God, and it stimulates gratitude for grace in God’s people. Finally, according to Aquinas, the wicked’s awareness of the endlessness of their punishment is part of their misery: “The eternity of damnation is part of the punishment of the damned, and it would not have the true nature of punishment unless it were repugnant to their will. Now the eternity of damnation would not be repugnant to their will unless the damned were aware that their punishment was everlasting. It is therefore a condition of their misery that they know they can in no way escape damnation and reach blessedness.” Aquinas echoed and advanced the church’s historic doctrine of last judgment and eternal punishment.

97



REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION

98



Martin Luther

“The fiery oven is ignited by the unbearable appearance of God and endures eternally. For the Day of Judgment will not last for a moment only but will stand throughout eternity and will thereafter never come to an end. Constantly the damned will be judged, constantly will they suffer pain, and constantly they will be a fiery oven, that is, they will be tortured within by supreme distress and tribulation.”

99



“And then there are others who can live with two destinations, two realities after death, but insist that there must be some kind of “second chance” for those who don’t believe in Jesus in this lifetime. In a letter Martin Luther, one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, wrote to Hans von Rechenberg in 1522 he considered the possibility that people could turn to God after death, asking: “Who would doubt God’s ability to do that?”

“Again, a good question.

“And so space is created in this “who would doubt God’s ability to do that?” perspective for all kinds of people--fifteen-year-old atheists, people from other religions, and people who rejected Jesus because the only Jesus they ever saw was an oppressive figure who did anything but show God’s love.”

Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (HarperOne, 2011) , 108.

100



“If God were to save anyone without faith, he would be acting contrary to his own words and would give himself the lie; yes, he would deny himself. And that is impossible for, as St. Paul declares, God cannot deny himself [II Tim. 2:13]. It is as impossible for God to save without faith as it is impossible for divine truth to lie. That is clear, obvious, and easily understood, no matter how reluctant the old wineskin is to hold this wine-- yes, is unable to hold and contain it.

“It would be quite a different question whether God can impart faith to some in the hour of death or after death so that these people could be saved through faith. *Who would doubt God's ability to do that?* No one, however, can prove that he does do this. For all that we read is that he has already raised people from the dead and thus granted them faith. But whether he gives faith or not, it is impossible for anyone to be saved without faith. Otherwise every sermon, the gospel, and faith would be vain, false, and deceptive, since the entire gospel makes faith necessary.”

Works, 43, ed. and trans. G. Wienke and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 53-54; WA 10.ii, 324.25-325.11.

□

101



Carl Trueman, “Easy Virtues and Cruel Mistresses: Basic Advice on How to Interpret Luther” *Reformation 21* March 2011

<http://www.reformation21.org/articles/easy-virtues-and-cruel-mistresses.php>

102



John Calvin

“He will separate the lambs from the goats, the elect from the reprobate [Matt. 25:31-33]. No one – living or dead – will escape his judgment. The sound of the trumpet will be heard from the ends of the earth, and by it all will be summoned before his judgment seat, both those still alive at that day and those whom death had previously taken from the company of the living [I Thess. 4:16-17].”

103



Quenstedt

“the privative blessings are the absence of sin and its causes: the fleshly nature that incites sin, the devil who suggests sin, the world that seduces to sin, and the punishments of sin, such as various sufferings...temporal death...[and] eternal death.”

...insisted that such eternal duration “will augment the punishments of the damned beyond measure. The *sufferings* will be continuous, *i.e.*, they will have no interval, no interruption; they will be *eternal*, they will have no end.”

104



John Wesley

“I believe that God forgives all the sins of them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel; and that, at the last day, all men shall arise again, everyone with his own body. I believe that, as the unjust shall after their resurrection be tormented in hell forever, so the just shall enjoy inconceivable happiness in the presence of God to all eternity.”

105



MODERN PERIOD

106



Jonathan Edwards

Five reasons for utter hopelessness of those in hell:

- 1.The wicked in hell will not be able to overcome their enemy – God – so as to deliver themselves.
- 2.They will have no strength to appease God or to abate the fierceness of his wrath.
- 3.They will have no friends in hell (or in heaven),
- 4.They will never be able to escape hell.
- 5.They will never be able to find anything to relieve them in hell.

107



Friedrich Schleiermacher

maintained that divine punishments “cannot be ordained by God as reformative” nor “merely vengeful or retributive.”

Felt that “in view of its almost universal prevalence in Christendom, we must try to elicit its essential meaning.”

Dismissed the doctrine of eternal damnation, asserting that “the figurative sayings of Christ, which have led to a state of irremediable misery for those who die out of fellowship with Christ being accepted as the counterpart of eternal blessedness, will, if more closely scrutinized, be found insufficient to support any such conclusion.”

Urged that “we ought at least to admit equal rights of the milder view, of which likewise there are traces in Scripture; the view, namely, that through the power of redemption, there will one day be a universal restoration of all souls.”



Edward Pusey

a defense of the church's historical position – specifically, “the supposition of its necessarily endless duration for all who incur it”

109



William Newton Clarke

“No Scripture is quoted in support of this view of the purpose of final judgment. The coming judgment that is known to Scripture is intended for the assignment of destiny to men; there is no hint that it is intended for vindication of God.”

110



Karl Barth

He championed the probability of universal salvation which would be the work of the undeserved grace of God in Christ. His two considerations: the unexpectedness of any such gracious, universal rescue; paradoxically the expectation of such gracious, universal salvation. This hope was based on the present gracious work of God in Christ against sin. He picks up the notion of *apokatastasis* or universal reconciliation. He offered hope for the salvation of all human beings through Jesus Christ: in Adam all are condemned; in Christ all our reconciled. It is important to note that though he draws a similar conclusion to Origen, he does so for different reasons: Origen's universalism is rooted in humanity (freedom); Barth's universalism is rooted in God (grace in Christ).¹¹¹



John A. T. Robinson

“that God may be all in all.” He embraced the doctrine of universalism. “The sole basis for such a doctrine, as more than wishful thinking, is the work of God in Christ....It is solely the Divine ‘nevertheless,’ intervening beyond any expectation and merit, on which the Christian hope rests.”

Insisted that universalism “can finally establish itself only if it also preserves intact two other truths upon which the Bible is equally insistent. These are the realities of human freedom and the seriousness of hell.”

Robinson held out hope “that an all-compelling love could possibly leave it [freedom] intact.”

112



William Shedd

confronted a new form of universalism, which “concedes the force of the biblical and rational arguments respecting the guilt of sin and its intrinsic desert of eternal punishment, but contends that redemption from it through the vicarious atonement of Christ is extended into the next world.” Specifically, “the advocates of this view assert that between death and the final judgment, the application of Christ’s work is going on, that the Holy Spirit is regenerating sinners in the intermediate state, and they are believing and repenting as in this life. This makes the day of judgment, instead of the day of death, the dividing line between ‘time’ and ‘eternity’.”

“Endless punishment is rational because of the endlessness of sin....One sin makes guilt, and guilt makes hell.”

“Endless punishment is rational because sin is an infinite evil: infinite, not because committed by an infinite being, but against one.”

“The finally lost are not to be conceived of as having faint desires and aspirations for a holy and heavenly state and as feebly but really inclined to sorrow for their sin, but are kept in hell contrary to their yearning and petition.”

113



John Stott

“traditional orthodoxy for most of the church fathers, the medieval theologians and the Reformers...and probably most Evangelical leaders.” “Emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.” At the same time, he acknowledged: “But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it. As a committed evangelical, my question must be—and is—not what does my heart tell me, but what does God’s word say?”



John Wenham

built “the case for conditional immortality,” “the belief that God created man only potentially immortal. Immortality is a state gained by grace through faith when the believer receives eternal life and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, immortality being inherent in God alone.”

“God alone has immortality.”

115



Edward Fudge

While affirming that God is “absolutely holy and perfectly just,” he questioned: “But are we to believe that God, who ‘so loved’ the world that he gave his only Son to die for our sins, will also keep millions of sinners alive forever so he can torment them endlessly throughout all eternity?” Fudge’s reply to his own question was emphatically negative: “He [God] will punish those who refuse his salvation, and not one of them will escape. There will be degrees of punishment, and the destructive process will allow plenty of opportunity for that. But whatever conscious suffering may be involved, the unrighteous will all finally die....The final end of the lost is the lake of fire, which is the second death. Life or death – these are the final two alternatives. Both that life and that death will last forever.”

116



Clark Pinnock

“Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself... Surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is no fiend; torturing people without end is not what our God does.”

117



Rob Bell

“Will everybody be saved, or will some perish apart from God forever because of their choices? Those are questions, or more accurately, those are tensions we are free to leave fully intact. We don't need to resolve them or answer them because we can't, and so we simply respect them, creating space for the freedom that love requires.”

118



Summary of Church History

“As regards the fate of the wicked ..., the general view was that their punishment would be eternal, without any possibility of remission.” (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, p. 56-57)

“Everlasting punishment of the wicked always was ... the orthodox theory.” (Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 273-74)

“The punishment inflicted upon the lost was regarded by the Fathers of the Ancient Church, with very few exceptions, as endless.” (William G. T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 414)

119



Richard Bauckham

“Until the nineteenth century almost all Christian theologians taught the reality of eternal torment in hell. Here and there, outside the theological mainstream, were some who believed that the wicked would be finally annihilated. . . . Even fewer were the advocates of universal salvation, though these few included some major theologians of the early church. Eternal punishment was firmly asserted in official creeds and confessions of the churches. It must have seemed as indispensable a part of the universal Christian belief as the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation. Since 1800 this situation has entirely changed, and no traditional Christian doctrine has been so widely abandoned as that of eternal punishment.” (p. 48)



Richard J. Bauckham, Universalism: A Historical Survey, *Themelios* 4/2 (September 1978), 48-54.

http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/journal-issues/4.2_Bauckham.pdf

121



IV. EFCA



Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

123



God's gospel requires a response that has eternal consequences.

I. God's Gospel Requires a Response

A. God Commands Us to Respond

B. The Gospel Addresses Everyone Everywhere

C. We Are to Believe the Gospel

1. We Are to Turn to God in Repentance

2. We Are to Receive the Lord Jesus Christ



II. Our Eternal Destiny

A. God Will Raise the Dead Bodily

B. God Will Judge the World

1. The Destiny of the Unbeliever: Condemnation and Eternal Conscious Punishment

2. The Destiny of the Believer

a. Eternal Blessedness and Joy with the Lord

b. In the New Heaven and the New Earth

125



Cf. also *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Church of America*, 250-252:

But what are we to make of the language of destruction? The Greek verb for “destroy” (*apollymi*, cf. also the related noun *apōleia*) need not mean “cease to exist” but is commonly used to describe the ruining of something such that it becomes useless for its intended purpose.

A related word (*olethron*) is used in a similar way. . . . Paul’s words imply an ongoing conscious existence, but one in which persons have been so corrupted that they almost cease to function as human beings created in the image of God.

126



Hell may be understood as a culmination of the effects of sin and the confirmation of God’s opposition to it. It is both the inexorable result of human choice and the active and deliberate judgment of God. The threefold description of hell as wrath, alienation and corruption is illustrated in the effects of the first sin. Adam and Eve incurred the wrath of God through the curse which resulted in physical suffering (strenuous work and painful childbearing), they were alienated from God (cast from the garden), and their nature was corrupted (through the spread of sin and death to all their descendants). Fallen humanity continues to experience these effects unless they are rescued by God’s grace in the gospel. Apart from that rescue, that state of wrath, alienation and corruption will be confirmed, intensified and made permanent when at the judgment God’s verdict of condemnation is pronounced and the sentence is executed in the on-going reality the Bible calls hell.

127



III. God’s Final Purpose: To the Praise of His Glorious Grace

IV. Our Final Response: Amen

128



V. Exegetical/Theological



Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *What is Hell?* (P & R, 2010) and *Is Hell for Real or Does Everyone Go to Heaven?* (Zondervan, 2011). The following slides contain a summary of this work (including a summary and adaption from Andy Naselli's notes regarding the five key truths).



130

First, "Hell is punishment" (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 20:10-15). God justly punishes people as retribution for their moral crimes against him. Hell is not even close to a big party. Jesus teaches that it would be better to cut off your hand or foot or to tear out your eye than to use them to sin and consequently suffer the just penalty in hell (Matt. 5:27-30; Mark 9:42-48).



131

a. The punishment is *deserved*. For clarity and emphasis, the biblical writers stress the justice of retributive punishment.

b. The punishment consists of *suffering*. Those in hell suffer intense and excruciating pain – emotional, spiritual, and physical. The suffering never ends. The intensity of the suffering seems to be according to the wickedness of the person's behavior. And hell is utterly fearful and dreadful; the suffering is constant.



132

c. The punishment is *conscious*. “If hell did not consist of conscious suffering, it is hard to see how it could be worse than death, worse than earthly suffering, filled with weeping and gnashing of teeth, or a place of misery. The biblical images show that people in hell will be aware of their suffering and just punishment.” (*Is Hell for Real*, 43)

133



d. The punishment is *eternal*. The never-ending nature of the punishment is shown vividly in Revelation 14:11, where it is said that the wicked “will have no rest day or night.” The endlessness of the punishment is also confirmed by the forceful pronouncement in Revelation 20:10, “They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

134



Second, “Hell is destruction” and death (Matt. 7:13–14; John 3:1; 2 Thess. 1:9). It speaks of loss, waste ruin, and refers to the fact that one has lost the essence of our purpose or function, the reason for our being.

135



Third, “Hell is banishment” (Matt. 7:23; 25:41; Rev. 22:15). Hell is the place where God banishes rebels from his kingdom once and for all. Separation could imply divine passivity, but banishment speaks of God’s active judgment and carries the weight of the dreadfulness of exclusion of God’s grace.

136



Fourth, “Hell is a place of suffering.” The Bible depicts hell with images that produce shock and fear: darkness, fire, and suffering.

137



Darkness. Those in hell are bound “hand and foot” and then thrown into “the outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). “The gloom of utter darkness” awaits them (Jude 13).

138



Fire. Those in hell are thrown “into the fiery furnace” (Matt. 13:42, 50), and they burn with “unquenchable fire” (Mark 3:12; 9:43). “Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). God’s judgment is “a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27). Those in hell “drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger” and are “tormented with fire and sulfur” (Rev. 14:10). They are “thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15; cf. 19:20; 20:10, 14; 21:8).

139



Suffering. Nothing on earth hurts like hell. The severe conscious punishment in hell hurts physically, emotionally, and mentally. That’s why “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). God warns the wicked who are rich, “Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire” (James 5:3).

140



Finally, “Hell is eternal” (Matt. 25:41, 46; Jude 7, 13; Rev. 14:10–11; 20:10). It lasts forever and ever. It never ever ends. There’s no relief in sight, ever.

141



“Scripture’s witness is clear: the suffering of the wicked in body and soul in hell will never end. There will never come a time when people in hell find relief. They rebelled against God and missed out on true life forever. They are punished by God and banished from his kingdom, and they suffer endlessly.” (*What is Hell*, 20)

142



Interpreting the Biblical Teaching on Hell

1. Mythical – not an option for Evangelicals who affirm the inerrancy and authority of the Bible.
2. Literal – yes, but the teaching on hell is also metaphorical.
3. Metaphor with a literal, real referent/meaning – we learn of the unknown from the known, and the reality lived/experienced is worse than the metaphor described.

143



Implications of these pictures of hell.

First, they complement biblical portraits of God – Judge who sentences the wicked, Victor who defeats his enemies, King who allows his citizens into His kingdom.

Second, they flow naturally from the biblical portraits of sin. They are logical aspects of sin – crime leads to punishment; spiritual death leads to destruction; alienation leads to banishment.

144



Third, they picture the doctrine of the atonement. On the cross, Jesus drank the cup of wrath – punishment; He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins – death; He experienced the God-forsakenness – banishment.

Fourth, they stand in contrast to biblical portraits of salvation. It awaits those who are not justified by faith, those who have never been reconciled to God through Christ.

145



Fifth, they contrast biblical portraits of the kingdom – punishment vs. reward; destruction vs. eternal life; banishment vs. presence of God; eternal punishment vs. inheriting the kingdom of God.

146



James Hamilton, “How Does Hell Glorify God?”, *9Marks eJournal* 7/4 (2010). (cf. also, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*)

To get at the way that hell glorifies God, we need to see hell in light of the Bible’s big story, its point of view, and its characterization of God and man.

147



In sum, hell glorifies God because

1. It shows that he keeps his word;
2. It shows his infinite worth, lasting forever;
3. It demonstrates his power to subdue all who rebel against him;
4. It shows how unspeakably merciful he is to those who trust him;

148



-
5. It upholds the reality of love by visiting justice against those who reject God, who is love;
 6. It vindicates all who suffered to hear or proclaim the truth of God's Word;
 7. And it shows the enormity of what Jesus accomplished when he died to save all who would trust him from the hell they deserved. If there were no hell, there would be no need for the cross.



149

Scripture speaks about the love of God in five distinguishable ways (cf. D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, [Wheaton: Crossway, 1999], 16-24):

1. Unique love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father (Jn 3:35 5:20; 14:31, etc.).
2. God's providential love over all he has made (cf. 'common grace') – Gen 1 – it is 'good'; Mt 10:29.
3. God's salvific stance toward a fallen world (Jn 3:16, here refers to the moral order in willful/culpable rebellion against God; cf. Ezk 33:11).
4. God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect (e.g. Israel, church, individuals – Dt 7:7-8; 10:14-15; Mal 1:2-3; Eph 1:4ff; 5:25; 1 Jn 4:8-10).
5. God's love toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way – conditional, that is, on obedience. This does not have to do with how we become Christians, but with our relationship with the Lord once we know him (cf. Ex 20:6; Ps 103:9-11, 13, 17-18; Jude 21; Jn 15:9-10).



150

We must not absolutize any one of these, but rather understand them as complementary.

1. If we absolutize the intra-Trinitarian love of God as the model of God's loving relationships we must remember that that relationship is one of perfection, untarnished by sin. But it takes too little account of how God manifests himself towards us – his rebellious image-bearers in love *and* wrath.
2. If God's love is nothing more than his providential ordering of everything this is not far from a beneficent "force." It says little about the story of Scripture – cross, resurrection, new creation.
3. If God's love is exclusively portrayed as an inviting, yearning, sinner-seeking passion, then this, too, takes little account of God's justice, sovereignty, holiness, and glory.
4. If God's love exclusively refers to his love for the elect, it is too easy to drift toward a simple and absolute bifurcation: God loves the elect and hates the reprobate. But this, too, is one-sided.
5. If God's love is exclusively tied to human obedience, then it might lead to a merit theology, endless fretting about whether we have been good enough today to enjoy the love of God, etc.



VI. Pastoral



PREACHING

153



Ligon Duncan, "Speaking Seriously and Sensitive about Hell to the Sons of this Age and the Next," Reformation21 Blog: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2011/03/speaking-seriously-and-sensiti.php>

154



So how do you address these difficult truths? How does the reality of hell and endless punishment make a difference in your preaching? How do you tackle them in responsible and appropriate way? What do you need to avoid when treating them? How should we preach hell and eternal punishment (if at all)?

155



1. Address Hell Textually. Unless you follow a systematic plan to preach the Bible, we will likely avoid these kinds of topics.

156



2. *Address Hell Decisively*. We must be convinced of the biblical truth and theology of this doctrine.

157



3. *Address Hell Pastorally*. The pastor ought to talk to people like he would to a family about death in extraordinary circumstances. You want to be sensitive but frank.

158



4. *Address Hell Correctively*. Hell is not just fire insurance. God may use the reality of hell to move one to consider Christ and faith. But if one only remains at the level of avoiding the fear of hell, then the person has not grown much.

159



5. *Address Hell Apologetically*. You need to be prepared to respond to suspicion, misconceptions, etc. people have about this doctrine. You should also be aware of the reasons the person is asking the questions and the heart/spirit with which they are asking.

160



6. Address Hell Exegetically. As those who affirm the inspiration, inerrancy, authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, teach the Scriptures.

161



7. Address Hell Christologically. This doctrine must be approached in conscious relation to the doctrine of Christ. First, this doctrine is on the lips of Jesus, and addressed the subject more than anyone else. We believe in hell, because we believe – and believe in – Jesus. Second, our preaching on hell must be set in the context of the cross.

162



PASTORAL

163



Jonathan Gibson, “Where the Fires are Not Quenched”: Biblical, Theological & Pastoral Perspectives on Hell.” (VI. The Weight of Hell: Pastoral Reflections”)

<http://beginningwithmoses.org/other-articles/279/where-the-fires-are-not-quenched-biblical-theological-and-pastoral-perspectives-on-hell>

Jonathan Gibson, “Hell part 4: Pastoral reflections on hell,” *The Briefing*:

<http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2010/06/hell-part-4-pastoral-reflections-on-hell/>

164



1. *How We Speak About Hell.* Hell should change the way we speak about hell. Reference to hell should not be flippant, and neither should it be used in an exaggerated way that goes beyond what Scripture teaches. And if there is a malicious joy in this life, I am not sure hell, or my condition or Christ or grace is understood/grasped.

165



2. *Clarity About End-Time Judgment.* The issue of how we speak about hell is appropriate for Christian preachers and teachers. Given the biblical teaching of hell, preachers and teachers should teach with clarity on the end-time judgment, not in vague and general terms. Preachers should not just talk about hell, they should preach hell. Once an apologia has been given about the reasonableness of speaking of hell, and this is necessary in our postmodern world, we should not stop short of actually preaching hell.

166



3. *Hell's Insufficiency.* In preaching hell we ought to preach not only the stark reality of it, unpacking the variety of images and pictures, but we should also speak of hell's insufficiency. Hell itself is not able to save people from hell, only Christ is, a Christ testified to by the Scriptures.

167



4. *People and Death.* Hell should change the way we think about people and death. Regarding people, "There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." (C. S. Lewis). Regarding death, the reality of hell, and the fact that many unbelievers pass from this life every day into eternity, should lead us to gospel urgency in order to warn people that death is not the end, hell is – and it does not end.

168



5. *Bold to Proclaim.* Hell should make believers bold to proclaim. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:5 which arise out of His commission to His disciples to preach. Don't fear people; fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell. The idolatry of pleasing other people and fearing what they think, which we are all so prone to, is best remedied by a wholesome fear of the One who rules hell.



169

6. *Hell should make believers confident to persevere.* In Revelation 14, the prospect of God's future judgments on all who have worshipped the best, "calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus" (14:12). In other words, eschatological judgment in hell that awaits those who worship the beast serves as a warning not to fall away from faithfully serving Jesus Christ. These texts also warn believers to persevere and endure to the end, helping us to fight sin, so that in the end we do not fall short (Heb. 3:12-14; 4:11).



170

7. *God's Final Just Punishment of the Ungodly Should Comfort Persecuted Believers.* In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 Paul writes of hell in the context of Christians suffering persecution and trials. This is not, however, a vindictive statement. It is prefaced with a declaration of God's right and just judgment (1:5-6). What the persecutor of Christians receive on that day is only what they deserve.



171

8. *The Inevitability of Death and the Eternal Fixity of Hell Should Lead Us to Tears.* The doctrine of hell is a painful topic, and those who do not respond with some emotional pain have simply not understood it. Jesus anguished over Jerusalem's stubborn resistance to his message (Matt. 23:37). Paul did the same about his fellow Jews (Rom. 9:3). When was the last time you wept over someone you know who is going to hell? (This response to hell now in this life is different to our response once we are with the Lord in all of His glory in the new heaven and earth. Does our response reflect an over-realized eschatology?)



172

9. *The Doctrine of Hell Should Be Kept in the Right Perspective.* This point relates to hell and living now as we await Christ's return. The thought that people are heading to hell should lead us to tears and to urgent efforts of gospel mission. When the church loses such urgency, it loses a part of its soul. The question is this: if hell is real, and it is!, what should I do tomorrow? What should I do with the rest of my life?

173



10. *Hell Shall Not Mar Heaven.* There is nothing in Scripture that hints in any way that hell will somehow disturb or spoil the enjoyment of heaven.

174



It is said that the joy of heaven will be marred by knowledge that some continue under merited retribution. But this cannot be said of God, as if the expression of his holiness in retribution hurts him more than it hurts the offenders; and since in heaven Christians will be like God in character, loving what he loves and taking joy in all his self-manifestation, including his justice, there is no reason to think that their joy will be impaired in this way.

J. I. Packer, "The Problem of Eternal Punishment," *Evangel* 10/2 (Summer 1992), 18.

175



Heaven and hell are the final destinies and the only two destinies. The Scripture portrays them as parallel, in a contrastive way, destinies. (Morgan and Peterson, *What is Hell?*, 28-30.)

176



First, heaven is the renewal of all creation. By contrast, lost human beings will be banished from the city of God and suffer forever.

Second, heaven is the final stage in the kingdom of God. But the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God.

177



Third, heaven is the everlasting rest of God's people. The wicked have no rest, day or night.

Fourth, heaven is being in the gracious presence of God forever. Unbelievers will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord.

178



Fifth, heaven is the final seeing of God that fills the beholders with joy. The unsaved will be in outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sixth, heaven is our shining in glory forever. The wicked will be fitted for shame and everlasting contempt, suffering and everlasting destruction in body and soul.

When viewed as alternatives, heaven looks even more glorious and hell even more dreadful.

179



Using the ballast metaphor, Kevin DeYoung, "There's Something Worse than Death," concludes, "If we lose the doctrine of hell, either becoming too embarrassed to mention it or too culturally-sensitive to affirm it, we can count on this: the boat will drift. The cross will be stripped of propitiation, our preaching will be devoid of urgency and power, and our work in the world will no longer center on calling people to faith and repentance and building them to maturity in Christ. Lose the ballast of divine judgment and our message, our ministry, and our mission will all eventually change."

<http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/theres-something-worse-death>

180



And when we speak of hell, remember M' Cheyne:
"When Robert M' Cheyne met his dearest friend Andrew Bonar one Monday and enquired what Bonar had preached on the previous day, only to receive the answer 'Hell,' he asked, 'Did you preach it with tears?' That we cannot do until we have come to recognize our own great need of grace to save us from the wrath to come, the terrible nature of that judgment, the provision that God has made for us in Christ, and the calling he has given us to take the gospel to every creature in the name of the One who did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it."

(Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Pastoral Theology: The Preacher and Hell," in *Hell Under Fire*, 237.)



Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000).

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, ed. *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, ed., *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *What is Hell?* (Philipsburg, P & R, 2010).

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, ed. *Is Hell for Real or Does Everyone Go To Heaven?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

