

HELL: A PLACE FOR THE FINALLY IMPENITENT

Mt 13:42; Lk 16:19-31; II Peter 3:9

I. SCRIPTURAL DECLARATIONS

- A. “A lake of fire (Rev. 20:15); a place of fiery coals, burning sulfur, and scorching wind (Ps. 11:6); a place of devouring fire (Isa. 33:14); a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42); a place of torment (Luke 16:23); a place where men will weep and gnash their teeth (Matt. 13:42); a place where they curse God (Rev. 16:11); a place where they never repent (Matt. 12:32); a place of filthiness (Rev. 22:11); a place of weeping (Matt. 8:12); a place of outer darkness (Matt. 8:12); a place where they have no rest (Rev. 14:11); a place where men gnaw their tongues in anguish (Rev. 16:10); a place of pains and sores (Rev. 16:11); a place of the blackest darkness (Jude 1:13); a place where they do not want their loved ones to go (Luke 16:28)” (Wade Menezes: *The Four Last Things*, #1027).
- B. “The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: ‘Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few’ (Matt. 7:13–14)” (CCC#1036)

II. DEFINING TERMS

- A. Biblical: *Hades*: realm of the dead; *Tartarus* (only found in II Peter 2:4) re angels; *Gehenna*—valley of Hinnom (site of Canaanite child sacrifice); of 12 NT passages all but James 3:6 Christ’s words
- B. Anglo-Saxon *hell*: hole, hidden, dark place; cf. “dark holes” in cosmos sucking in & destroying all

III. HERETICAL THEORIES

- A. Annihilationism/Destructionism—“damned” simply cease to be, while saints enjoy life everlasting
- B. Universalism—all ultimately saved since God is Love
 - a. Origin (ca 200 A.D.) suggests possibility, but condemned by subsequent Church councils
 - b. Gregory of Nyssa (ca 350) speculates re possibility—currently cited by David Bentley Hart
 - c. Erigena (ca 800) thought ultimately all things redeemed—pantheistic tendencies
 - d. Universalist Church in 19th century America (e.g. Orestes Brownson’s autobiography)—united with Unitarians in 1960 as Unitarian Universalist Church
 - e. Karl Barth (*Church Dogmatics*) promotes universalism, widely influential in Neo-Orthodox circles
 - f. Hans Urs von Balthasar: *Dare We Hope*—pervasive Catholic currents
 - g. Rob Bell (alleged Evangelical): *Love Wins*
 - h. David Bentley Hart: *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universalism*—Eastern Orthodox
- C. Restorationism—following suitable punishment/rehabilitation, all ultimately saved; F.D.E. Schleiermacher & Protestant Liberalism
- D. Fatalism—no difference between saints & sinners, so all (or none or some) saved by Grace

IV. TRADITIONAL ORTHODOXY: C.S. Lewis: “What are you asking God to do? To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But he has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does.” [*Problem of Pain*, 128] Elsewhere, Lewis wrote: “It’s not a question of God ‘sending’ us to Hell. In each of us there is a something growing up which will of it self be Hell unless it is nipped in the bud. The matter is serious: let us put ourselves in His hands at once—this very day, this hour.” [Dock, 155]

V. DIVERSE (both intensity and variety) SUFFERINGS (cf. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III, p. 868)

- A. Loss of all earthly good—evil=deprivation/absence of goodness; dark hole sucking away being/substance
- B. Excluded from God’s presence—lost Beatific Vision with its joy (the primary good of heaven)
- C. Deprived of Holy Spirit—Love absent, comfort gone, prevenient/common grace forfeited
- D. Dominated by sin & evil passions—lost prevenient/common grace, unleashed worst dimensions of sin-nature
- E. Forfeited/barren conscience—lacking awareness of goodness, nihilism reigns
- F. Consumed by despair—no hope, especially since Hope linked to belief in Resurrection of Christ
- G. Surrounded by evil associates—inasmuch as relationship exist, tormenting
- H. Painful punishments—both physical (inasmuch as retain body) and emotional anguish
- I. Perpetuity—everlasting, eternal, without respite

Traditional Act of Contrition: “And I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell; but most of all, because they have offended You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love.”