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THE DEVELOPMENT OF HELL FROM JEWISH TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: a Biblical Guide to Hell and Its Existence

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Abstract
According to the view that is relatively common in the wider Christian culture, heaven and hell basically deserve compensation for the kind of earthly life we lead. Good people go to heaven as a worthy reward for a virtuous life, and bad people go to hell as a just punishment for an immoral life; in that way, the scale of justice is sometimes considered balanced. But almost all Christian theologians regard such a view, however commonly it may be in popular culture, as too simplistic and unsampled; the biblical perspective, as they see it, is much more subtle than that. It is important to acknowledge the polemical and apologetic setting of its development. Judaism underwent modifications to protect the Jewish faithful and chastise apostates in the face of invading Hellenism. For the early Christ-movement, continued growth was necessary to defend itself against both internal defection and first-century Judaism and Greco-Roman paganism. The early church fathers believed that using the dread of damnation to uphold moral standards was ideologically motivated. As a result, the evolution of the afterlife may be viewed as a social construct, the effects of which in the contemporary day have had a permanent, harmful influence for many individuals. The purpose this research is to study development of hell and existence in Christian theology which is come from Jewish theology for Christian today. The research using hermeneutic qualitative method which is coming Jewish theology.

Keywords: Development of hell, Christian theology, Jewish theology

INTRODUCTION

There are two facts that are unavoidable and cannot be avoided: There are few individuals who can honestly state that they have no interest in what occurs after death – even those who are uncomfortable talking about the issue – because life is brief, and death is a certainty. Images of hell have fascinated the church throughout the ages. With few exceptions, the literal idea of hell dominated Christian thought from Augustine's time (the fifth century) until the Reformers (sixteenth century). When confronted with raging imaginations, theologians such as Luther and Calvin refused to dwell on the

literal implications of pain. Others, trapped in the swirl of history, enthusiastically offered images precise enough to satisfy God's most horrific creatures.[1]

The word "hell" nowadays typically conjures up images of a burning underworld where the wicked are tortured endlessly. The reader of the Bible will have a difficult time finding this description of hell in the Bible itself, even though this prevalent image of hell owes much to the history of interpretation of Jewish and Christian texts. This seeming lack of allusions to hell in the Bible is due to several factors. Given the Medieval imagery with which the notion of hell is still burdened, and the vindictive picture of God that it typically entails, this hesitation is more than understandable to put it simply, to us the punishment of hell does not suit the offense - certainly, all men commit some evil and a few do vast sins, but nothing that anybody has ever done can warrant eternal torture.

Therefore, a large portion of people believe in an afterlife, but it is one of happiness rather than suffering. Hell, it appears, is a thought that is as hard to live with as it is to do without — those who profess strongly to denial in the place are frequently tempted to want others there. Hell seems to be a concept that is as difficult to accept as it is to reject; those who fiercely reject it are frequently tempted to want others there; those who accept it frequently wish they didn't have to, but regrettably it is simpler for them to reject heaven.[2]

Hell, according to orthodox teaching, is a horrific place—or, at the very least, far worse than heaven. Furthermore, according to tradition, all people are doomed to spend eternity in hell or be doomed to an eternity in hell. The customary doctrine does not apply clarify the reasons why one person finds up in hell instead of heaven. Supposedly, one is judged based on his or her works or faith, or the choice is decided by God divine command. Sider says that the traditional theory of hell leads one to arbitrary cutoffs since there must be a standard to assess whether an individual is going to paradise or hell. However, borderline cases are possible regardless of the criterion employed cases in which one person just barely misses the threshold for heaven and is thus doomed to hell, while another person who slightly rates better on whatever criterion is used is

[1] John Walvoord, Willian Crockett, Zachary Hayes, Clark Pinnock. *Four Views on Hell*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 46.

[2] Hanre Janse van Rensburg and Ernest Van Eck, "Hell Revisited: A Socio-Critical Enquiry into the Roots and Relevance of Hell for the Church Today," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (January 23, 2008), https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v64i3.74.

placed in heaven. However, rewarding these two persons in such disparate ways is clearly unjust. Such an injustice is undoubtedly irreconcilable with God's perfect justice, and hence the traditional understanding of hell is incompatible with God's perfect justice.[3]

"We may assume from many places of Scripture, that it [everlasting fire] is a figurative language,"[4] said John Calvin, about 400 years ago. Shortly before Calvin, Martin Luther dismissed the painters' depictions of hell as having "no value." Luther could speak of a searing hell where the wicked would crave for "a small drop of water," but he had no intention to force a literal interpretation: "It is not very significant whether or not one depicts hell as it is frequently shown and described."[5] Following in the footsteps of the Reformers, Princeton professor Charles Hodge stated unequivocally: "There appears no reason to suppose that the fire spoken of in Scripture is to be a literal fire, any more than that the worm that never dies is literally a worm."[6]

As much research done before in the past about hell in Christian theology, but almost none using Jewish theology such as Launonen,[7] Kyrtatas,[8] David,[9] etc. The dynamic cultural environment in which they were produced, the New Testament writings depict a time when the Judeo-Christian notion of hell was in flux and exhibit conceptual breadth. For instance, in the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature of the Hellenistic era, the link of eternal retribution with fire and suffering first appeared. As a result of this evolution, the author's apocalyptic viewpoint frequently determines how much a New Testament passage connects with the concept of hell as a burning site of retribution. The Hebrew and Greek terms that are translated as "hell" in the bible are the subject of investigations on the subject. Scholars pay close attention to how these phrases are employed in the biblical texts as well as the connections between the terms'

Commented [BP1]: Tambahkan penelitian2 sebelumnya tentang nereka / penelitian sejenis, sehingga terlihat gap dan novelty dari penelitian ini.
Tambahkan juga metode penelitian yang digunakan dan bagaimana proses metode digunakan dalam pembahasan.

[3] Andrei A. Buckareff and Allen Plug, "Escaping Hell: Divine Motivation and the Problem of Hell," *Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (March 18, 2005): 39–54, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412504007437.

[4] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke,* trans. William Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949, reprint from 1610), 200-201.

[5] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on the Minor Prophets, II, Jonah, Habakkuk*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 19:74

[6] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (New York: Wentworth Press, 2019), 3:868.

[7] Lari Launonen. "Hell and the Cultural Evolution of Christianity." *Theology and Science*, 20, Issue 2 (2022): 193-208. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2022.2051251.

[8] Dimitris J. Kyrtatas. "The Origins of Christian Hell." Numen 56, No. 2/3 (2009): 282-297. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27793793.

[9] Christopher P. Davis "Revisiting the Afterlife: The Inadequacies of "Heaven" and "Hell"," *Fidei et Veritatis: The Liberty University Journal of Graduate Research* 1, Iss.1 (2016): Article 1. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/fidei_et_veritatis/vol1/iss1/1.

ancient Jewish and Christian meanings and their corresponding ideas in neighboring cultures. Research also considers the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha that mention eternal punishment in order to trace the evolution of the concept of hell within second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.

METHOD

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation, where interpretation entails a justifiable understanding. It refers to both a corpus of historically diverse approaches for interpreting texts, objects, and concepts, as well as a philosophy of comprehension.[10] The hermeneutic is the skill of comprehending a text in a circular movement that includes both subjective and objective aspects. The Qualitative Content Analysis is a method for methodically expressing the significance of qualitative data by inscribing and categorization, including description and interpretation of material as characteristics.

This research looking the hermeneutic of hell from Jewish theology which is the root of hell in Christian theology. There is hermeneutic development how Christian theology see the hell. In the discussion section, this article explains about Jewish theology of hell, then how to build the concept of hell in Christian theology. This research give insight how the development is happened from Jewish theology into Christian theology.

DISCUSSION

Jewish Theology on Hell

Jewish apologists assert that there is no definite Jewish theology about the afterlife. In A Guide to Jewish Knowledge, Chaim Pearl, and Reuben S. Brookes, for instance, contend that when it comes to the afterlife, "Judaism adopted a stand of its own...Having provided the belief in the deathlessness of the soul, the authoritative teaching of Judaism warns us against useless speculation about the details of the afterlife."[11] These authors claim that Judaism is focused on the material world: "The Jewish religion instructs us to focus all our efforts and energy in behaving ourselves as

[10] J. Dyer, in International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition), 2010. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B978008044894701544X

[11] D. Cohn-Sherbok et al. (eds.), *Beyond Death.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 64.

children of God in this world, here and now. “Rabbinic exaggeration, often known as the symbolic use of language. In the past, rabbis (including Jesus) frequently employed colorful language to make their views. For instance, Jesus does not mean that we must despise our parents to be good disciples when he says, "If someone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children... he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). That is a way of expressing in language that devotion to him comes first.

The Hebrew Bible does not mention hell as a place of unending torment and punishment. Early Israelite philosophy on death simply assumed that it represented the end of all worthy existence for all people.[12] Indeed, the Hebrew Job's idea of a shadowy post-mortem world occurs in his first lament, mirroring what we find elsewhere in the Old Testament: "There the wicked cease from worrying, and there the weary are at rest" (Job 3:17). *Sheol* was regarded as a land of darkness and gloom by many ancient Israelites. The dead have some sort of existence, but they lack strength and consciousness. "I am listed among those who go down to the pit; I am like those who have no aid, like those forsaken among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off," the troubled Psalmist says.[13] *Sheol*, in Hebrew thinking, was a vast underground realm that was dark, dusty, and dreary.[14]

However, in both Hebrew and Greek belief, *Sheol* or *Hades* was not a place of retribution for the wicked; rather, it was the place where all the dead's souls went. The soul, also known as the spirit, is considered the essence of the human being. This is expressed in Genesis 2, where the divine breath breathed into the body gives life; its removal gives death. Interestingly, evidence from the Hebrew Bible reveals that *Sheol* was not always regarded as filthy in early Israel: there are no rules against kissing a corpse (Gen. 50.1); remains might be interred in the home after death (1 Sam. 25.1; 1 Kgs 2.34).

[12] M.T. Finney. “Afterlives of the Afterlife: The Development of Hell in its Jewish and Christian Contexts.” Exum, J.C. and Clines, D.J.A., (eds.) *Biblical Reception*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

[13] Jeremy Corley, “After Hope before the New Testament: A Descriptive Survey,” in *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association Vol. 41/42* (Belfast: Irish Biblical Association, 2018), 1–24, https://ixtheo.de/Record/1697294561.

[14] Gen. 37.35; 42.38; 44.29, 31; 1 Sam. 2.6; 1 Kgs 2.6, 9; Tob. 3.10; 4.19; 13.2; Ps. 54.16; 87.5 [LXX]/88.4; *Odes* 3.6; Prov. 2.18; 5.5; 7.27; 15.24; Job 7.9; 17.16; 21.13; Wis. 16.13; Isa. 14.11, 15; 38.18; 57.9; Bar. 3.19; Ezek. 31.15-17; 32.27; Num. 16.30, 33 notes a descent alive into *Sheol*, which, in the context, is considered extraordinary.

The suspicion that translating Sheol as "hell" was an example of cultural imposition has been exposed as unwarranted. The four suppositions underlying the alleged theological imposition are untenable. As a result, "the grave" translation appears much more guilty of cultural imposition because it overlooks Sheol's mythological connotations, and because it neglects Sheol's figurative use, and because it assumes that going to Sheol is a general term for death (as though meaning "to die" or "rest in peace"). As a matter of fact, "the grave" translation is more questionable since it more obviously arose from the theological presumption that hell did not belong to the OT and tried to correct the alleged (theological) mismatch (theologically).

Since *Sheol* never occurs with the article and is associated with a downward direction it is clearly the Hebrew equivalent (and proper name) for the Underworld. Thus, Sheol's absence is conspicuous in the picture of the God-made cycle of life and (complete) death in the mythological-type story in Gen 2–3 which might be read as a response to the fear of a literal *Sheol*.[15] Especially given that the expression "return to dust" (3:19) would have been obvious to many readers or hearers that the story's language resembled common language for the Underworld (Land of Dust, Land of No Return). In this case Gen 2-3 would be asserting something relevant concerning the Underworld—namely that "returning to the dust" does not (contrary to widespread belief) involve being consigned to dwell in a frightening underworld environment but is a natural end to the life cycle. Readers are thus comforted that there is nothing fearful about natural dissolution—meaning relief from pain! The otherworldly fear/judgment of Sheol is transferred to a this-worldly fear/judgment of weeding and giving birth. Gen 2–3 thus could be a polemic not only against immortality, but also against any kind of speculation of a human's afterlife in the mythological Underworld.[16] A similar theological procedure is discernible in other texts like Ps 9:17 *Sheol* is equivalent to "dust" (as disintegration).

Jewish literature presents dramatic depictions of hell to demonstrate how God has decreed an end to wrongdoing. The authors desire their portrayals to serve as warnings of impending judgment rather than as realistic depictions of the damned's fate. For instance, in the Qumran texts, ideas like fire and darkness that are

[15] T. Stordalen, (2000) *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* Leuven: Peeters.

[16] T. Stordalen, (2000)

incompatible with one another are utilized more to conjure a grotesque image than to represent a real hell. The authors refer to hell as "the fire of the dark regions" and discuss "the murky abode of everlasting fire" (IQS 2:8), (IQS 4:13).[17]

In the Hebrew Bible, Gehenna is simply a geographical location, associated with child sacrifice to Molech (condemned in 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer. 7:31-32; 19:2, 6; 32:35) and is perhaps also the valley discussed in Isa. 66:24. *Gehenna* was frequently employed as a metaphor for hell, the realm of perpetual punishment, throughout the intertestamental era. Later, *Gehenna* is given a location in rabbinic literature—in the depths of the earth, and occasionally in Africa past the Mountains of Darkness. Of course, some Jews took the flaming pictures literally, believing that the Hinnom Valley will eventually become a site of judgment and hellfire (1 Enoch 27:1-2; 54:1-6; 56:3-4; 90:26-28; 4 Ezra 7:36). 31 But in Judaism, this viewpoint was marginal and not widely believed. This idea is likewise rejected by the New Testament, which claims that *Gehenna* has already been prepared elsewhere (Matthew 25:41), just as heaven has been (Matthew 25:34; John 14:2; Heb. 11:16).[18]

Jewish authors frequently employ vivid language to make a point; fire is frequently used in nonliteral ways. According to the Jerusalem Talmud's Shekalim 6:1, 49d, even the Torah was supposed to have been inscribed with "black fire on white fire," and the tree of life was depicted as being gold-looking and taking the "shape of fire" (2 Enoch 8:4). There are rivers of fire (1 Enoch 17:5), mountains of fire (Pseudo-Philo 11:5), thrones of fire (Apoc. Abram. 18:3), flames of fire (T. Abram. 12:1), even fire-breathing angels and demons (2 Bar. 21:6; T. of Sol. 1:10). The Bible describes God as a "consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24), who sits on a throne that is "flaming with fire" and has a "river of fire" flowing out from beneath it (Dan. 7:9–0). Some of the images of fire can sometimes resemble how we think of natural fire on earth. In Exodus 3:1–6, God transports a prophet to heaven in a chariot of fire and speaks from a flame that spares a desert bush (2 Kings 2:11).[19]

The eschatology during the time of the Second Temple was very different from the eschatology of the Hebrews. It is theologically significant that the Israelites did not

[17] John Walvoord, Willian Crockett, Zachary Hayes, Clark Pinnock (1996) 52

[18] Hans Bietenhard, (1976) "Hell," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* ed. Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2:208.

[19] John Walvoord, Willian Crockett, Zachary Hayes, Clark Pinnock (1996) 52

have an elaborate afterlife, given that most of the nations around the ancient Hebrews did.[20] In "striking contrast" to other ancient Near Eastern societies, the Hebrew Scriptures simply state that the dead—whether evil or good—go to *sheol* (Isa 28:15).[21] However, due to external pressures, "sometime after the exile, [Hebrew eschatology] went through a sequence of acute modifications." These changes have led to the seeming acceptance of the promise of the judgment of the wicked (Dan. 12:1–5) and a belief in a corporeal resurrection (Isa 66:24).[22]

The evolution of Second Temple eschatology requires an additional explanation. The development of Second Temple period eschatology, which presumes a split underworld in which the wicked are punished with fire and the good are rewarded, requires an additional explanation (e. g., 1 Enoch). Some academics, including Hultgard, have concluded that Persian concepts influenced this period's Judaism to the point where concepts of a physical resurrection and a split afterlife with paradise and hell emerged.[23] Jewish apocalyptic openly appropriated from a variety of different cultural practices. A strong resemblance to a punishment in the tour of hell may be found in the Egyptian tale of Setme and Osiris. Some of the penalties in the Jewish and Christian tours of hell have clear analogues in the Greek and Roman depictions of punishments in Hades.[24]

Other Zoroastrian concepts might have easily infiltrated Israelite religion during the Persian era. It is known that the Persian rulers worshiped Ahura Mazda as the Creator, especially Cyrus, who the Jews referred to as "mashiach" (Isa 44:28–45:1). The Zoroastrian purity standards that Ezra, a Persian court officer, upheld in the region of Yehud, were recorded in the Bible's Book of Leviticus. Additionally, he is credited with duplicating every book of the Hebrew Bible.[25] Despite this, there is one specific feature of the Jewish Hell—namely, the wicket's eternal residence in a lake of fire—that cannot

[20] J. Jarick, (1999) "Questioning *Sheol*" in Resurrection eds. S. Porter, M. Hayes, and D. Tombs: New York: T&T Clark, 22–32; P. S. Johnston, (2002) Shades of *Sheol*: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament. Downers Grove, Il: IVP, 69–85

[21] Clint Burnett (2013) Going Through Hell; ΤΑΡΤΑΡΟΣ in Greco-Roman Culture, Second Temple Judaism, and Philo of Alexandria. *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, 4. Jg., 352–378, ISSN 1869-3296

[22] Clint Burnett (2013)

[23] Hultgard, (1998) "Persian Apocalypticism," in The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism 3 vols.; eds. B. McGinn, J. J. Collins, and S. J. Stein; New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1:79; A. Hultgard, (2010) "Persian Religion," in Dictionary of Early Judaism. eds. J. J. Collins and D. Harlow; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1048–50.

[24] Himmelfarb, Martha, (1952) *Tours of Hell*. The University of Pennsylvania Press. 88

[25] Mary Boyce, (1992)) *A History of Zoroastrianism, Volume II.* Leiden: Brill. 191-192.

be attributed to the Persians. The closest resemblance to this idea is found in ancient Egyptian texts where individuals who are antagonistic to Ra's soul are tormented in fire pits. Egyptian concepts were probably transmitted through the Greeks during the Hellenistic period. This idea first occurs in Roman literature (Rev 20:15).[26]

Development of Hell in Christian Theology

The authors of the New Testament worked hard to condense history into a single period, tracing the development of the world from creation to an endless afterlife. The Virgin Birth, the Temptation, the Crucifixion, the Ascension into Hades, the Resurrection, and the Mythical Future (the Parousia, the General Resurrection, and the Last Judgment), to name just a few of the most important points, are just a few examples. It draws heavily upon fundamental aspects of Jewish belief.[27]

The term "*Gehenna*," which has come to be used to refer to hell, is how the New Testament translates the Hebrew word *Gê*. Other terms like *Hades, Sheol,* the Pit, the Grave, and so forth are used in both the Old and New Testaments.[28] Although they would have had somewhat varying shades of meaning, by the time of early Christianity, they appear to have crystallized in meaning. In the gospels, *Gehenna* is mentioned 10 times (Matthew 5:22, 29, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5, as well as James 3:6), whereas Hades is mentioned 11 times (Matthew 11:23, 16:18; Luke 10:15, 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13, 14). This reveals a vision, possibly still in flux, which incorporates aspects of Jewish thought, which itself appears to have absorbed older Egyptian or perhaps Zoroastrian concepts, together with components of modern Greek and Roman cosmology, which are descendants of the Mediterranean koine (such as the Lake of Fire). combined with Jewish components, which itself appear to have absorbed older Egyptian or perhaps Zoroastrian beliefs, and Roman cosmology, both of which are descendants of the Mediterranean koine (such as the Lake of Fire).[29]

[26] Shaked, Shaul. (1984) "Iranian Influence on Judaism: First Century B.C.E. to Second Century C.E." In *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 1: Introduction; The Persian Period*, edited by William D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press .308-325.

[27] Hanré Janse van Rensburg & Ernest van Eck (2009)

[28] Wyatt, "The Concept and Purpose of Hell: Its Nature and Development in West Semitic Thought," *Numen* 56, no. 2–3 (2009): 161–84, https://doi.org/10.1163/156852709X404964.

[29] Wyatt, N (2009

This reveals a vision, possibly still in flux, which incorporates aspects of Jewish thought, which itself appears to have absorbed older Egyptian or perhaps Zoroastrian concepts, together with components of modern Greek and Roman cosmology, which are descendants of the Mediterranean koine (such as the Lake of Fire). Plato discusses how the souls are examined at the mouth of Tartarus in the Republic (X.615d–e), and the unworthy or those who aren't yet permitted to ascend are chastised and sent back. The Tartarus was envisioned similarly by Plutarch.[30] The place where offenders are punished was described by him as "a big crater with streams pouring into it." He stated that the agony of individuals who believed they had completed their term and were later arrested again was the most pitiful of all. Rev. 20:1-3, where John envisions a "bottomless pit" where Satan is imprisoned until he is freed at the end of time to be cast into, may be a mirror of the Greek concept of Tartarus.[31]

The beginning from the second through the fourth century, there was no universal opinion on the fate of the lost, although portrayals of hell that were beyond belief arose from some Christians. Not content with imagery of fire and smoke, some of the more imaginative imagined hell as a weird terror chamber. They were not afraid of excess or originality. These dramatic Christian depictions of hell are akin to, and frequently based on, older Jewish descriptions of torment.[32] Punishment is predicated on a measure-far-measure premise in both literatures, as in the formula "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20). Jesus' remarks about the future judgment were vital for Christians: "For you will be evaluated by the judgment you make, and the measure you use." (Matt 7:2).

It is the fourteenth century Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet, fanned these early ideas with the publication of his Divine Comedy, a popular work that attained some prominence in the Middle Ages Western culture. He pictured a terrifying environment where while the wretched writhe and wail, the blessed bathe in the Eternal Light's splendor. The descriptions of hell are finished with the scared and naked wails of sinners sizzling in blood people fleeing hordes of biting snakes and areas infested with there is a lot of darkness and fog. People in Dante's inferno must endure dense, searing smoke that chars their nostrils stay stuck in lead cloaks forever, a claustrophobic

[30] Plutarch, On the Delay of Divine Vengeance 566a–b and 567d, trans. Ph. H. De Lacy in Loeb. z

[31] Czachesz, Istvan, (2012) The grotesque body in early Christian discourse: hell, scatology, and metamorphosis. Equinox Publishing Ltd. UK: Sheffield.30

[32] John Walvoord, Willian Crockett, Zachary Hayes, Clark Pinnock (1996)

nightmare.[33] Some saw evidence for this teaching in the story of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and the declaration that those who bear the mark of the beast will be "tormented with scorching sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10; d. Isa. 66:22-24). It's difficult to envision the blessed delighting in the suffering of the damned, especially if the damned include loved ones.

Both the 18th and 19th centuries numerous well-known preachers and theologians continued to believe that hell would be a sea of fire where the wicked would burn eternally, despite Luther and Calvin's and others' warnings. They felt no need to provide an alternative explanation for the literal interpretation of the New Testament's depictions of hell. As a result, a graphic depiction of hell emerged that frequently went beyond the scope of the New Testament. They avoided the gory images of the past, but not the temptation to fill in the blanks of perdition.

American theologian Jonathan Edwards described hell as a blazing pit of fire in sermons about imminent punishment in the eighteenth century. He had the vision of the wicked being thrown into a body- and soul-filling pool of both physical and spiritual liquid fire.

> Every portion of the body will be filled with pain to the farthest extent of its capacity. Every joint in their bodies as well as every nerve will be filled with excruciating agony. Even the tips of their fingers will be tortured. The anger of God will overflow the entire body. They will be filled with the Holy Spirit in their hearts, bowels, heads, eyes, tongues, hands, and feet.[34]

Rensburg explain about the hell

> Modern literalists in the twenty-first century are often more circumspect. They are hesitant to provide detailed depictions of hell or to go into detail about its alleged agony. But lest we think that graphic portrayals of hell are a thing of the past, let me remind you that there are still individuals who insist on taking the imagery in the Bible literally. Naturally, there are no longer depictions of worms or reptiles devouring the decaying flesh of the condemned. It is completely permissible to use pictures to express reality.[35]

After all, Jesus warned the wicked of the effects of sin by using the symbols of fire and darkness. Only when we insist that the representations accurately depict tangible

[33] John Walvoord, Willian Crockett, Zachary Hayes, Clark Pinnock (1996) 47

[34] Jonathan Edwards, in John Gerstner, (1980) Jonathan *Edwards on Heaven and Hell.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 56, n. 37; d. pp. 54-55.

[35] Janse van Rensburg, Hanre, & Ernest van Eck. "Hell revisited: A socio-critical enquiry into the roots and relevance of hell for the church today." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* [Online], 64.3 (2008): 1499-1525. https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/74.

reality do problems start to occur. A crucial argument regarding this is made by Alan E. Bernstein in his influential book on the creation of hell:

> But there is a significant aspect that makes the analysis of "background" difficult. The writers of the texts we consider to be historical backdrop were unaware of how the idea of hell would evolve. Even if we believe they are closely linked to the notion that finally formed, when they addressed the topics that interest us, they were really talking about other topics. Only in the presence of similar concepts that are considerably more commonplace—beliefs about dying, the afterlife, the soul, justice, and vengeance—did their thoughts find expression. It would be unfair to these authors to claim that this background "expected" or "prepared" the idea of hell.[36]

Bernstein mention than Christianity places more emphasis on life after death than it does on life forever. According to Christian belief, via the divine sacrifice of Christ, mankind is now able to mimic Jesus' resurrection through the reunification of the soul with a spiritually transformed body, creating a regenerated individual who will experience eternal happiness in God's kingdom. For the Christian, Hades and death, the final foes, are vanquished.[37] Christianity broke with the Greek concept of cycles and declared linear, teleological time, developing the implications of the apocalyptic branch of late ancient Judaism. The Christian view of history develops along a line from creation to redemption and resurrection. Death becomes the deadline for conversion because each person only has one life.[38]

CONCLUSION

Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament provide evidence for the idea of an abode of eternal punishment for unbelievers after death. If not for the kindness of a loving and holy God, personal accountability for the deeds of human life would be an almost insurmountable barrier to entering the kingdom of heaven. In summary, the Bible—and particularly the New Testament—offers a solution that is much preferable to torment. The divinely determined mission of Jesus Christ on behalf of God the Father offers this substitute so that no one might be eternally condemned and punished but rather that "the world through him would be rescued. "The same can be said of the depictions of hell that can be found in the New Testament. They serve as a metaphor for suffering rather than a literal representation for the reader. Although Jewish and Greek

[36] Bernstein, Alan E. (1993) *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*. New York: Cornell University Press. 2

[37] Bernstein, A E (1993). 205

[38] Bernstein, A E (1993) 248.

authors frequently depict hell in vivid detail, they typically did not intend for their fiery descriptions to be taken literally. When Gentile converts to Christianity came across descriptions of hellfire that were like those they had grown up with, they would naturally interpret those portraits as symbols of God's wrath. One would anticipate finding a refutation of this belief somewhere in the text of the Bible if they were wrong and hell really was a place of genuine fire and smoke. Of course, there isn't any. Therefore, hell shouldn't be imagined as an inferno spouting fire like Nebuchadnezzar's blazing furnace. The most we can predict is that the disobedient will be banished from God's presence without any possibility of redemption. They will be taken away, much like Adam and Eve, but this time into "everlasting night," where happiness and hope are permanently lost.

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