

Stubborn Facts ... *... About Hell*



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About the front cover

The photo on the front cover shows a beautiful park area just south of Jerusalem. It is the modern-day location of "Gehenna" (literally, in ancient Israel, "The valley of the son of Hinnom"). Originally it was a place where the Jewish people (in the days of the prophet Jeremiah), sacrificed their precious little babies to false gods in an attempt to appease them. This was abhorrent to their true God, Jehovah, who brought them out of slavery in Egypt generations earlier.

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Stubborn Facts About Hell

This is a study on all of the words in the Bible that are commonly translated as “hell.” But it turns out that none of these words (in the original Greek and Hebrew) have the same meaning as our modern-day word, hell, as “a place of never-ending punishment.”

Introduction

They say facts are stubborn things. And this is true. But facts can also be made to say whatever a person wants them to say -- if presented selectively and out of context. All too often it is not the facts that are stubborn, but those who present them. The facts about hell, when all are considered and seen in their complete context, are indeed stubborn.

When it comes to discovering a word, a topic, or an idea presented in the Bible, there are five very important questions to ask that will keep you on track to discover the stubborn truth that the facts reveal. I have used these questions in many studies I have done in the Bible, and they have served me very well.

1. What is the Greek meaning of the word you want to understand? This is important because the New Testament was written in Greek, not English, and the meaning of words must be found there.
2. How many times is the word used in the New Testament, and by whom? Why is it used so many or so few times?
3. What did a writer (or speaker) in the New Testament mean by the word he used? Why did he use it and not some other word?
4. What is the context in which this word is used? There are two contexts to look at. One is the immediate context (the words and discussion surrounding that particular use of the word). The other is the greater context – that of the whole Bible, and everything we know about God.
5. How is this word translated in the English Bible, and why did they choose this English word? How much interpreting did they do in making this choice?

Greek Definitions of the Word Hell

There are four Greek words in the New Testament writings that are translated as hell in modern Bibles.

The first is “Tartarus”, and it occurs only one time in 2Peter 2:4: *“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (Tartarus) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”* This word originated in Greek mythology to describe where the Titans were sent for punishment. It is very common for the New Testament writers to use known terms and phrases in their culture to describe truths they wanted to reveal. This does not mean that Peter was validating any truth in Greek mythology, but rather was using a known concept to describe the truth the Holy Spirit had revealed to him about the fate of fallen angels. This word and how it is used in the Bible seems to fit the modern day idea of hell, somewhat. But it seems to have no eternal duration.

The second word is “Sheol”, which is the Hebrew word for “the grave.” It is used to quote Old Testament writings. It does not include the idea of torment in its meaning, only that it was a place where the dead reside.

The third word is “Hades”, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sheol (the grave, or place of the dead). It occurs eleven times in the New Testament.

The last word is “Gehenna”, used just 12 times in the New Testament. Its most basic and literal meaning is *not* a place of torment in the spiritual realm (as Tartarus is). Instead, it is a physical location in a valley just south of Jerusalem. A modern day photo of Gehenna is shown at the beginning of this section. It is actually a very beautiful and pleasant park today.

Since Sheol and Hades are not places of torment or suffering and are focused on the place of the dead (both good and wicked people), and Tartarus is ascribed only to fallen angels (and only mentioned once), the remaining discussion will be on Gehenna. Is this a place in the spiritual realm where some of the dead are tormented forever by God, or is it something else? The remaining four questions will be asked primarily about this word, Gehenna.

Frequency of Use in the NT

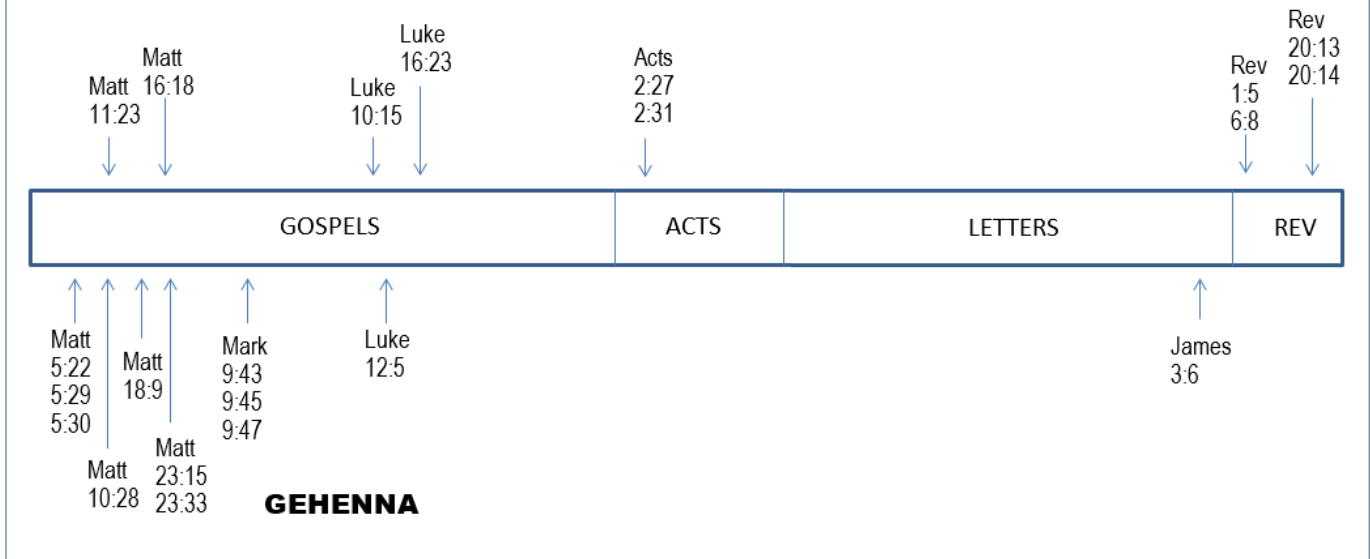
Hades occurs in the NT just eleven times. It is the same word (in Greek) as “Sheol” (in Hebrew). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament in the days of Jesus) always translates “Sheol” as “Hades.” This means that the seventy Jewish translators that did this translation understood Hades to be the same as Sheol. And Sheol was clearly and historically “the grave” or “the place of the dead.” There was no eternal torment associated with Sheol, and therefore not with Hades either. Additionally, of the eleven occurrences of Hades in the NT, none of them identify it as a place of eternal punishment. In the parable of the *Rich Man and Lazarus*, the rich man is in Hades and is tormented. But the source of the torment is not revealed (is it God or himself?) Also, no duration is given, only that a gulf is fixed that cannot be crossed. But for how long? This is not revealed. Additionally, the Rich Man seems to be repenting! His perspective and his attitude seems to be improving ... enough to warn others of his agony. So, Hades is not “hell” – certainly not in the modern-day definition sense of “a place of never-ending torment”!

The word Gehenna was used almost exclusively by Jesus, and on only four occasions and in only five different ways. This is a striking fact, one that is very stubborn. If Gehenna is an actual place of torment that all people are in danger of, then why so little direct mention of it by Jesus? And why does He never identify it clearly as “a place of never-ending torment”?

But even more amazing is that none of his apostles ever use the word Gehenna, (except for James who said our vicious and vile speech is “set on fire” by Gehenna). No other apostle used the word Gehenna in his writings – writings inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul never used Gehenna (in all he wrote about redemption, faith, and judgment), nor did Peter, John, Jude, or the author of Hebrews. This is yet another stubborn fact. If Gehenna is a place where God torments people for all eternity, making it by far the greatest single warning in the Bible, why do the apostles (except for James, once) never even mention it by name? And, again, why did Jesus himself only mention it five times?

Shown below is a chart displaying all of the occurrences of Hades and Gehenna in the New Testament writings, along with some observations:

Occurrences of Hades and Gehenna in the New Testament



Observations:

- Hades is never used in any of the NT letters where most Christian doctrine is found.
- Hades is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Sheol, found in the Old Testament some 75 times, and means “the grave.”
- Hades is never presented as a place of eternal punishment
- Gehenna is only used by Jesus, (except once by James).
- Jesus only mentions Gehenna five unique times on just four occasions (when considering duplicate occurrences in the three synoptic gospels).
- Jesus never identifies Gehenna as a place of eternal punishment.
- Over half of the occurrences of Gehenna are in Matthew, a gospel written for Jewish people.
- Gehenna is never used by John, Paul, Peter, Jude, or the Author of Hebrews, nor is it used in Acts or the book of Revelation.

Jesus' Meaning of Gehenna

Here is a breakdown of where and how Jesus used the word Gehenna:

1. If you call a person a fool you are in danger of the fire of Gehenna (Matt 5:22)
2. Better to get rid of an offending eye or hand than to keep it and be thrown into Gehenna (Matt 5:29, 18:9, Mark 9:43)
3. Fear God who can destroy body and soul in Gehenna (Matt 10:28, Like 12:5)
4. The Pharisees make their followers into twice the offspring of Gehenna as they are (Matt 23:15)
5. How will you Pharisees escape the sentence of Gehenna? (Matt 23:33)

Wow! That's it! This brevity about hell (Gehenna) is a very stubborn fact that most people are not aware of. Now, it could be that Jesus is warning everyone about a spiritual place of torment to be avoided at all cost. And if He is, then so be it. But a closer look at these occurrences makes this even harder to believe.

First, none of the illustrations that Jesus used has anyone *actually* thrown into Gehenna. Instead, Gehenna is presented as: (1) a place of the *danger* of being thrown into, (2) a place one can *avoid* being thrown into a matter of choice, (3) a place where one *can* be destroyed by God, (4) a place that some are an offspring of, and (5) a place where one can be under the sentence of. But in none of these examples is anyone actually thrown into Gehenna or described as being there. This is yet another stubborn fact.

Secondly, look at the kind of actions that warrant this threat of Gehenna: Calling a person a fool, doing something offensive with your eye or hand, being a follower of the Pharisees, or being a Pharisee. What a peculiar list! Not exactly the worst possible actions a person can do. None of them even break one of God's top ten commandments, except possibly the use of an eye or hand. Do we really believe that calling a person a fool is the essence of deserving eternal torment by God?

Thirdly, the first two examples are directed toward general hearers. The third is a just a statement about God's *capability*, and is not directed toward anyone. The last two examples are directed toward Pharisees who Jesus was much harder on (than average sinners) because of their hypocrisy, arrogance, stubborn heart, greed, and deception of others.

The point of these three observations is that the case for accusing God of being an eternal tormentor is rather weak -- in both the *number* and in the *nature* of the statements made by Jesus. It really makes an honest person seek some other

realistic meaning for his words. But this is very hard for some people to do – especially if they have been taught all their lives that the God, who is love, is also an eternal tormentor.

Gehenna in the Context of the Bible

So what did Jesus mean when He used the word Gehenna? Context is essential in determining this. Remember, the Greek meaning of the word is that it is a physical location in a valley just south of Jerusalem. However, words (even names of places) can take on meanings beyond their literal and original meaning. And this is true of Gehenna. It is obvious that Jesus is using it in some actual (or metaphorical) meaning beyond being a piece of real estate. Reading, again, the list of five uses above by Jesus makes this clear. But what did Jesus have in mind?

There are, basically, two options (or, possibly, some combination of these two). First, He might be using Gehenna in the way it was understood in his day. Jesus drew from all kinds of illustrations, walks of life, activities in nature, etc. Every speaker and writer does this – we all explain unknown things by using known things. And Jesus was a master of it. This is why He spoke so often in parables.

But, secondly, and more importantly, Jesus might have been referring to some historic place or event. This would be expected when referring to a physical location. Jesus, if He wanted to talk about some location in the spiritual realm, could have used the word Hades, or he could have made up a new word and define it as such, or he could have just stated more clearly that he was referring to someplace other than Hades. But instead he chose a historical location (and event) from the Old Testament writings. This is very significant because Jesus was big on the authority of Scripture. Jesus often appealed to scripture directly. In this case he used a term, Gehenna, that was already known historically by all Jews.

The word Gehenna literally means “the valley of Hinnom”, and it was a place in the time of Jerimiah when Israel worshipped false gods and even sacrificed their own children to them in that valley. God pronounced judgment on them (through Jerimiah) and told them that their bodies would be burned there.

Jer 7:30 For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight,” declares the Lord, “They have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. 31 They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind. 32 “Therefore,

behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place. 33 The dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten them away. 34 Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become a ruin.

This all came true when the dead from wars (that God brought upon them) were burned there. The valley became a place where everything was burned, and so it became well known in Jesus’ day as a place of continual fires.

So the question is, was Jesus using the word Gehenna to symbolize a place of eternal fire and torment of the dead based on the common understanding of Gehenna of that day? Or was Jesus using the word Gehenna to symbolize the judgment that God would bring on the current generation of his day, just as God did back in the days of Jeremiah? What is interesting is that the historical understanding of Gehenna never had any association with torment in the spiritual realm after death. This all came from the Pharisees, who Jesus opposed. Gehenna was, historically, always about God’s temporal judgment against Israel. It is also important to note that Jesus’ judgment on the Jews of those days was embodied in his prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. (See Matt 24). The choice is very simple. Would Jesus choose to use Gehenna to teach what the Pharisees of that day taught about eternal torment of the dead, or would he use Gehenna in reference to its historical meaning in Scripture to pronounce the same kind of temporal judgment on the Jews in his day?

There will always be people who will argue both ways on this, and the answer will always be speculative to at least some degree. But there is a much more important question. Would Jesus base his meaning of Gehenna on the Old Testament event from which it originated, or from the use of it by the Rabi of his day? Is there sufficient evidence to accuse the God who *is* love of being also one who will eternally torment those he loves and has created in his own image? Is this really what the Bible clearly teaches, or is it just what many people have been told all their lives? Based on the evidence about the word Gehenna shown so far, does the Bible really support a hell of torment? Your call! But, for me, I will never again accuse my Lord of such evil and cruelty when the evidence is so lacking. If God was on trial for being an eternal tormentor ... he would be acquitted for lack of evidence.

How Gehenna has been Translated

The English word hell is defined by Webster's as:

- A nether world in which the dead continue to exist.
- The nether realm of the devil and the demons in which the damned suffer everlasting punishment.
- Often used in curses (go to hell), or as a term of abuse (the hell with it).
- A place or state of misery, torment, or wickedness.
- A place or state of turmoil or destruction.
- A severe scolding (he gave me hell for coming in late).
- Unrestrained fun or sportiveness (the kids were full of hell).
- Often used in the phrase "for the hell of it" especially to suggest action on impulse or without a serious motive (I decided to go, just for the hell of it).
- An extremely unpleasant and often inescapable situation (I was stuck in rush-hour hell).
- Used as an interjection (hell, I don't know!), or as an intensive (hurts like hell; funny as hell).
- Often used in the phrase "hell of a..." (it was one hell of a good fight), or used as "the hell out of ..." (scared the hell out of him), or used with "the" or "in" (moved way the hell up north; what in hell is wrong, now?)

As you can see, the word hell is used in a variety of meanings, ranging from very literal to very figurative. Language needs such a word to express extreme situations (whether literal or figurative). But this is no reason to translate all four Greek words as "hell" in the English translation! Why not translate Gehenna like Hades and Sheol (transliterate the letters from Greek to English) so that the reader will know what was used in the Greek? Why use "hell" for Gehenna? When did this begin and why was this done?

One possible reason for translating Gehenna as “hell” is to accommodate a particular interpretation -- one that assumes that Gehenna is a spiritual location of torment for the dead. But still, why not use “Gehenna” so readers of the English Bible will have some clue of what was in the original language? Is not our goal to be as clear and accurate as possible? Does the Holy Spirit need help in interpreting Scripture? Is he not our “only teacher”? Young’s translation of the New Testament is one of the few that uses “Gehenna” instead of “hell.” It shows that he had a very high view of Scripture and that translation was not to be a tool for interpretation!

History of Gehenna

When did this all start? A majority of early believers (the generation right after Christ up until about 500 AD, after Constantine and in the days of Augustine) believed that God would fully restore everything and everyone (eventually) . They based this on the fact that the good news message (the gospel) is essentially a proclamation of the victory already won by Jesus for all humanity through his birth, death, and resurrection from the dead. And this is exactly what the word “gospel” (“evangel” in Greek) means. It comes from a description of those who came in from the battle field and proclaimed that the victory had already been won. It had nothing to do with anyone believing it (or not), and it was not an “offer” to activate the victory by believing. It was simply a declaration of good news.

This was also Paul’s gospel message. On Mars Hill he proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. Some believed it and some did not, but he never presented it as an *offer* by which they could make the resurrection valid by their faith. Those who did not believe were just as loved and forgiven by God (through Jesus) as those who believed. Unbelievers just didn’t acknowledge it or fully benefit from it (experientially). But all are equally saved by Jesus who is “The Savior of the World” and “the savior of all men.” This is why Paul warned (in the opening of his letter to the believers in Galatia) that any other gospel than the one he preached – the resurrection of Jesus – is a false gospel. Faith is our response to what God has done *for us*, through Jesus. As Paul said, “We are saved by Jesus alone.” Even our act of faith does not earn us anything with God. The act of Jesus, alone, earned everything for us. Any other gospel is false because it is not completely by the grace of God.

So, these early believers had every reason to believe that God would restore and bring into complete salvation all of humanity, whose sins were fully paid for by

Jesus on the cross. Therefore, they had no reason to believe that God would eternally punish anyone. And, in fact, God *cannot* punish anyone, because Jesus *already* paid the penalty for their sin. What is there to punish? Certainly, God may severely correct and discipline many who refuse to believe -- but he cannot torment them forever with no opportunity to repent, since they were bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

But there were also some during this period that believed that God would indeed *punish and torment* unbelievers for eternity. And, there were others who believed he would *annihilate* them after punishing them for a long period of time. But in those early days these were in the minority. Augustine, who is the great propagator of the idea of eternal damnation (Tertullian seems to have been the father of it many years before), complained that there were “so many who disagreed” with him, and did not accept his arguments in favor of eternal punishment that he laid out in his book *City of God*.

Things seem to be just about reversed in the church today (among both Protestants and Catholics) -- that those who believe in eternal torment outnumber those who believe in God’s eventual and full restoration. So what happened? It turns out that Augustine’s arguments eventually did take hold in the church. As the early church grew into Roman Catholicism, the tyranny and fear of eternal torment taught by its leaders also grew. And it had great power over people – as the history of the church clearly shows. Perhaps this is why “hell” was used (instead of Gehenna) in most translations.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther saw both the grace of God and the unlimited reach of the work of Jesus. And this was a true reformation of thought. It freed the church (and the world) from a great deal of “religious slavery” that had gained a huge hold. The reformation *claimed* to hold to “scripture alone, grace alone, and Christ alone”, but it seems it was not fully realized. Calvin seemed to truly hold to “grace alone”, but only for some – just those chosen by God. Nowhere in the Bible does it ever say God “passes over” anyone and chooses just some. But it does say many times in the New Testament that God does not show favoritism. Calvin failed to realize its unlimited application to all men. But when both are understood (salvation in Jesus is for all people, and that it is actual and complete – not potential) the gospel of grace, and grace alone, is maintained and proclaimed. (For more information on the history of Gehenna, see my four-part video series titled *The History of Eternal Punishment* on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdvpcvMPYM8&list=PL1jI9OL0CInDAYiaCJLM6WOp2GmyypN1X>).

Some Conclusions

As Paul often said in his letter to the believers in Rome, “What shall we say then”? Well, first of all, there is no way to prove that hell (as a place of eternal torment) does not exist, but neither can anyone prove that it does – at least not as a “slam-dunk” proof based on some collection of Bible verses, and certainly not to the satisfaction of everyone. But perhaps looking at all of this from a higher level will be of some help.

God is love. He loves everyone, all the time -- he always has and he always will. How could he not? He loves everyone the same; he has no favorites. All people are his favorites. No one is left out, denied, or shunned. And not only does God love everyone, he loves us infinitely. He cannot love us any more than he does – it is impossible.

Since God is love, he always acts in the best interest of those he loves. There is no better definition of love (and, therefore, of who God is) than these words taken from the famous *love chapter* in the Bible:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Love does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

All these things are true about God, because God is love!

When these same words are read using “God” instead of “love” (since he is love), it now reads: “God is patient, God is kind. He does not envy, He does not boast, he is not proud. God does not dishonor others, he is not self-seeking, he is not easily angered, he keeps no record of wrongs. God does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. He always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. God never fails.” A God like this is irresistibly wonderful. Could we expect any less of Him? This is who God is, and you can know him. He already knows you, and loves you more than you will ever know.

God is more than just “loving”; and love is more than just something God does. It is something he *is* -- it is the essence of his being. God has many attributes: he is eternal, spirit (exists beyond this material world), never changes, everywhere present, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, perfect, good, and patient. But love is what he *is* – always. He never stops loving, nor does his love fluctuate in the slightest amount. Everything God does is from a *motive* of love, always wanting

the best for all his creation – especially the human race, created to be a reflection of himself. Because of this, we all have a special connection with God that can never be broken. He will not allow it. We are all very important to him – more so than anything else.

It has been said that the ultimate purpose of man is to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” And this is true, because it is best when we focus on God rather than ourselves (or someone else). God asks this of us for our own good, not because He is an egotist. He knows that when we focus our attention on ourselves we become miserable people. He wants us to be joyous, happy, and at peace. But, if that is the ultimate purpose of man, what is the ultimate purpose of God? To glorify himself? Not the God who *is* love. Instead, the ultimate purpose of God is “to glorify man and enjoy him forever.” Wow, exactly backwards from our purpose. God wants all of us to become more like himself. And this is ultimate *glorification of mankind*.

God is love and everything he does is motivated by love because he wants only the very best for the whole world. Even his judgment and condemnation are acts of love. They have to be. How could they not be? What other motive could God have? Hate? Revenge? Retaliation? Punishment just for the sake of punishment (with no restoration or correction in mind)? Not possible! Not for the God who is love! God’s judgment is an accurate assessment of our condition – which is not always good. His goal is to make things right and make things better – all things for all people. God does not judge and condemn for the purpose of destroying and retaliating. God is truly magnanimous and forgiving. He is a redeemer and a restorer. He saves, improves, and re-creates the human race that he originally created very good. The only destroying and condemning God does is to remove forever all the bad and harmful things that reside in us – all the stuff that ruins us and keeps us from being the perfect people he intended us to be. He condemns the “old person” in us and makes us a “new person” in Jesus.

With God (unlike people) judgment and condemnation have only a good and loving purpose. For example, suppose I take my child to a doctor and he diagnoses him to have cancer. A loving doctor who really cares will “judge” my child as one having a terminal illness. This is an accurate statement, made in love, because it communicates the truth about my child’s condition. Would I prefer to be lied to in kindness? But even further, the same loving doctor rightly “condemns” my son when she declares that cancer will indeed take my child’s life if not treated. Judgment and condemnation are good when love is the motive and purpose behind them. In the case of this doctor, the motives are good because he wants to see my

child live. In the case of God, he wants us to live a beautiful and abundant life, forever!

The judgment and condemnation of the God (who is love) is likewise grounded in good motives and purpose -- the very best. Like the doctor, God's purpose is to heal and restore -- not to destroy. The only destroying God does is to get rid of the evil in us that destroys us. It is like the proverbial "not throwing out the baby with the bathwater", where a mother desires only to get rid of the dirty water and not her precious baby. It is no less true of God. He loves his world, and everyone in it, and he wants only to get rid of all that ruins us and keep the good he created in us that is a reflection of himself.

God's purpose for his the world never changes. It has been the same from all eternity. He loves and he wants only the best for all people, no matter what it takes. He has always loved us and always will. He knew that we would fall into ruin long before he created us. But he made us anyway knowing he had a greater and grander purpose for us, beyond the destruction we would bring upon ourselves. Rather than just creating human beings and preventing them from failing, he made them free and allowed them to do what they would inevitably do -- plunge themselves into ruin and despair. We see this every day, in our own lives and in the lives of others. No exceptions.

God, in his mercy, love, and wisdom, judged and condemned us as "less than good enough" -- but only did so in order to make us into something new and better. Much better! This is love, and this is what a God of love does -- makes things better. It is like condemning an old house that is moldy, rotten, and dangerous. Condemning such a building is good. But what is much better is the plan and purpose to erect a new and better building in its place. This is how God sees the human race. We are judged and condemned, but done so in love and with the purpose of re-creating new and better human beings to share his own nature and perfection.

For those who believe that God is an eternal tormenter, (without any opportunity to escape, even if one repents), and that He does so without any good purpose in mind, the burden of proof is on them to make the Biblical case *against* the infinite love of God. Keep in mind as you ponder this that all humanity was created in God's very own image and were fully paid for, and bought, with the high price of the precious blood of His own Son! Not only does God's perfect moral character not allow him to perform the most evil act of cruelty and retaliation imaginable by man, but the love he demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus (on the behalf of all men) guarantees that God has no reason to torment anyone, since all

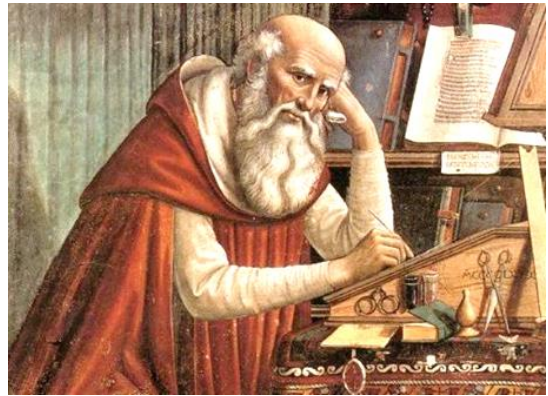
sin and judgment was paid for in full by Jesus, his Son. Paul summed it up this way, “God was in Jesus, reconciling the world to Himself.”

The stubborn facts about hell, along with our understanding of the complete and unlimited work of Jesus on the behalf of all mankind, plus our acknowledgment that God is love and good, and only does good, always – all of this should cause us to never accuse God of torment, torture, and cruelty. Instead, we should forever see him as one who always wants the very best for those he created and loves, and that his grace and mercy will never allow him to forsake or give up on anyone!

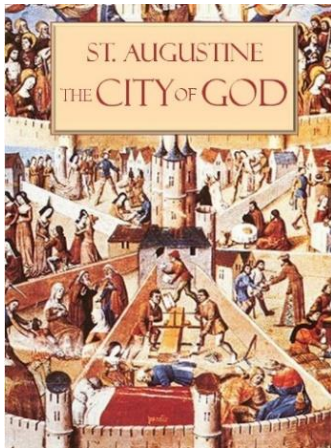
Augustine's View of Hell

The doctrine of hell and eternal punishment was best (and most thoroughly) articulated by Augustine in his monumental work titled the City of God. It is very clear that the Roman Catholic (and therefore Protestant) tradition of *eternal punishment* finds its foundation in Augustine.

It is hard to deny that Augustine is the great champion of eternal punishment in the history of the Christian church. Up until his day, even during his own times, the Christian church predominately held to the belief that God would eventually restore and reconcile all things and people to himself, even if he must do so through very severe means of corrective punishment through a process described as “fire.” (See the section later in this booklet titled *Early Church Writers on Restoration*). But after Augustine, the church in Rome (which became the dominate force in Western Christianity from about 500 AD onward) eventually adopted *eternal punishment* as the official position of the church. They did not officially adopt it until around 1000 AD. But the emperor Justinian promoted eternal punishment around 550 AD when he inserted himself into the Church Council in an attempt to silence the followers of Origen. Additionally, one unofficial creed (the pseudo-Athanasian creed around 500 AD) expressed it clearly, unlike all other official creeds prior to it.



However, in Augustine's own day (and even before), the Christian church never held eternal punishment as an official position (even though there were some Christians who held this view as their personal belief, like Tertullian). Augustine even lamented about how few people believed as he did and semi-mocked them for being too “tender-hearted”! But isn't such “tender-heartedness” clearly and predominately the character and “heart” of God as we know Him from the Bible as a whole? Over time, the church at Rome (which became the Roman Catholic Church), adopted eternal punishment as its official view of eternal destiny of unrepentant sinners in around 1200 AD (4th Lateran



Council, and the 1st and 2nd councils of Lyons). Eternal Punishment is one of many beliefs held by Augustine and adopted by the Western Church that has rendered him the “most influential thinker” in Church History –for better or for worse!

Augustine literally wrote the book on eternal punishment in *Book XXI* of his monumental work titled “The City of God” (here is a link to it: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120121.htm>). This book reveals clearly where Augustine stood on God’s purpose in punishment. And his view is clearly different from the view of most Early Christians who came before him (as this booklet demonstrates) who believed that God’s purpose in punishment is corrective, restorative, and healing in nature. Big difference! Key chapters from his lengthy twenty-first book in City of God are presented below to demonstrate his clear commitment to eternal punishment. Key passages have been underlined.

AUGUSTINE’S CITY OF GOD

Book XXI.

Of the end reserved for the city of the devil, namely, the eternal punishment of the damned; and of the arguments which unbelief brings against it.

Chapter 1.—Of the Order of the Discussion, Which Requires that We First Speak of the Eternal Punishment of the Lost in Company with the Devil, and Then of the Eternal Happiness of the Saints.

I Propose, with such ability as God may grant me, to discuss in this book more thoroughly the nature of the punishment which shall be assigned to the devil and all his retainers, when the two cities, the one of God, the other of the devil, shall have reached their proper ends through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Judge of quick and dead. And I have adopted this order, and preferred to speak, first of the punishment of the devils, and afterwards of the blessedness of the saints, because the body partakes of either destiny; and it seems to be more incredible that bodies endure in everlasting torments than that they continue to exist without any pain in everlasting felicity. Consequently, when I shall have demonstrated that that punishment ought not to be incredible, this will materially aid me in proving that which is much more credible, viz., the immortality of the bodies of the saints which are delivered from all pain. Neither is this order out of harmony with the divine writings, in which sometimes, indeed, the blessedness of the good is placed first, as in the words, “They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment;” but sometimes also last, as, “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things which offend, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of His Father;” and that, “These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” And though we have not room to cite instances, anyone who examines the prophets will find that

they adopt now the one arrangement and now the other. My own reason for following the latter order I have given.

Chapter 2.—Whether It is Possible for Bodies to Last for Ever in Burning Fire.

What, then, can I adduce to convince those who refuse to believe that human bodies, animated and living, can not only survive death, but also last in the torments of everlasting fires? They will not allow us to refer this simply to the power of the Almighty, but demand that we persuade them by some example. If, then, we reply to them, that there are animals which certainly are corruptible, because they are mortal, and which yet live in the midst of flames; and likewise, that in springs of water so hot that no one can put his hand in it with impunity a species of worm is found, which not only lives there, but cannot live elsewhere; they either refuse to believe these facts unless we can show them, or, if we are in circumstances to prove them by ocular demonstration or by adequate testimony, they contend, with the same skepticism, that these facts are not examples of what we seek to prove, inasmuch as these animals do not live forever, and besides, they live in that blaze of heat without pain, the element of fire being congenial to their nature, and causing it to thrive and not to suffer,—just as if it were not more incredible that it should thrive than that it should suffer in such circumstances. It is strange that anything should suffer in fire and yet live, but stranger that it should live in fire and not suffer. If, then, the latter be believed, why not also the former?

Chapter 3.—Whether Bodily Suffering Necessarily Terminates in the Destruction of the Flesh.

But, say they, there is no body which can suffer and cannot also die. How do we know this? For who can say with certainty that the devils do not suffer in their bodies, when they own that they are grievously tormented? And if it is replied that there is no earthly body—that is to say, no solid and perceptible body, or, in one word, no flesh—which can suffer and cannot die, is not this to tell us only what men have gathered from experience and their bodily senses? For they indeed have no acquaintance with any flesh but that which is mortal; and this is their whole argument, that what they have had no experience of they judge quite impossible. For we cannot call it reasoning to make pain a presumption of death, while, in fact, it is rather a sign of life. For though it be a question whether that which suffers can continue to live forever, yet it is certain that everything which suffers pain does live, and that pain can exist only in a living subject. It is necessary, therefore, that he who is pained be living, not necessary that pain kill him; for every pain does not kill even those mortal bodies of ours which are destined to die. And that any pain kills them is caused by the circumstance that the soul is so connected with the body that it succumbs to great pain and withdraws; for the structure of our members and vital parts is so infirm that it cannot bear up against that violence which causes great or extreme agony. But in the life to come this connection of soul and body is of such a kind, that as it is dissolved by no lapse of time, so neither is it burst asunder by any pain. And so, although it be true that in this world there is no flesh which can suffer pain and yet cannot die, yet in the world to come there shall be flesh such as now there is not, as there will also be death such as now there is not. For death will not be abolished, but will be eternal, since the soul will neither be able to enjoy God and live, nor to die and escape the pains of the body. The first death drives the soul from the body against her will: the second death holds the soul in the body against her will. The two have this in common, that the soul suffers against her will what her own body inflicts.

Our opponents, too, make much of this, that in this world there is no flesh which can suffer pain and cannot die; while they make nothing of the fact that there is something which is greater than the body. For the

spirit, whose presence animates and rules the body, can both suffer pain and cannot die. Here then is something which, though it can feel pain, is immortal. And this capacity, which we now see in the spirit of all, shall be hereafter in the bodies of the damned. Moreover, if we attend to the matter a little more closely, we see that what is called bodily pain is rather to be referred to the soul. For it is the soul not the body, which is pained, even when the pain originates with the body,—the soul feeling pain at the point where the body is hurt. As then we speak of bodies feeling and living, though the feeling and life of the body are from the soul, so also we speak of bodies being pained, though no pain can be suffered by the body apart from the soul. The soul, then, is pained with the body in that part where something occurs to hurt it; and it is pained alone, though it be in the body, when some invisible cause distresses it, while the body is safe and sound. Even when not associated with the body it is pained; for certainly that rich man was suffering in hell when he cried, “I am tormented in this flame.” But as for the body, it suffers no pain when it is soulless; and even when animate it can suffer only by the soul’s suffering. If, therefore, we might draw a just presumption from the existence of pain to that of death, and conclude that where pain can be felt death can occur, death would rather be the property of the soul, for to it pain more peculiarly belongs. But, seeing that that which suffers most cannot die, what ground is there for supposing that those bodies, because destined to suffer, are therefore, destined to die? The Platonists indeed maintained that these earthly bodies and dying members gave rise to the fears, desires, griefs, and joys of the soul. “Hence,” says Virgil (i.e., from these earthly bodies and dying members), “Hence wild desires and groveling fears, And human laughter, human tears.” But in the fourteenth book of this work we have proved that, according to the Platonists’ own theory, souls, even when purged from all pollution of the body, are yet possessed by a monstrous desire to return again into their bodies. But where desire can exist, certainly pain also can exist; for desire frustrated, either by missing what it aims at or losing what it had attained, is turned into pain. And therefore, if the soul, which is either the only or the chief sufferer, has yet a kind of immortality of its own, it is inconsequent to say that because the bodies of the damned shall suffer pain, therefore they shall die. In fine, if the body causes the soul to suffer, why can the body not cause death as well as suffering, unless because it does not follow that what causes pain causes death as well? And why then is it incredible that these fires can cause pain but not death to those bodies we speak of, just as the bodies themselves cause pain, but not therefore death, to the souls? Pain is therefore no necessary presumption of death.

Chapter 9.—Of Hell, and the Nature of Eternal Punishments.

So then what God by His prophet has said of the everlasting punishment of the damned shall come to pass—shall without fail come to pass,—“their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” In order to impress this upon us most forcibly, the Lord Jesus Himself, when ordering us to cut off our members, meaning thereby those persons whom a man loves as the most useful members of his body, says, “It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” Similarly of the foot: “It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” So, too, of the eye: “It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” He did not shrink from using the same words three times over in one passage. And who is not terrified by this repetition, and by the threat of that punishment uttered so vehemently by the lips of the Lord Himself?

Now they who would refer both the fire and the worm to the spirit, and not to the body, affirm that the wicked, who are separated from the kingdom of God, shall be burned, as it were, by the anguish of a spirit repenting too late and fruitlessly; and they contend that fire is therefore not inappropriately used to express this burning torment, as when the apostle exclaims "Who is offended, and I burn not?" The worm, too, they think, is to be similarly understood. For it is written they say, "As the moth consumes the garment, and the worm the wood, so does grief consume the heart of a man." But they who make no doubt that in that future punishment both body and soul shall suffer, affirm that the body shall be burned with fire, while the soul shall be, as it were, gnawed by a worm of anguish. Though this view is more reasonable,—for it is absurd to suppose that either body or soul will escape pain in the future punishment,—yet, for my own part, I find it easier to understand both as referring to the body than to suppose that neither does; and I think that Scripture is silent regarding the spiritual pain of the damned, because, though not expressed, it is necessarily understood that in a body thus tormented the soul also is tortured with a fruitless repentance. For we read in the ancient Scriptures, "The vengeance of the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms." It might have been more briefly said, "The vengeance of the ungodly." Why, then, was it said, "The flesh of the ungodly," unless because both the fire and the worm are to be the punishment of the flesh? Or if the object of the writer in saying, "The vengeance of the flesh," was to indicate that this shall be the punishment of those who live after the flesh (for this leads to the second death, as the apostle intimated when he said, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die", let each one make his own choice, either assigning the fire to the body and the worm to the soul,—the one figuratively, the other really,—or assigning both really to the body. For I have already sufficiently made out that animals can live in the fire, in burning without being consumed, in pain without dying, by a miracle of the most omnipotent Creator, to whom no one can deny that this is possible, if he be not ignorant by whom has been made all that is wonderful in all nature. For it is God Himself who has wrought all these miracles, great and small, in this world which I have mentioned, and incomparably more which I have omitted, and who has enclosed these marvels in this world, itself the greatest miracle of all. Let each man, then, choose which he will, whether he thinks that the worm is real and pertains to the body, or that spiritual things are meant by bodily representations, and that it belongs to the soul. But which of these is true will be more readily discovered by the facts themselves, when there shall be in the saints such knowledge as shall not require that their own experience teach them the nature of these punishments, but as shall, by its own fullness and perfection, suffice to instruct them in this matter. For "now we know in part, until that which is perfect is come;" only, this we believe about those future bodies, that they shall be such as shall certainly be pained by the fire.

Chapter 10.—Whether the Fire of Hell, If It Be Material Fire, Can Burn the Wicked Spirits, that is to Say, Devils, Who are Immaterial.

Here arises the question: If the fire is not to be immaterial, analogous to the pain of the soul, but material, burning by contact, so that bodies may be tormented in it, how can evil spirits be punished in it? For it is undoubtedly the same fire which is to serve for the punishment of men and of devils, according to the words of Christ: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" unless, perhaps, as learned men have thought, the devils have a kind of body made of that dense and humid air which we feel strikes us when the wind is blowing. And if this kind of substance could not be affected by fire, it could not burn when heated in the baths. For in order to burn, it is first burned, and affects other things as itself is affected. But if any one maintains that the devils have no bodies, this is not a matter either to be laboriously investigated, or to be debated with keenness. For why may we not assert that even immaterial spirits may, in some extraordinary way, yet really be pained by the punishment of material fire, if the spirits of men, which also are certainly immaterial, are both now contained in material

members of the body, and in the world to come shall be indissolubly united to their own bodies? Therefore, though the devils have no bodies, yet their spirits, that is, the devils themselves, shall be brought into thorough contact with the material fires, to be tormented by them; not that the fires themselves with which they are brought into contact shall be animated by their connection with these spirits, and become animals composed of body and spirit, but, as I said, this junction will be effected in a wonderful and ineffable way, so that they shall receive pain from the fires, but give no life to them. And, in truth, this other mode of union, by which bodies and spirits are bound together and become animals, is thoroughly marvelous, and beyond the comprehension of man, though this it is which is man.

I would indeed say that these spirits will burn without any body of their own, as that rich man was burning in hell when he exclaimed, "I am tormented in this flame," were I not aware that it is aptly said in reply, that that flame was of the same nature as the eyes he raised and fixed on Lazarus, as the tongue on which he entreated that a little cooling water might be dropped, or as the finger of Lazarus, with which he asked that this might be done,—all of which took place where souls exist without bodies. Thus, therefore, both that flame in which he burned and that drop he begged were immaterial, and resembled the visions of sleepers or persons in an ecstasy, to whom immaterial objects appear in a bodily form. For the man himself who is in such a state, though it be in spirit only, not in body, yet sees himself so like to his own body that he cannot discern any difference whatever. But that hell, which also is called a lake of fire and brimstone, will be material fire, and will torment the bodies of the damned, whether men or devils,—the solid bodies of the one, aerial bodies of the others; or if only men have bodies as well as souls, yet the evil spirits, though without bodies, shall be so connected with the bodily fires as to receive pain without imparting life. One fire certainly shall be the lot of both, for thus the truth has declared.

Chapter 11.—Whether It is Just that the Punishments of Sins Last Longer Than the Sins Themselves Lasted.

Some, however, of those against whom we are defending the city of God, think it unjust that any man be doomed to an eternal punishment for sins which, no matter how great they were, were perpetrated in a brief space of time; as if any law ever regulated the duration of the punishment by the duration of the offence punished! Cicero tells us that the laws recognize eight kinds of penalty,—damages, imprisonment, scourging, reparation, disgrace, exile, death, slavery. Is there any one of these which may be compressed into a brevity proportioned to the rapid commission of the offence, so that no longer time may be spent in its punishment than in its perpetration, unless, perhaps, reparation? For this requires that the offender suffer what he did, as that clause of the law says, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." For certainly it is possible for an offender to lose his eye by the severity of legal retaliation in as brief a time as he deprived another of his eye by the cruelty of his own lawlessness. But if scourging be a reasonable penalty for kissing another man's wife, is not the fault of an instant visited with long hours of atonement, and the momentary delight punished with lasting pain? What shall we say of imprisonment? Must the criminal be confined only for so long a time as he spent on the offence for which he is committed? or is not a penalty of many years' confinement imposed on the slave who has provoked his master with a word, or has struck him a blow that is quickly over? And as to damages, disgrace, exile, slavery, which are commonly inflicted so as to admit of no relaxation or pardon, do not these resemble eternal punishments in so far as this short life allows a resemblance? For they are not eternal only because the life in which they are endured is not eternal; and yet the crimes which are punished with these most protracted sufferings are perpetrated in a very brief space of time. Nor is there anyone who would suppose that the pains of punishment should occupy as short a time as the offense; or that murder, adultery, sacrilege, or any other crime, should be measured, not

by the enormity of the injury or wickedness, but by the length of time spent in its perpetration. Then as to the award of death for any great crime, do the laws reckon the punishment to consist in the brief moment in which death is inflicted, or in this, that the offender is eternally banished from the society of the living? And just as the punishment of the first death cuts men off from this present mortal city, so does the punishment of the second death cut men off from that future immortal city. For as the laws of this present city do not provide for the executed criminal's return to it, so neither is he who is condemned to the second death recalled again to life everlasting. But if temporal sin is visited with eternal punishment, how, then, they say, is that true which your Christ says, "With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again?" and they do not observe that "the same measure" refers, not to an equal space of time, but to the retribution of evil or, in other words, to the law by which he who has done evil suffers evil. Besides, these words could be appropriately understood as referring to the matter of which our Lord was speaking when He used them, viz., judgments and condemnation. Thus, if he who unjustly judges and condemns is himself justly judged and condemned, he receives "with the same measure" though not the same thing as he gave. For judgment he gave, and judgment he receives, though the judgment he gave was unjust, the judgment he receives just.

Chapter 12.—Of the Greatness of the First Transgression, on Account of Which Eternal Punishment is Due to All Who are Not Within the Pale of the Savior's Grace.

But eternal punishment seems hard and unjust to human perceptions, because in the weakness of our mortal condition there is wanting that highest and purest wisdom by which it can be perceived how great a wickedness was committed in that first transgression. The more enjoyment man found in God, the greater was his wickedness in abandoning Him; and he who destroyed in himself a good which might have been eternal, became worthy of eternal evil. Hence the whole mass of the human race is condemned; for he who at first gave entrance to sin has been punished with all his posterity who were in him as in a root, so that no one is exempt from this just and due punishment, unless delivered by mercy and undeserved grace; and the human race is so apportioned that in some is displayed the efficacy of merciful grace, in the rest the efficacy of just retribution. For both could not be displayed in all; for if all had remained under the punishment of just condemnation, there would have been seen in no one the mercy of redeeming grace. And, on the other hand, if all had been transferred from darkness to light, the severity of retribution would have been manifested in none. But many more are left under punishment than are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all. And had it been inflicted on all, no one could justly have found fault with the justice of Him who taketh vengeance; whereas, in the deliverance of so many from that just award, there is cause to render the most cordial thanks to the gratuitous bounty of Him who delivers.

Chapter 13.—Against the Opinion of Those Who Think that the Punishments of the Wicked After Death are Purgatorial.

The Platonists, indeed, while they maintain that no sins are unpunished, suppose that all punishment is administered for remedial purposes, be it inflicted by human or divine law, in this life or after death; for a man may be scathless here, or, though punished, may yet not amend. Hence that passage of Virgil, where, when he had said of our earthly bodies and mortal members, that our souls derive— "Hence wild desires and groveling fears, And human laughter, human tears; Immured in dungeon-seeming night, They look abroad, yet see no light," goes on to say: "Nay, when at last the life has fled, And left the body cold

and dead, Ee'n then there passes not away The painful heritage of clay; Full many a long-contracted stain Performe must linger deep in grain. So penal sufferings they endure For ancient crime, to make them pure; Some hang aloft in open view, For winds to pierce them through and through, While others purge their guilt deep-dyed In burning fire or whelming tide."

They who are of this opinion would have all punishments after death to be purgatorial; and as the elements of air, fire, and water are superior to earth, one or other of these may be the instrument of expiating and purging away the stain contracted by the contagion of earth. So Virgil hints at the air in the words, "Some hang aloft for winds to pierce;" at the water in "whelming tide;" and at fire in the expression "in burning fire." For our part, we recognize that even in this life some punishments are purgatorial,—not, indeed, to those whose life is none the better, but rather the worse for them, but to those who are constrained by them to amend their life. All other punishments, whether temporal or eternal, inflicted as they are on every one by divine providence, are sent either on account of past sins, or of sins presently allowed in the life, or to exercise and reveal a man's graces. They may be inflicted by the instrumentality of bad men and angels as well as of the good. For even if anyone suffers some hurt through another's wickedness or mistake, the man indeed sins whose ignorance or injustice does the harm; but God, who by His just though hidden judgment permits it to be done, sins not. But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But of those who suffer temporary punishments after death, all are not doomed to those everlasting pains which are to follow that judgment; for to some, as we have already said, what is not remitted in this world is remitted in the next, that is, they are not punished with the eternal punishment of the world to come.

Chapter 14.—Of the Temporary Punishments of This Life to Which the Human Condition is Subject.

Quite exceptional are those who are not punished in this life, but only afterwards. Yet that there have been some who have reached the decrepitude of age without experiencing even the slightest sickness, and who have had uninterrupted enjoyment of life, I know both from report and from my own observation. However, the very life we mortals lead is itself all punishment, for it is all temptation, as the Scriptures declare, where it is written, "Is not the life of man upon earth a temptation?" For ignorance is itself no slight punishment, or want of culture, which it is with justice thought so necessary to escape, that boys are compelled, under pain of severe punishment, to learn trades or letters; and the learning to which they are driven by punishment is itself so much of a punishment to them, that they sometimes prefer the pain that drives them to the pain to which they are driven by it. And who would not shrink from the alternative, and elect to die, if it were proposed to him either to suffer death or to be again an infant? Our infancy, indeed, introducing us to this life not with laughter but with tears, seems unconsciously to predict the ills we are to encounter. Zoroaster alone is said to have laughed when he was born, and that unnatural omen portended no good to him. For he is said to have been the inventor of magical arts, though indeed they were unable to secure to him even the poor felicity of this present life against the assaults of his enemies. For, himself king of the Bactrians, he was conquered by Ninus king of the Assyrians. In short, the words of Scripture, "An heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to the mother of all things,"—these words so infallibly find fulfillment, that even the little ones, who by the layer of regeneration have been freed from the bond of original sin in which alone they were held, yet suffer many ills, and in some instances are even exposed to the assaults of evil spirits. But let us not for a moment suppose that this suffering is prejudicial to their future happiness, even though it has so increased as to sever soul from body, and to terminate their life in that early age.

Chapter 17.—Of Those Who Fancy that No Men Shall Be Punished Eternally.

I must now, I see, enter the lists of amicable controversy with those tender-hearted Christians who decline to believe that any, or that all of those whom the infallibly just Judge may pronounce worthy of the punishment of hell, shall suffer eternally, and who suppose that they shall be delivered after a fixed term of punishment, longer or shorter according to the amount of each man's sin. In respect of this matter, Origen was even more indulgent; for he believed that even the devil himself and his angels, after suffering those more severe and prolonged pains which their sins deserved, should be delivered from their torments, and associated with the holy angels. But the Church, not without reason, condemned him for this and other errors, especially for his theory of the ceaseless alternation of happiness and misery, and the interminable transitions from the one state to the other at fixed periods of ages; for in this theory he lost even the credit of being merciful, by allotting to the saints real miseries for the expiation of their sins, and false happiness, which brought them no true and secure joy, that is, no fearless assurance of eternal blessedness. Very different, however, is the error we speak of, which is dictated by the tenderness of these Christians who suppose that the sufferings of those who are condemned in the judgment will be temporary, while the blessedness of all who are sooner or later set free will be eternal. Which opinion, if it is good and true because it is merciful, will be so much the better and truer in proportion as it becomes more merciful. Let, then, this fountain of mercy be extended, and flow forth even to the lost angels, and let them also be set free, at least after as many and long ages as seem fit! Why does this stream of mercy flow to all the human race, and dry up as soon as it reaches the angelic? And yet they dare not extend their pity further, and propose the deliverance of the devil himself. Or if anyone is bold enough to do so, he does indeed put to shame their charity, but is himself convicted of error that is more unsightly, and a wresting of God's truth that is more perverse, in proportion as his clemency of sentiment seems to be greater.

Chapter 23.—Against Those Who are of Opinion that the Punishment Neither of the Devil Nor of Wicked Men Shall Be Eternal.

First of all, it behoves us to inquire and to recognize why the Church has not been able to tolerate the idea that promises cleansing or indulgence to the devil even after the most severe and protracted punishment. For so many holy men, imbued with the spirit of the Old and New Testament, did not grudge to angels of any rank or character that they should enjoy the blessedness of the heavenly kingdom after being cleansed by suffering, but rather they perceived that they could not invalidate nor evacuate the divine sentence which the Lord predicted that He would pronounce in the judgment, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." For here it is evident that the devil and his angels shall burn in everlasting fire. And there is also that declaration in the Apocalypse, "The devil their deceiver was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also are the beast and the false prophet. And they shall be tormented day and night forever." In the former passage "everlasting" is used, in the latter "forever;" and by these words Scripture is wont to mean nothing else than endless duration. And therefore no other reason, no reason more obvious and just, can be found for holding it as the fixed and immovable belief of the truest piety, that the devil and his angels shall never return to the justice and life of the saints, than that Scripture, which deceives no man, says that God spared them not, and that they were condemned beforehand by Him, and cast into prisons of darkness in hell, being reserved to the judgment of the last day, when eternal fire shall receive them, in which they shall be tormented world without end. And

if this be so, how can it be believed that all men, or even some, shall be withdrawn from the endurance of punishment after some time has been spent in it? how can this be believed without enervating our faith in the eternal punishment of the devils? For if all or some of those to whom it shall be said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," are not to be always in that fire, then what reason is there for believing that the devil and his angels shall always be there? Or is perhaps the sentence of God, which is to be pronounced on wicked men and angels alike, to be true in the case of the angels, false in that of men? Plainly it will be so if the conjectures of men are to weigh more than the word of God. But because this is absurd, they who desire to be rid of eternal punishment ought to abstain from arguing against God, and rather, while yet there is opportunity, obey the divine commands. Then what a fond fancy is it to suppose that eternal punishment means long continued punishment, while eternal life means life without end, since Christ in the very same passage spoke of both in similar terms in one and the same sentence, These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal! Matthew 25:46 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 correlative — on the one hand, punishment eternal, on the other hand, life eternal. And to say in one and the same sense, life eternal shall be endless, punishment eternal shall come to an end, is the height of absurdity. Wherefore, as the eternal life of the saints shall be endless, so too the eternal punishment of those who are doomed to it shall have no end.

Chapter 26.—What It is to Have Christ for a Foundation, and Who They are to Whom Salvation as by Fire is Promised.

But, say they, the catholic Christians have Christ for a foundation, and they have not fallen away from union with Him, no matter how depraved a life they have built on this foundation, as wood, hay, stubble; and accordingly the well-directed faith by which Christ is their foundation will suffice to deliver them some time from the continuance of that fire, though it be with loss, since those things they have built on it shall be burned. Let the Apostle James summarily reply to them: "If any man say he has faith, and have not works, can faith save him?" And who then is it, they ask, of whom the Apostle Paul says, "But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire?" Let us join them in their inquiry; and one thing is very certain, that it is not he of whom James speaks, else we should make the two apostles contradict one another, if the one says, "Though a man's works be evil, his faith will save him as by fire," while the other says, "If he have not good works, can his faith save him?"

We shall then ascertain who it is who can be saved by fire, if we first discover what it is to have Christ for a foundation. And this we may very readily learn from the image itself. In a building the foundation is first. Whoever, then, has Christ in his heart, so that no earthly or temporal things—not even those that are legitimate and allowed—are preferred to Him, has Christ as a foundation. But if these things be preferred, then even though a man seem to have faith in Christ, yet Christ is not the foundation to that man; and much more if he, in contempt of wholesome precepts, seek forbidden gratifications, is he clearly convicted of putting Christ not first but last, since he has despised Him as his ruler, and has preferred to fulfill his own wicked lusts, in contempt of Christ's commands and allowances. Accordingly, if any Christian man loves a harlot, and, attaching himself to her, becomes one body, he has not now Christ for a foundation. But if any one loves his own wife, and loves her as Christ would have him love her, who can doubt that he has Christ for a foundation? But if he loves her in the world's fashion, carnally, as the disease of lust prompts him, and as the Gentiles love who know not God, even this the apostle, or rather Christ by the apostle, allows as a venial fault. And therefore even *such a man may have Christ for a foundation. For so long as he does not prefer such an affection or pleasure to Christ, Christ is his foundation*, though on it he builds wood, hay,

stubble; and therefore he shall be saved as by fire. For the fire of affliction shall burn such luxurious pleasures and earthly loves, though they be not damnable, because enjoyed in lawful wedlock. And of this fire the fuel is bereavement, and all those calamities which consume these joys. Consequently the superstructure will be loss to him who has built it, for he shall not retain it, but shall be agonized by the loss of those things in the enjoyment of which he found pleasure. But by this fire he shall be saved through virtue of the foundation, because even if a persecutor demanded whether he would retain Christ or these things, he would prefer Christ. Would you hear, in the apostle's own words, who he is who builds on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones? "He that is unmarried," he says, "careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." Would you hear who he is that buildeth wood, hay, stubble? "But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it,"—the day, no doubt, of tribulation—"because," says he, "it shall be revealed by fire." He calls tribulation fire, just as it is elsewhere said, "The furnace proves the vessels of the potter, and the trial of affliction righteous men." And "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide"—for a man's care for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, abides—"which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward,"—that is, he shall reap the fruit of his care. "But if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss,"—for what he loved he shall not retain:—"but he himself shall be saved,"—for no tribulation shall have moved him from that stable foundation,—"yet so as by fire;" for that which he possessed with the sweetness of love he does not lose without the sharp sting of pain. Here, then, as seems to me, we have a fire which destroys neither, but enriches the one, brings loss to the other, proves both.

But if this passage [of Corinthians] is to interpret that fire of which the Lord shall say to those on His left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," so that among these we are to believe there are those who build on the foundation wood, hay, stubble, and that they, through virtue of the good foundation, shall after a time be liberated from the fire that is the award of their evil deserts, what then shall we think of those on the right hand, to whom it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," unless that they are those who have built on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones? But if the fire of which our Lord speaks is the same as that of which the apostle says, "Yet so as by fire," then both—that is to say, both those on the right as well as those on the left—are to be cast into it. For that fire is to try both, since it is said, "For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." If, therefore, the fire shall try both, in order that if any man's work abide—i.e., if the superstructure be not consumed by the fire—he may receive a reward, and that if his work is burned he may suffer loss, certainly that fire is not the eternal fire itself. For into this latter fire only those on the left hand shall be cast, and that with final and everlasting doom; but that former fire proves those on the right hand. But some of them it so proves that it does not burn and consume the structure which is found to have been built by them on Christ as the foundation; while others of them it proves in another fashion, so as to burn what they have built up, and thus cause them to suffer loss, while they themselves are saved because they have retained Christ, who was laid as their sure foundation, and have loved Him above all. But if they are saved, then certainly they shall stand at the right hand, and shall with the rest hear the sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and not at the left hand, where those shall be who shall not be saved, and shall therefore hear the doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." For from that fire no man shall be saved, because they all shall go away into eternal punishment, where their worms shall not die, nor their fire be quenched, in which they shall be tormented day and night for ever.

But if it be said that in the interval of time between the death of this body and that last day of judgment and retribution which shall follow the resurrection, the bodies of the dead shall be exposed to a fire of such a

nature that it shall not affect those who have not in this life indulged in such pleasures and pursuits as shall be consumed like wood, hay, stubble, but shall affect those others who have carried with them structures of that kind; if it be said that such worldliness, being venial, shall be consumed in the fire of tribulation either here only, or here and hereafter both, or here that it may not be hereafter,—this I do not contradict, because possibly it is true. For perhaps even the death of the body is itself a part of this tribulation, for it results from the first transgression, so that the time which follows death takes its color in each case from the nature of the man's building. The persecutions, too, which have crowned the martyrs, and which Christians of all kinds suffer, try both buildings like a fire, consuming some, along with the builders themselves, if Christ is not found in them as their foundation, while others they consume without the builders, because Christ is found in them, and they are saved, though with loss; and other buildings still they do not consume, because such materials as abide forever are found in them. In the end of the world there shall be in the time of Antichrist tribulation such as has never before been. How many edifices there shall then be, of gold or of hay, built on the best foundation, Christ Jesus, which that fire shall prove, bringing joy to some, loss to others, but without destroying either sort, because of this stable foundation! But whosoever prefers, I do not say his wife, with whom he lives for carnal pleasure, but any of those relatives who afford no delight of such a kind, and whom it is right to love,—whosoever prefers these to Christ, and loves them after a human and carnal fashion, has not Christ as a foundation, and will therefore not be saved by fire, nor indeed at all; for he shall not possibly dwell with the Savior, who says very explicitly concerning this very matter, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." But he who loves his relations carnally, and yet so that he does not prefer them to Christ, but would rather want them than Christ if he were put to the proof, shall be saved by fire, because it is necessary that by the loss of these relations he suffer pain in proportion to his love. And he who loves father, mother, sons, daughters, according to Christ, so that he aids them in obtaining His kingdom and cleaving to Him, or loves them because they are members of Christ, God forbid that this love should be consumed as wood, hay, stubble, and not rather be reckoned a structure of gold, silver, precious stones. For how can a man love those more than Christ whom he loves only for Christ's sake?

Chapter 27.—Against the Belief of Those Who Think that the Sins Which Have Been Accompanied with Almsgiving Will Do Them No Harm.

It remains to reply to those who maintain that those only shall burn in eternal fire who neglect alms-deeds proportioned to their sins, resting this opinion on the words of the Apostle James, "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy." Therefore, they say, he that hath showed mercy, though he has not reformed his dissolute conduct, but has lived wickedly and iniquitously even while abounding in alms, shall have a merciful judgment, so that he shall either be not condemned at all, or shall be delivered from final judgment after a time. And for the same reason they suppose that Christ will discriminate between those on the right hand and those on the left, and will send the one party into His kingdom, the other into eternal punishment, on the sole ground of their attention to or neglect of works of charity. Moreover, they endeavor to use the prayer which the Lord Himself taught as a proof and bulwark of their opinion, that daily sins which are never abandoned can be expiated through alms-deeds, no matter how offensive or of what sort they be. For, say they, as there is no day on which Christians ought not to use this prayer, so there is no sin of any kind which, though committed every day, is not remitted when we say, "Forgive us our debts," if we take care to fulfill what follows, "as we forgive our debtors." For, they go on to say, the Lord does not say, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you your little daily sins," but "will

forgive you your sins.” Therefore, be they of any kind or magnitude whatever, be they perpetrated daily and never abandoned or subdued in this life, they can be pardoned, they presume, through alms-deeds.

But they are right to inculcate the giving of alms proportioned to past sins; for if they said that any kind of alms could obtain the divine pardon of great sins committed daily and with habitual enormity, if they said that such sins could thus be daily remitted, they would see that their doctrine was absurd and ridiculous. For they would thus be driven to acknowledge that it were possible for a very wealthy man to buy absolution from murders, adulteries, and all manner of wickedness, by paying a daily alms of ten paltry coins. And if it be most absurd and insane to make such an acknowledgment, and if we still ask what are those fitting alms of which even the forerunner of Christ said, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,” undoubtedly it will be found that they are not such as are done by men who undermine their life by daily enormities even to the very end. For they suppose that by giving to the poor a small fraction of the wealth they acquire by extortion and spoliation they can propitiate Christ, so that they may with impunity commit the most damnable sins, in the persuasion that they have bought from Him a license to transgress, or rather do buy a daily indulgence. And if they for one crime have distributed all their goods to Christ’s needy members, that could profit them nothing unless they desisted from all similar actions, and attained charity which worketh no evil. He therefore who does alms-deeds proportioned to his sins must first begin with himself. For it is not reasonable that a man who exercises charity towards his neighbor should not do so towards himself, since he hears the Lord saying, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” and again, “Have compassion on thy soul, and please God.” He then who has not compassion on his own soul that he may please God, how can he be said to do alms-deeds proportioned to his sins? To the same purpose is that written, “He who is bad to himself, to whom can he be good?” We ought therefore to do alms that we may be heard when we pray that our past sins may be forgiven, not that while we continue in them we may think to provide ourselves with a license for wickedness by alms-deeds.

The reason, therefore, of our predicting that He will impute to those on His right hand the alms-deeds they have done, and charge those on His left with omitting the same, is that He may thus show the efficacy of charity for the deletion of past sins, not for impunity in their perpetual commission. And such persons, indeed, as decline to abandon their evil habits of life for a better course cannot be said to do charitable deeds. For this is the purport of the saying, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” He shows them that they do not perform charitable actions even when they think they are doing so. For if they gave bread to a hungry Christian because he is a Christian, assuredly they would not deny to themselves the bread of righteousness, that is, Christ Himself; for God considers not the person to whom the gift is made, but the spirit in which it is made. He therefore who loves Christ in a Christian extends alms to him in the same spirit in which he draws near to Christ, not in that spirit which would abandon Christ if it could do so with impunity. For in proportion as a man loves what Christ disapproves does he himself abandon Christ. For what does it profit a man that he is baptized, if he is not justified? Did not He who said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God,” say also, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?” Why do many through fear of the first saying run to baptism, while few through fear of the second seek to be justified? As therefore it is not to his brother a man says, “Thou fool,” if when he says it he is indignant not at the brotherhood, but at the sin of the offender,—for otherwise he were guilty of hell fire,—so he who extends charity to a Christian does not extend it to a Christian if he does not love Christ in him. Now he does not love Christ who refuses to be justified in Him. Or, again, if a man has been guilty of this sin of calling his brother Fool, unjustly reviling him without any desire to remove his sin, his alms-deeds go a small way towards expiating this fault, unless he adds to this the remedy of reconciliation which the same passage enjoins. For it is there said,

“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Just so it is a small matter to do alms-deeds, no matter how great they be, for any sin, so long as the offender continues in the practice of sin.

Then as to the daily prayer which the Lord Himself taught, and which is therefore called the Lord’s prayer, it obliterates indeed the sins of the day, when day by day we say, “Forgive us our debts,” and when we not only say but act out that which follows, “as we forgive our debtors;” but we utter this petition because sins have been committed, and not that they may be. For by it our Savior designed to teach us that, however righteously we live in this life of infirmity and darkness, we still commit sins for the remission of which we ought to pray, while we must pardon those who sin against us that we ourselves also may be pardoned. The Lord then did not utter the words, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Father will also forgive you your trespasses,” in order that we might contract from this petition such confidence as should enable us to sin securely from day to day, either putting ourselves above the fear of human laws, or craftily deceiving men concerning our conduct, but in order that we might thus learn not to suppose that we are without sins, even though we should be free from crimes; as also God admonished the priests of the old law to this same effect regarding their sacrifices, which He commanded them to offer first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people. For even the very words of so great a Master and Lord are to be intently considered. For He does not say, If ye forgive men their sins, your Father will also forgive you your sins, no matter of what sort they be, but He says, your sins; for it was a daily prayer He was teaching, and it was certainly to disciples already justified He was speaking. What, then, does He mean by “your sins,” but those sins from which not even you who are justified and sanctified can be free? While, then, those who seek occasion from this petition to indulge in habitual sin maintain that the Lord meant to include great sins, because He did not say, He will forgive you your small sins, but “your sins,” we, on the other hand, taking into account the character of the persons He was addressing, cannot see our way to interpret the expression “your sins” of anything but small sins, because such persons are no longer guilty of great sins. Nevertheless not even great sins themselves—sins from which we must flee with a total reformation of life—are forgiven to those who pray, unless they observe the appended precept, “as ye also forgive your debtors.” For if the very small sins which attach even to the life of the righteous be not remitted without that condition, how much further from obtaining indulgence shall those be who are involved in many great crimes, if, while they cease from perpetrating such enormities, they still inexorably refuse to remit any debt incurred to themselves, since the Lord says, “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?” For this is the purport of the saying of the Apostle James also, “He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy.” For we should remember that servant whose debt of ten thousand talents his lord cancelled, but afterwards ordered him to pay up, because the servant himself had no pity for his fellow-servant, who owed him an hundred pence. The words which the Apostle James subjoins, “And mercy rejoiceth against judgment,” find their application among those who are the children of the promise and vessels of mercy. For even those righteous men, who have lived with such holiness that they receive into the eternal habitations others also who have won their friendship with the mammon of unrighteousness, became such only through the merciful deliverance of Him who justifies the ungodly, imputing to him a reward according to grace, not according to debt. For among this number is the apostle, who says, “I obtained mercy to be faithful.”

But it must be admitted, that those who are thus received into the eternal habitations are not of such a character that their own life would suffice to rescue them without the aid of the saints, and consequently in their case especially does mercy rejoice against judgment. And yet we are not on this account to suppose that every abandoned profligate, who has made no amendment of his life, is to be received into the eternal

habitations if only he has assisted the saints with the mammon of unrighteousness,—that is to say, with money or wealth which has been unjustly acquired, or, if rightfully acquired, is yet not the true riches, but only what iniquity counts riches, because it knows not the true riches in which those persons abound, who even receive others also into eternal habitations. There is then a certain kind of life, which is neither, on the one hand, so bad that those who adopt it are not helped towards the kingdom of heaven by any bountiful alms-giving by which they may relieve the wants of the saints, and make friends who could receive them into eternal habitations, nor, on the other hand, so good that it of itself suffices to win for them that great blessedness, if they do not obtain mercy through the merits of those whom they have made their friends. And I frequently wonder that even Virgil should give expression to this sentence of the Lord, in which He says, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations;” and this very similar saying, “He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” For when that poet described the Elysian fields, in which they suppose that the souls of the blessed dwell, he placed there not only those who had been able by their own merit to reach that abode, but added,— “And they who grateful memory won By services to others done;” that is, they who had served others, and thereby merited to be remembered by them. Just as if they used the expression so common in Christian lips, where some humble person commends himself to one of the saints, and says, Remember me, and secures that he do so by deserving well at his hand. But what that kind of life we have been speaking of is, and what those sins are which prevent a man from winning the kingdom of God by himself, but yet permit him to avail himself of the merits of the saints, it is very difficult to ascertain, very perilous to define. For my own part, in spite of all investigation, I have been up to the present hour unable to discover this. And possibly it is hidden from us, lest we should become careless in avoiding such sins, and so cease to make progress. For if it were known what these sins are which, though they continue, and be not abandoned for a higher life, do yet not prevent us from seeking and hoping for the intercession of the saints, human sloth would presumptuously wrap itself in these sins, and would take no steps to be disentangled from such wrappings by the deft energy of any virtue, but would only desire to be rescued by the merits of other people, whose friendship had been won by a bountiful use of the mammon of unrighteousness. But now that we are left in ignorance of the precise nature of that iniquity which is venial, even though it be persevered in, certainly we are both more vigilant in our prayers and efforts for progress, and more careful to secure with the mammon of unrighteousness friends for ourselves among the saints. But this deliverance, which is effected by one’s own prayers, or the intercession of holy men, secures that a man be not cast into eternal fire, but not that, when once he has been cast into it, he should after a time be rescued from it. For even those who fancy that what is said of the good ground bringing forth abundant fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold, is to be referred to the saints, so that in proportion to their merits some of them shall deliver thirty men, some sixty, some an hundred,— even those who maintain this are yet commonly inclined to suppose that this deliverance will take place at, and not after the day of judgment. Under this impression, someone who observed the unseemly folly with which men promise themselves impunity on the ground that all will be included in this method of deliverance, is reported to have very happily remarked, that we should rather endeavor to live so well that we shall be all found among the number of those who are to intercede for the liberation of others, lest these should be so few in number, that, after they have delivered one thirty, another sixty, another a hundred, there should still remain many who could not be delivered from punishment by their intercessions, and among them every one who has vainly and rashly promised himself the fruit of another’s labor. But enough has been said in reply to those who acknowledge the authority of the same sacred Scriptures as ourselves, but who, by a mistaken interpretation of them, conceive of the future rather as they themselves wish, than as the Scriptures teach. And having given this reply, I now, according to promise, close this book.

Some Historical Paintings of Hell

The paintings shown below are just a fraction of what was produced in the Middle Ages, by the Christian Church and artists of that era. They demonstrate how graphic and terrifying the society's view of hell had become from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. If hell is real, and is a place like this, then why do we not hang such paintings in our churches today who claim that believe in Eternal Punishment by God? Would this not help to warn people – especially children – of the horror that they face if they do not believe or behave correctly? But we do not do this! Why? Perhaps we really do not believe it.



The Last Judgement: Hell,
Fra Angelico, (1431)

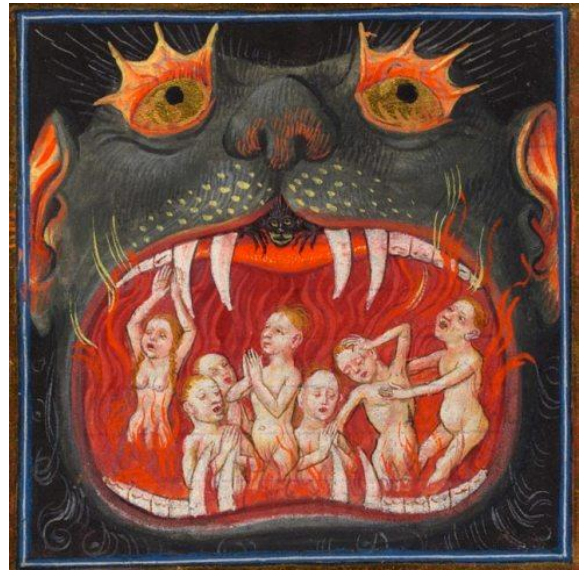
Hell, Coppo di Marcovaldo,
Mosaic, Baptistry, Florence
(1274)



The Hell, Herri met de Bles (1545)



Hellmouth close-up from "The Hours of Catherine of Cleves (1440)



The Damned being cast into Hell, Frans Francken the Younger (1605)



Medieval image of hell in the Hortus deliciarum of Herrad of Landsberg (1180)



List of Modern-Day Quotes About Hell

Listed below are some quotes from popular contemporary theologians, Bible teachers, and pastors. Notice how graphic and detailed their descriptions are of hell. Where did such extreme ideas come from? We find nothing of this kind *detailed horror* in the Old Testament, New Testament, nor in the Early Church Fathers (with a few exceptions). Looking carefully at the history of the Christian Church, going all the way back to the time of Jesus and His Apostles, it seems rather obvious that this kind of view of hell came from the Western/Latin Roman Catholic Church that emerged in about 500 AD.

Hades a place of torment and agony ... The judgment and Hell will be more tolerable for some than for others ... The fact that Hell will not be the same for everybody in no way implies that it will be a good place for anybody. People in Hell will be separated from God and all that is good forever. As much as I dislike the idea, I do believe that the lake of fire (hell) is a real, literal place. -- Charles Stanley

I know of no one who has overstated the terror of hell ... we are meant to tremble and feel dread. We are meant to recoil from the reality. Not by denying it, but by fleeing from it into the arms of Jesus who died to save us from it. -- John Piper

Hell is a place of unrelieved torment and horrible misery ... a place of a impenetrable darkness ... a place of fire ... a place of unrelieved torment for both body and soul. Hell will be horrible for everybody there, but some people will suffer more than others. -- John MacArthur

Hell is going to be eternity filled with grief and pain, and unquenchable fire, according to the Bible.

-- Franklin Graham

The abyss is literally a shaft. Somewhere upon the surface of the earth there is a shaft. The entrance to this shaft leads down into the heart of the earth where Hades exists. Hades is often translated "hell" in the Bible. Hell does exist. It is in the center of the earth. -- Chuck Smith

It is an experience of intense anguish ... a sense of loneliness ... There is the realization that this separation is permanent ... Thus, hopelessness comes over the individual. -- Millard J. Erickson

For hell is viewed by our Lord Jesus Christ not as "made for man," but as "made for the devil and his angels." Humans as such were made for fellowship with God and for eternal glory. That such creatures should be banished forever into the outer darkness with no escape exit, should fill us with a sense of horror. -- Sinclair B. Ferguson

The lost will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9). No one lives without God ... He gives you every breath you take. His kindness surrounds ... He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on the unjust as well as the just (Matt. 5:45). He gives you beauty of a summer evening, the coolness of a refreshing breeze ... He delights you with the taste of fresh crusty bread or the juice of a ripe peach. Perhaps you have experienced the ecstasy of love. These are God's gifts ... All of these are blessings are from God ... But in hell all of this will be taken from you ... all the dignity that you now have as an image bearer of God will be stripped from you ... The wicked will burn with fire but they will not be consumed. -- Edward Donnelly

*Indeed, all other senses will be affected too: the ear with hideous noises, shrieks and yells from fellow damned sinners; the eye with fearful, ghastly, and horrible spectacles; the smell with suffocating odors and nasty stench, worse than that of carrion or that which comes out of an open sepulcher.
-- Thomas Vincent*

Your bodies shall be tormented in every part in the flames of hellfire ... the pains of hell fire will be a thousand times more horrible and tormenting. Your bodies cannot now endure much pain without expiring ... but hereafter God will strengthen your bodies to endure; they shall have ... quicker sense and so much more capacity for pain ... Your bodies shall roll and tumble in flames, and burn with horrible pain and yet never be consumed ... I believe that the space of one quarter of an hour in hell will seem longer to the damned than a whole life of misery in this world. -- Thomas Vincent

Consider for a moment the companions who will share Hell with those who stubbornly resist God's mercy to the very end -- Hitler, Stalin, plus every other murderer and torturer in history Consider for one horrible moment what a normal citizen would experience if they were condemned to live in the worst penitentiary in North America, totally at the mercy of the Wicked, perverted prisoners. Imagine that there were no guards or cell bars to protect you from the rage and cruelty of the merciless criminals who shared your jail ... However, those who reject the salvation of Jesus Christ to the very end of their lives will face a situation far more horrible than the one suggested. -- Grant Jeffrey