

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell****Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell, on: 2014/3/2 18:04**

Google definition of eternal is existing or lasting forever, without end or beginning.

Verses which speak of eternal hell or eternal fire or eternal punishment are,

Matthew 18:8

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you, it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet, and be cast into the "eternal fire".

Mathew 25:46

These will go away into "eternal punishment", but the righteous into "eternal life".

2 Thessalonians 1:9

These will pay the penalty of "eternal destruction" away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Jude 7

just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strang flesh, are exhibited as an example and undergoing the punishment of "eternal fire".

Jude 12-13

These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves ; clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved "for ever" ,

Saints there are some in this forum who reject the truth of an eternal hell. I believe this is a fundamental Christian doctrine. As such I felt compelled to open up this thread and set forth the case for eternal punishment.

The verses above speak of an eternal hell. They speak of a destiny that awaits those who reject Jesus Christ.

There are probably new believers in Christ who access this forum. For their sakes I must contend for the truth that the Scriptures teach an eternal hell.

Also I feel compelled to state that ultimate reconciliation or universalism is not biblical. There is no scriptural proof that can establish this doctrine.

the doctrine of eternal punishment has been a truth the historic church has taught. It has been taught from the word. It has been hammered out and reflected in various creeds and confessions from various theological viewpoints.

Thus historic Christianity does hold that those who reject Jesus Christ will suffer eternal torment in a fiery hell.

Knowing that there is eternal punishment that awaits those without Christ, we should be more fervent in our evangelism. We should be more engaged and telling those without Christ how they can escape an eternal hell by having eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Posted by Blaine Scogin

Re: Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/2 19:57

Why would you start a new thread rather than simply interacting in the other one? I thought the discussion was civil.

Universalism" as currently conceived seems to be the view that everyone will automatically end up in heaven ---- no relation to their life or manner of living. The Universalist-Unitarian Church is probably the most liberal church in Christendom. It is filled with atheists and other humanists. Although I believe in the POSSIBILITY of the reconciliation of all things to God as stated in the New Testament, I try to avoid the appellation "universalist". Those who will be in Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, will have to repent and submit to the authority of Christ in order to be acceptable to God ---- just like the rest of us. Some Scriptures Concerning the Reconciliation of All Things to God:

Colossians 1:19,20 For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Ephesians 1:9,10 For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the secret of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Romans 5:18 Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all people, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all people.

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I Timothy 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Revelation 5:12-13 And I heard every created being in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that herein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might into the ages of ages.

Romans 11:32 For God has consigned all people to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

Philippians 3:20,21 But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Corinthians 15:22-28 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. "For God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection under him," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/2 20:04

Quote:
-----TMK....Why would you start a new thread rather than simply interacting in the other one?

Can't say why here, I have not followed that thread. Most forums I follow, folks do it so they can be heard louder, if they think they are not getting the response/attention they want. Again can't say why here, I have not followed it, I tend to stay away from the long drawn out ones, as they start out great, but start heading south after 50 or so replies. It's hard to have folks that can disagree with each other posts for very long, until it starts to get ugly. :)

Re: - posted by noone (), on: 2014/3/2 20:13

I have to say that I put very little stock in the Historic church. What the Historic church taught me was: tithe to a pastor, raptured out of any persecution, the pastor rules, follow what you are told, don't rock the boat, say a little prayer when you are 8 and you will go to heaven, everything revolves around a building, be a good church member, baptism in the holy spirit and gifts are evil, demons are not real or are of no threat, if you don't tithe you are cursed with a curse.....and so on

I am currently studying this for myself, which I will read opinions on both sides and spend much time letting the Holy Spirit teach me all things.

Re: Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell, on: 2014/3/2 20:59

I have not followed the other thread.

This two verses have two different greek words Aionian G166 (age-enduring) and Aidios G126 (everlasting).

"These will go away into eternal(Aionian G166) punishment, but the righteous into eternal(Aionian G166) life."
(Matthew 25:46 NASB+)

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal(Aidios G126) bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,
(Jude 1:6 NASB+)

So mans' judgement may be different from the angles' who sinned.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/3 8:14

Noone wrote:

"I am currently studying this for myself, which I will read opinions on both sides and spend much time letting the Holy Spirit teach me all things"

That is awesome. I would think everyone would want to do that. I for one am overjoyed that the Bible might not actually support that hell is a place of conscious torment forever and ever. What I don't understand are those who seem to hope that it does!

In the first few hundred years of the new church the idea of universal reconciliation of all things was a prevailing if not a majority view. It was not until after Augustine that the idea of hell as a place of eternal torment gained ground. Quite frankly I don't trust the motives of the medieval Catholic Church.

Re: TMK, on: 2014/3/3 10:37

It is not that those who hold to an eternal hell hope that it is a place of conscious torment. The issue is holding to Biblical truth. The issue is believing the words of Jesus when he said that those who reject Him will have the wrath of God biting on them. Those who reject Christ will suffer eternal torment.

Those who hold your position of universal reconciliation only see God in mercy and love. You reject the concept that God is a God of wrath. That God is angry with sin and will punish the evil doer.

Consider when the 6th seal is broken in Revelation. The cry of the unregenerate is hide from Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come who is able to stand.

In Rev. 6:12-17 the unregenerate cry to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God.

These verses speak of God's wrath that will judge the non believer. Particularly those who have persecuted the saints of God.

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell

The rocks and mountains will not hide one from the wrath of God. The only place to be hidden from God's wrath is found in the cleft of the Rock. And that rock is Jesus Christ.

Blaine Scogin

Re: , on: 2014/3/3 10:52

I cannot say I have ever met a born-again child of God who hopes the condemned suffer eternal torment. Final judgment is God's business and I can't say for sure that I know exactly what will happen to the condemned for eternity, but I do know that this verse is speaking of only the saved and that there will be no more pain for them.

Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Universalism (all shall be saved) is clearly an affront to Christ, His death and the cross that He is asking all of us to bear.

Re: There are no second chances in hell, on: 2014/3/3 11:05

For those who believe that one has a second chance of repentance while in hell need to consider Luke 16:19-31. Here Jesus gives a sobering account of the rich man who is in the the torment of.hell. While in agony the rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus with cool water to relieve his torment. Abraham answers there is a great barrier that no one can cross from hell to heaven or heaven to hell. Thus.implying that one cannot change their eternal destiny. Even if they choose to repent in the flames of an eternal torment of hell. This account by Jesus should lay to rest the idea that one has a second chance in hell.

The other sobering truth in this account is God is giving sinners the opportunity now to escape the eternal torment of hell. In the account the rich man pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers that they will not come to the torment of hell. But Lazarus says they have Moses and the prophets. They should be warned by them. But the rich man cries that Lazarus be set from the dead to warn this rich man's brothers. But the response of Abraham is if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

Today we have access to Bibles and gospel tracts and gospel preaching that point to us to Jesus Christ and his shed blood on the cross to save us from hell. But Satan is deceiving people into believing that there is no hell. Or deceiving people into thinking there will be a second chance out of hell.

The scriptures tell us now is the day of salvation. Now is the time of God's favor. Let us not fall into this lie into thinking that hell is not an eternal place of torment. Let us be about the task of evangelizing they lost so that they will not go into an eternity without Jesus Christ. And suffer eternal torment and the flames of an everlasting hell.

Blaine Scogin

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/3 11:08

Quote:
-----just-in.....I cannot say I have ever met a born-again child of God who hopes the condemned suffer eternal torment.

+1

Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2014/3/3 11:21

by MrBillPro on 2014/3/3 11:08:48

Quote:
-----just-in.....I cannot say I have ever met a born-again child of God who hopes the condemned suffer eternal torment.

+1--

i can say the same, know of none that are truly saved and hope for the condemned to suffer.

Blaine posted;The scriptures tell us now is the day of salvation. Now is the time of God's favor. Let us not fall into this lie into thinking that hell is not an eternal place of torment. Let us be about the task of evangelizing they lost so that they will not go into an eternity without Jesus Christ. And suffer eternal torment and the flames of an everlasting hell.---

i agree with this as well. hold firm to the truth the Bible tells us clearly those who reject God will suffer eternity apart from Him. for all those who reject Jesus and go on to suffer in hell they do so at their own hand and choosing. God has given the Way but men reject His way for their own and it leads them to destruction.

rdg

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/3 11:39

Bear---

I hate to have to accuse you of being purposefully obtuse but I guess I am going to have to.

You continue to state that the position of universal reconciliation is that God is only love and would never pour out his wrath on anybody.

I have repeatedly written that this is not the case so you are either not reading what I have written or you simply refuse to acknowledge it and simply keep on repeating your plain misrepresentation on what proponents of that view actually hold.

It is not possible to discuss this when you use this tactic. But perhaps that is your goal... To stanch all discussion of the issue. That is fine but I thought this was a discussion forum.

I would encourage you to visit a site like tentmaker.org which will fully explain what UR actually means. You will find very well reasoned scriptural answers for any question you might have. Of course you do not have to accept their explanations. Why not study it for yourself? What are you afraid of?

I have also repeatedly stated that I am not convinced of the truth of UR. But one thing I cannot stand is to see a view purposefully maligned and misrepresented. To summarize (once again):

- 1) UR states there is a hell of torment
- 2) unbelievers will go there and be tormented
- 3) hell's purpose is remedial
- 4). Post mortem repentance is possible and inevitable
- 5). God reconciles all things to himself
- 6) God wins, satan loses

Re: - posted by noone (), on: 2014/3/3 12:00

I have not even considered the UR position, but thanks TMK for your definition of it. I will check that website out in my studies.

This 3 part series is very interesting as well concerning Annihilationism and raises some valid points imo.

http://www.heavensfamily.org/ss/e_teachings/the-hell-debate-annihilationism

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/3 12:04

From Wikipedia:

"Straw Man

The straw man fallacy occurs in the following pattern of argument:

1. Person 1 has position X.
2. Person 2 disregards certain key points of X and instead presents the superficially similar position Y. The position Y is a distorted version of X and can be set up in several ways, including:
 1. Presenting a misrepresentation of the opponent's position.
 2. Quoting an opponent's words out of context—i.e., choosing quotations that misrepresent the opponent's actual intentions (see fallacy of quoting out of context).
 3. Presenting someone who defends a position poorly as the defender, then denying that person's arguments—thus giving the appearance that every upholder of that position (and thus the position itself) has been defeated.
 4. Inventing a fictitious persona with actions or beliefs which are then criticized, implying that the person represents a group of whom the speaker is critical.
 5. Oversimplifying an opponent's argument, then attacking this oversimplified version.

3. Person 2 attacks position Y, concluding that X is false/incorrect/flawed.

This reasoning is fallacious because attacking a distorted version of a position does not address the actual position."

We ought not to use Straw Men when we are discussing on these forums.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/3 12:07

Noone wrote:

"This 3 part series is very interesting as well concerning Annihilationism and raises some valid points imo."
"

I actually lean more toward Conditional Immortality (annihilationism) than UR because I believe it has slightly more scriptural support.

Greg Boyd has written an excellent article on this topic with all the scriptural support- it can be found here:

<http://reknew.org/2008/01/the-case-for-annihilationism/>

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2014/3/3 13:37

Quote:
----- I have also repeatedly stated that I am not convinced of the truth of UR. But one thing I cannot stand is to see a view purposefully maligned and misrepresented. To summarize (once again):

- 1) UR states there is a hell of torment
- 2) unbelievers will go there and be tormented
- 3) hell's purpose is remedial
- 4) Post mortem repentance is possible and inevitable
- 5) God reconciles all things to himself
- 6) God wins, satan loses

I believe that the greatest difficulty in this discussion is that those of us who study the Bible are aware of the fact that points 3-4 are a figment of someone's imagination and are simply not found in the Bible.

Any of us could dream up what appears to us to be a good and fair way for God to handle the eternal destiny of wicked people, but regardless of how good our plan sounds to human ears, we CANNOT have faith in such a plan if it cannot be

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Scripturess support the teaching of an eternal hell

e validated in scripture.

We realize that the UR position includes suffering and torment ... but it is obviously the same pipe dream that some pop e came up with when purgatory was invented. It is just not found in the Bible!

Re: , on: 2014/3/3 13:51

I do not see that universal reconciliation or conditional immortality have any scriptures support from the new Testament.

I agree with Lorddoitagain that hell being remedial and purgative is drawn more from Catholic teaching. Also Jesus teaches in Luke 16 there are no second chance in hell. For a person who does not know Jesus the time for them to repent is now. Not waiting and hoping they can do it from hell.

Blaine Scogin

Re: - posted by Lorddoitagain (), on: 2014/3/3 14:17

Quote:
----- I actually lean more toward Conditional Immortality (annihilationism) than UR because I believe it has slightly more scriptural support.

Greg Boyd has written an excellent article on this topic with all the scriptural support- it can be found here:

<http://reknew.org/2008/01/the-case-for-annihilationism/>

TMK, if you are willing to base your beliefs about eternity on the works of such a misguided and uninformed "scholar" as Greg Boyd, you are to be pitied! Look at his flimsy argument against the plain reality of Rev. 14:11:

Quote:

Responding to Objections

1) Tormented Day and Night. The most difficult passages for annihilationists to explain are Revelation 14:10-11 and 20:10. These passages speak of the wicked being tormented "day and night forever and ever." However, these passages are not as decisive against the annihilationist's view as they might initially seem. The phrase "forever and ever" can be translated "for ages upon ages" which implies an indefinite, but not necessarily unending, period of time. Even more fundamentally, it's important to keep in mind that Revelation is a highly symbolic book. Its apocalyptic images shouldn't be interpreted literally. This is particularly true of the phrase "forever and ever" since similar phrases are used elsewhere in Scripture in contexts where they clearly cannot literally mean "unending" (e.g. Gen 49:26; Ex 40:15; Nu 25:13; Ps 24:7).

First of all, he rejects its literal truth simply because it is in the book of Revelation "apocalyptic", while on other issues he accepts the LITERAL interpretation of passages in that apocalyptic book. He is simply picking and choosing what "shouldn't be interpreted literally"!

Then, he uses comparison examples from the ENGLISH word "forever and ever" (out of the Old Testament) to substantiate his argument (that forever does not mean forever). Anybody who knows very much about the Bible knows that the New Testament is written in Greek. The Greek word used there is:

G165
ἀἰώνιον
aiōnion

Thayer Definition:

- 1) for ever, an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity
- 2) the worlds, universe
- 3) period of time, age

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from the same as G104

Citing in TDNT: 1:197, 31

He should have taken his comparison from the 129 cases (listed below) in the New Testament where that GREEK WORD was used if he wanted to retain ANY credibility with people who really study the Bible.

G165
 ἄϊον
 aion, n
 Total KJV Occurrences: 129
 ever, 72
 Mat_6:13, Mat_21:19, Mar_11:14, Luk_1:33, Luk_1:55, Joh_6:51, Joh_6:58, Joh_8:35 (2), Joh_12:34, Joh_14:16, Rom_1:25, Rom_9:5, Rom_11:36, Rom_16:27, 2Co_9:9, Gal_1:5 (2), Phi_4:20 (2), 1Ti_1:17 (2), 2Ti_4:18 (2), Heb_1:8 (2), Heb_5:6, Heb_6:20, Heb_7:17, Heb_7:21, Heb_7:24, Heb_13:8, Heb_13:21 (2), 1Pe_1:23, 1Pe_1:25, 1Pe_5:11 (4), 2Pe_3:17-18 (2), 1Jo_2:17, 2Jo_1:2, Jud_1:13, Jud_1:25, Rev_1:6 (2), Rev_4:9-10 (4), Rev_5:13-14 (4), Rev_7:12 (2), Rev_10:6 (2), Rev_11:15 (2), Rev_14:11 (2), Rev_15:7 (2), Rev_19:3 (2), Rev_20:10 (2), Rev_22:5 (2)
 world, 37
 Mat_12:32, Mat_13:22, Mat_13:39-40 (2), Mat_13:49, Mat_24:3, Mat_28:20, Mar_4:19, Mar_10:30, Luk_1:70, Luk_16:8, Luk_18:30, Luk_20:34-35 (2), Joh_9:32, Act_3:21, Act_15:18, Rom_12:2, 1Co_1:20, 1Co_2:6-8 (4), 1Co_3:18, 1Co_8:13, 1Co_10:11, 2Co_4:4, Gal_1:4, Eph_1:21, Eph_3:9, Eph_3:21, Eph_6:12, 1Ti_6:17, 2Ti_4:10, Tit_2:12, Heb_6:5, Heb_9:26
 never, 8
 Mar_3:29, Joh_4:14, Joh_6:35, Joh_8:51-52 (2), Joh_10:28, Joh_11:26, Joh_13:8
 evermore, 3
 2Co_11:31, Heb_7:28, Rev_1:18
 ages, 2
 Eph_2:7, Col_1:26
 end, 2
 Eph_3:21 (2)
 eternal, 2
 Eph_3:11, 1Ti_1:17
 worlds, 2
 Heb_11:2-3 (2)
 course, 1
 Eph_2:2

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/3 14:38

lorddoitagain-

thanks for your posts. i would much rather see a reasoned argument than simply a reiteration of what has already been said and misrepresenting the other side's position. You have given the reasons why eternal (Aion) can mean "forever and forever." A proponent of UR simply says that it doesn't HAVE to mean forever and ever, but it can.

As for Greg Boyd's article, I certainly don't get my theology from him; I rarely visit his website. The only book I have read of his is "Letters to a Skeptic." But his article (whether you agree with it or not) is a good summary of what Annihilationism actually is and gives all the scriptural support for same. By the way, in the article he himself says he is not convinced that this view is correct but rather that it is worthy of consideration.

That being said, I am not sure how helpful it is to call a brother that we happen to disagree with on some points "misguided" or "misinformed." You can disagree with him without resorting to such terminology.

An even better and more thorough exposition of the view of Conditional Immortality (Annihilationism) is Edward Fudge's "The Final End of the Wicked" in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS):

http://www.edwardfudge.com/JETS_final_end_wicked.pdf

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/3 15:07

Quote:
-----TMK...That being said, I am not sure how helpful it is to call a brother that we happen to disagree with on some points "misguided" or "misinformed." You can disagree with him without resorting to such terminology.

I would even take that to another level, I think we all at some point have been in the shoes of the "misguided" or "misinformed", unless you were born with the gift of all knowledge.

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2014/3/3 20:00

Quote:
----- That being said, I am not sure how helpful it is to call a brother that we happen to disagree with on some points "misguided" or "misinformed." You can disagree with him without resorting to such terminology.

An even better and more thorough exposition of the view of Conditional Immortality (Annihilationism) is Edward Fudge's "The Final End of the Wicked" in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS):

http://www.edwardfudge.com/JETS_final_end_wicked.pdf

However you want to phrase it ... "misguided" or "misinformed" ... "incorrect" ... the reality is that the authors that you have presented on this forum that support these erroneous views have been examined by many who see clearly the error in their methodology. When we study the Bible by piling up and piecing together our own set of ideas while totally ignoring other verses that clearly contradict what we claim to be true, we sink ourselves into more and more darkness.

Below I have copied a very good examination of Mr. Edward Fudge's failing pursuit to dismiss the truth about eternal punishment that is very evident in the scripture. As this writer notes, one of his tactics is:

"... he has bombarded the reader with Scripture references. Although this may have the effect of impressing some readers, careful ones will notice that Fudge has never explained the verses at hand! The result once again is a weakening of his case for conditionalism."

What you are calling a "more thorough exposition" is actually a compilation of many many scriptures pieced together with his own ideas and totally ignoring other scriptures. A person who studies the Bible in order to support his own ideas can put together something that sounds convincing. A person who studies the Bible with a sincere desire to know the truth contained therein will look at ALL of the evidence even if it goes against his own ideas.

This essay by Robert A. Peterson is a good examination of Mr. Fudge's erroneous theological method:

<http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar21.htm>

Issues, Etc.

Articles and book excerpts used in and referred to on Issues, Etc.

The Hermeneutics of Annihilationism:
The Theological Method of Edward Fudge
by Robert A. Peterson*

My purpose in this essay is to evaluate the biblical hermeneutic of the evangelical conditionalist Edward William Fudge. I have chosen Fudge, the author of *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment*, for two reasons.¹ First, his work has attracted considerable attention of late. As evidence of this fact I cite two essays in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, edited by Nigel Cameron.² John W. Wenham ascribes importance to Fudge's book when he includes it with three others that, in his estimation, have not been answered by traditionalist writers: I have been waiting since 1973 for a reply to the massive work of Froom (2,476 pages), to Atkinson's closely argued 112 pages, to Guillebaud's 67 and (more important) to the one additional book which has appeared on the conditionalist side: Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes*³

Wenham's remarks occur in the introduction to his essay, "The Case for Conditional Immortality." In the essay that follows Wenham's, Kendall S. Harmon makes "The Case Against Conditionalism: A Response to Edward William Fudge."⁴ Notice that when Harmon seeks to interact with a contemporary annihilationist, he chooses Fudge. Harmon gives two reasons for so doing: "First, although not as prominent as John Stott or Philip Hughes, Mr. Fudge's work is more substantial than theirs (500 pages) and is devoted exclusively to the doctrine of hell. Secondly, Mr. Fudge's book has been praised for its tone and its thoroughness."⁵ Plainly, the stock of *The Fire That Consumes* is on the rise.

My second reason for choosing to evaluate the biblical interpretation of Fudge is that in the preface to *The Fire That Consumes* he says that he has given attention to hermeneutics and that he invites evaluation of his work: This book is written to be read - and argued with! I have no axe to grind and no cause to champion; I have tried to follow the ordinary methods of sound, biblical exegesis. Competent scholars and serious students are cordially invited to enter into dialogue. Check the statements made here. Weigh the evidence. Examine the arguments. Measure the work by every proper standard. All that matters is that we seek God's truth for His glory and the salvation of sinners!⁶

I appreciate the openness Fudge here expresses. In this paper I take up one aspect of his challenge. I propose to evaluate his hermeneutic within the framework of his theological method.⁷ Like most writers on the doctrine of hell, Fudge does not devote a section of his book to hermeneutics.⁸ Nevertheless, he refers to principles of interpretation throughout *The Fire That Consumes*. By studying these stated principles and the hermeneutic implicit in his exegesis, we can discern some aspects of his hermeneutical method.

Fudge's book totals 500 pages. Instead of trying to evaluate all of his exegesis, I have chosen to base my evaluation primarily on his treatment of three NT passages: Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 14:9-11; and Revelation 20:10, 15. I have chosen these passages because they have figured most prominently in the history of the doctrine of hell. Indeed, Augustine, Thomas, Calvin, Edwards, and Shedd, to name the stalwarts of the orthodox view of hell, all regard one or more of these passages as teaching the endless conscious torment of the wicked.⁹ I have studied Fudge's treatment of these passages (within the context of his whole book) in order to evaluate his hermeneutical approach and method. As a result I summarize Fudge's hermeneutic under the following headings.

USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Fudge devotes a thirty page chapter of *The Fire that Consumes* to a study of "The End of the Wicked in the OT."¹⁰ Contrary to the assumption of many, the OT has much to say about the fate of the wicked. Fudge points to numerous biblical examples of God's judging the ungodly. I will cite two: the Genesis flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

At the time of the flood, "God decided 'to wipe mankind.., from the face of the earth' (Gen 6:5). Indeed, Fudge notes, "God told Noah his plan... 'to destroy... every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything will perish' (v. 17). Subsequently, God fulfilled his threat and, "When the flood came, 'Every living thing that moved on the earth perished....' (Gen 7:21). Fudge concludes, "Here there is no doubt about the meaning of 'perish,' 'destroy,' or 'die'.... In this actual historical example of the end of the world, those terms were clearly literal. They meant being 'wiped out,' being 'wiped off the face of the earth.'¹¹

The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is another example given by Fudge of God's judging the wicked in the OT. In this case, "The fire fell from heaven and burned the wicked to ashes, resulting in a total desolation that would never be reversed!"¹² Indeed, as Fudge amplifies in a footnote, "The final outcome of 'fire and brimstone' in the prototypical historical judgment of Sodom was the complete extermination of every sinner...." ¹³

It is not necessary to multiply examples. These two enable us to understand Fudge's conception of the fate of the wicked

d according to the OT - annihilation. Although Fudge is not the first conditionalist to reach this conclusion, as he acknowledges,¹⁴ he has given it new visibility. Consider these words from an article he wrote in 1984: Is the OT silent concerning the wicked's final fate? Indeed it is not. It overwhelmingly affirms their total destruction. It never affirms or even hints at anything resembling conscious unending torment. The OT uses about 50 different Hebrew verbs to describe this fate, and about 70 figures of speech. Without exception they portray destruction, extinction or extermination. Not one of the verbs or word-pictures remotely suggests the traditional doctrine.¹⁵

How are we to evaluate Fudge's conclusions? I must give them a mixed review on the basis of a study of the major Old Testament judgment texts.¹⁶ Such a study reveals that the punishments of God described in them are earthly and temporal, resulting in physical death. These passages do not speak of life after death or eternal destinies. This is significant in the light of Fudge's claim that the Old Testament supports his view of the extinction of the wicked.¹⁷ Fudge correctly asserts that the judgment passages use the "vocabulary of destruction." God punishes the ungodly in the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues and Red Sea, and the captivities by "wiping them out, cutting them off, putting them to an end, overthrowing them." As a result the wicked "perish, die, are consumed, shattered, destroyed."

Fudge errs, however, when he claims that these OT texts teach the annihilation of the wicked. If that were the case, then the judgment passages would teach too much, for the "annihilation" depicted in them does not follow the resurrection and punishment of the wicked, as does the annihilation for which Fudge argues. Instead, the "annihilation" presented by the OT would entail cessation of existence at death and this is more akin to Bertrand Russell's view than to the teaching of evangelical annihilationists. Actually, however, since these passages do not speak of judgment after death, they do not teach annihilationism and pose no threat to the orthodox view of eternal punishment.¹⁸

I conclude that Fudge's claim that the OT judgment passages teach annihilationism is false. Moreover, Fudge's error has serious repercussions in the light of his theological method, for after concluding that the OT teaches annihilationism, Fudge reads this conclusion into the NT. This is evident, for example, in his comments on "burning sulfur" in Rev 14:10. There Fudge asserts, "In the Bible the symbol derives its meaning from the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah."¹⁹

A page later Fudge argues that the images of "burning sulfur" and of "carrion birds" eating "the corpses" both "sound out a message of utter extinction." Furthermore, "Rev 19:20, 21 has both figures and distinguishes between them, but it gives no indication of changing this basic meaning of either" (*italics mine*). Here we see Fudge's theological method in action. The OT provides the "basic meaning" of the images of God's judgment - annihilationism - and the NT "gives no indication of changing this basic meaning."²⁰

I will elaborate below on Fudge's habit of reading his annihilationist understanding of the OT into the NT. For now it is sufficient to have demonstrated the faulty basis for this practice. Fudge has misinterpreted the numerous OT texts that use the "vocabulary of destruction" as teaching annihilationism. This is the source of his mishandling of the NT.

APPEAL TO LINGUISTICS

Throughout *The Fire That Consumes*, Fudge appeals to linguistics in an effort to strengthen his case for conditionalism. Unfortunately, his work is marred by linguistic fallacies. I will cite two different types of such errors.

First, at times, he adopts a diachronic rather than a synchronic approach to the study of words. Fudge claims that the meaning of "punishment" in Matt 25:46 is disputed. He then cites among other authorities Aristotle, Plutarch, and the Septuagint. Fudge would do well to heed Moises Silva's caution:

We must accept the obvious fact that the speakers of a language simply know next to nothing about its development; and this certainly was the case with the writers and immediate readers of Scripture two millennia ago.... It follows that our real interest is the significance of Greek or Hebrew in the consciousness of the biblical writers; to put it baldly, "historical considerations are irrelevant to the investigation" of the state of the Koine at the time of Christ (*italics in original*).²¹

Second, Fudge commits a linguistic fallacy in his treatment of the Pauline pair of words "trouble" (*thlipsis*) and "distress" (*stenochoria*) in Rom 2:9. After noting a few other occurrences of this pair in Paul's writings, Fudge remarks, "Paul is one of those who are 'hard pressed... but not crushed,'" and he uses these same two words in participle form to say so (2 Cor 4:8)." So far, so good. But next Fudge draws an unwarranted conclusion, "This last translation is suggestive for our present verse. Judgment day will find the wicked 'hard pressed' - to the point of being 'crushed.'"²²

This is an example of what D. A. Carson calls, "Unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field." Carson explains:

The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word's entire semantic range. This step is sometimes called illegitimate totality transfer.²³

Although *stenochoroumenoi*, used metaphorically, may be rendered "crushed" in 2 Cor 4:8 (the NIV does so), it is illegitimate to transfer this meaning to the noun *stenochoria* in Rom 2:9 and suggest that it implies the literal "crushing" - the annihilation - of the wicked on judgment day.

I conclude that Fudge's appeal to linguistics sometimes has the opposite of his desired effect: it harms rather than helps his case for annihilationism.

AVOIDANCE OF TEXTS AND OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

Another feature of Fudge's hermeneutic is his occasional avoidance of aspects of biblical passages that are difficult to reconcile with conditionalism. Sometimes this avoidance takes the form of ignoring the strongest arguments of traditionalism.

An example of the latter is his failure to correlate Matt 25:41 with Rev 20:10, in spite of the fact that he dedicates eleven pages to a study of Matt 25:41, 46.²⁴

Included in Jesus' teaching concerning the sheep and the goats are his terrible words to the wicked, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41). Traditionalists since Augustine have interpreted Scripture by Scripture and gone to Rev 20:10 for help in understanding this "eternal fire prepared for the devil." There John describes Satan's fate, "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Referring to Matt 25:41 and Rev 20:10, Augustine reasons, "Eternal' in the first passage is expressed in the second by 'for ever and ever', and those words have only one meaning in scriptural usage: the exclusion of any temporal end."²⁵

Many traditionalists since Augustine have regarded this as a strong argument for endless punishment. A recent example is Alan Gomes's use of this argument in his presentation of the two sets of texts (Matt 25:41, 46; Rev 14:9-11; 20:10) that he views as "conclusively" teaching eternal conscious torment (*italics mine*).²⁶

What is Fudge's hermeneutical technique for dealing with this prominent traditionalist argument? He simply does not address it. In so doing he actually weakens his case for conditionalism, by giving the impression that he avoids the traditionalist argument because he cannot answer it.

At other times Fudge avoids biblical texts that are difficult to harmonize with conditionalism. One example is Fudge's handling of the angel's message in Rev 14:9-11:

If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.

This text is one of the pillars upon which the traditional doctrine of hell has been built. It may seem odd for me to cite Fudge's treatment of this passage as an example of his avoiding difficult texts because he devotes more than six pages to its exposition! Nevertheless, it is a striking example of avoidance. In fact, all the more so, because of the amount of space Fudge allots to it.

After briefly setting Rev 14:9-11 in its literary context, Fudge divides it into four elements: "Wine of God's Fury," "Burning Sulfur," "Rising Smoke," and "No Rest Day or Night." He then treats the four in turn. In so doing he mentions the OT more than twenty-five times and the NT more than fifteen times. He regards many of these texts as teaching annihilationism and insists that we interpret Rev 14:9-11 accordingly. Amazingly, however, other than an exposition of "There is no rest day or night" and a brief summary at the end of his discussion, Fudge does not explain Rev 14:9-11 at all.²⁷

What are we to make of this? Fudge informs us of the theological method he intended to follow when he states his aim of "letting the Scripture interpret itself."²⁸ Certainly, interpreters are to compare Scripture with Scripture, as Luther urged.

Furthermore, consulting the OT background is especially important for those seeking to understand the Apocalypse, which is replete with OT allusions and symbolism. Unfortunately, however, Fudge has not allowed other Scriptures to inform his exegesis of Rev 14; instead he has substituted his comments on many other texts for the interpretation of Rev 14:9-11 itself. And this does not constitute an exegesis of this critical text. Indeed, Fudge has not explained verses 9-11 as John has put them together. Instead, he has created his own theological context for Rev 14:9-11 out of his mosaic of biblical texts. And apparently, he assumes that the interpretation of Rev 14:9-11 will be apparent to his readers - it teaches the same conditionalism that Fudge finds elsewhere in the Bible.

Granted, John's statements in Rev 14:9-11 are very difficult for conditionalist interpreters to handle. But this is exactly what Fudge has to do in order to prove that annihilationism can stand up to the scrutiny of biblical exegesis. Instead, he has bombarded the reader with Scripture references. Although this may have the effect of impressing some readers, careful ones will notice that Fudge has never explained the verses at hand! The result once again is a weakening of his case for conditionalism.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not prying into Fudge's motives or accusing him of dishonesty. Rather, I am criticizing his theological hermeneutic. At times he simply avoids texts that are difficult for his position.

Another example is his treatment of Mark 9:43-48. Although Fudge discusses seventy New Testament passages under individual headings, he does not devote a separate heading to this significant text; instead, he subsumes it under his treatment of Matt. 18:8, 9. There Fudge plays Matthew's and Mark's accounts against each other to avoid the difficult verses for annihilationism. For example, Fudge notes that whereas Matthew speaks of "eternal fire," Mark speaks simply of being "thrown/going into hell." What conclusion are we to draw from this? Fudge urges, "Matthew's language may add flavor and force, but it should not be naively interpreted in a way that contradicts Mark's."²⁹ I must ask why it is naive to seek to understand each passage on its own merits before doing theological systematization? And why should one regard unbelievers' being thrown into hell as incompatible with endless punishment, unless one were committed a priori to annihilationism?

Fudge diverts his readers' attention from Jesus' strong words about hell in Matt 18:8,9 and Mark 9:44, 48 by noting that Calvin in his commentary on these passages, "does not elaborate at all on final punishment."³⁰ I fail to understand how that lessens Fudge's responsibility to explain the verses at hand. Nevertheless, he simply skips Jesus' words in Mark 9:44, where he speaks of "hell, where the fire never goes out."

Fudge does treat Jesus' saying in Mark 9:48 that hell is "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." But his treatment is another example of avoidance. He instructs us that the worm here "is a devouring worm, and what it eats - in Isaiah's picture here quoted without amendment - is already dead."³¹ Once more Fudge imposes his annihilationist reading of the OT upon the NT text. Does this sufficiently explain Jesus' words about the worm's not dying? Wouldn't the worm die, when it had consumed its host? Shouldn't a conditionalist theologian address the traditionalist arguments arising out of the biblical text? At least this traditionalist gets the impression that Fudge is reading his theology into passages that are difficult to assimilate to his position.

Moreover, my impression is only confirmed by Fudge's explanation of Jesus' description of hell as a place "where... the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48). Fudge informs us, "The devouring worm is aided by a consuming fire" (italics in original). As evidence he points us to biblical references already adduced along with passages in Homer and Eusebius.³² Is this not clear avoidance of Jesus' words? Jesus says nothing in Mark 9:42-48 about a consuming fire; instead, he says that hell-fire "is not quenched" (v. 48). And Fudge has not interpreted these words in the context of Jesus' message.

In sum: Fudge's avoidance of the strongest traditionalist arguments and of the texts used for centuries to teach the endless punishment of the wicked damages his case for conditionalism.³³

LOGICAL FALLACIES

The Logical Fallacy of Argumentum ad Hominem In his zeal to argue for conditionalism Fudge at times commits logical fallacies. I will cite two examples. Irving M. Copi defines argumentum ad hominem (abusive) as follows: "The phrase 'argumentum ad hominem' translates literally into 'argument directed to the man....' This fallacy.... is committed when, instead of trying to disprove the truth of what is asserted, one attacks the man who made the assertion.... The way in which this irrelevant argument may sometimes persuade is through the psychological process of transference. Where an attitude of disapproval toward a person can be evoked, it may possibly tend to overflow the strictly emotional field and become di-

sagreement with what the person says" (italics in original).³⁴

Fudge argues in this manner in his treatment of Jesus' words in Matt 25:46. There, speaking of the goats and sheep respectively, Jesus declares, "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Traditionalists have often pointed to the parallelism of the fates of the righteous and unrighteous when making their case for the endless punishment for the wicked. Augustine, for example, argued this way, "Christ, in the very same passage, included both punishment and life in one and the same sentence when he said, 'So those people will go into eternal punishment, while the righteous will go into eternal life' (Matt. 25:46). Augustine contends:

If both are "eternal", it follows necessarily that either both are to be taken as long-lasting but finite, or both as endless and perpetual. The phrases "eternal punishment" and "eternal life" are parallel and it would be absurd to use them in one and the same sentence to mean: "Eternal life will be infinite, while eternal punishment will have an end." Hence, because the eternal life of the saints will be endless, the eternal punishment also, for those condemned to it, will assuredly have no end.³⁵

How does Fudge counter this traditionalist argument? First, he contends that eternal punishment means irreversible annihilation. "When the wicked have perished, it will be forever - their destruction and punishment is unending as well as qualitatively different from anything we now know." ³⁶

Second, Fudge responds to this traditionalist argument by employing an argumentum ad hominem. He writes, "We must be careful in pressing the parallel between 'eternal' life and 'eternal' punishment that we do not fall into any spirit of vindictiveness or ungodly joy at the fate of the wicked."³⁷

The implication is that understanding Matt 25:46 as teaching endless punishment for the wicked makes one liable to vindictiveness. Copi puts the argumentum ad hominem into the category of "irrelevant arguments." The premises of such arguments "are logically irrelevant to, and therefore incapable of establishing the truth of, their conclusions."³⁸ This is true of Fudge's argument here: whether traditionalists are vindictive or not has nothing to do with the meaning of Matt 25:46. In fact, the defenders of the orthodox doctrine of hell have often demonstrated compassion for the lost. But whether they are compassionate or vengeful does not help us understand Jesus' words.

Fudge, by arguing in this way, seeks to persuade by "the psychological process of transference," to use Copi's description. As was already noted, "Where an attitude of disapproval toward a person can be evoked, it may possibly tend to overflow the strictly emotional field and become disagreement with what the person says."³⁹

Unfortunately, Fudge pursues this line of argumentation in a chapter of his book entitled, "Traditionalism's Problem of Pain."⁴⁰ Here he cites extreme portrayals from church history of the wicked's "everlasting torture in agony," and declares, "If the whole point is to scare the poor and the little children, why not give them a fright they will never forget?" He even paints crude Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim pictures of hell to heap ridicule on the traditionalist view.⁴¹

Fudge's argument here is as unconvincing as that employed by defenders of endless punishment who use an argumentum ad hominem against annihilationism by grouping conditionalists with cultists.⁴²

The Logical Fallacy of Petitio Principii

Fudge also commits the logical fallacy of petitio principii. Copi describes this fallacy:

In attempting to establish the truth of a proposition, one often casts about for acceptable premisses from which the proposition in question can be deduced as conclusion. If one assumes as a premiss for his argument the very conclusion he intends to prove, the fallacy committed is that of petitio principii, or begging the question.⁴³

Fudge commits this fallacy in his exposition of the lake of fire in Rev 19:20. He argues that the beast and false prophet are not actual people but institutions, and hence incapable of suffering conscious, sensible pain. Their being cast into the lake of fire cannot, therefore, indicate endless punishment. Fudge then notes that Homer Hailey does not regard Rev 19:20 as describing Christ's second coming.⁴⁴

Fudge next appeals to Hanns Lilje who " marvels that John gives no description here of any battle." Lilje writes of God's throwing the beast into the lake of fire:

The very moment when this purpose of God is fulfilled, the mighty power of the beast shrivels up like a collapsed balloon, as if it had never been. It has been unmasked, and its true character revealed: it was empty, futile presumption.⁴⁵

Fudge notes that "Lilje is content to use the word 'annihilated' to express the meaning of the lake of fire. Fudge's next sentence is revealing, "In the case of the beast and false prophet, therefore, the lake of fire stands for utter, absolute, irreversible annihilation" (italics mine).⁴⁶ Here Fudge commits the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question. Fudge does not prove that the lake of fire signifies annihilation. He merely states that Lilje thinks it means this. On that basis ("therefore") Fudge concludes that the lake of fire stands for obliteration. Fudge here assumes his conclusion. This aspect of his argument, therefore, lacks cogency.

Fudge commits the same fallacy in his comments on Heb 2:2,3. There, after admitting that this passage "gives no details of that terrible and certain punishment," he nevertheless concludes that the wicked will "perish forever in the second and final death."⁴⁷

APPEAL TO SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

While commenting on the "wine of God's fury" in Rev 14:10, Fudge speaks of the cup of God's wrath. In this context he says:

Such was the cup Jesus accepted from God's hand in Gethsemane, and to drink it unmixed He refused even the numbing wine offered by His murderers (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; 27:34). He suffered torment of body and soul. More than that, He drained the cup of God's wrath, passively enduring the simultaneous draining of His own life into total death.⁴⁸

Here Fudge, following the examples of Atkinson and Froom before him, teaches that Jesus was annihilated in his death. In fact, Fudge devotes six pages of his book to the thesis: "Jesus' Death Involved Total Destruction."⁴⁹ Here he quotes approvingly James Dunn's statements, "Man could not be helped other than through his annihilation," and "This process of destruction is speeded up in the case of Jesus, the representative man, the hilasterion, and destroys him."⁵⁰ Next Fudge agrees with Oscar Cullmann who wrote that:

can conquer death only by actually dying, by betaking Himself to the sphere of death, the destroyer of life, to the sphere of nothingness.... Whoever wants to conquer death must die; he must really cease to live - not simply live on as an immortal soul; but die in body and soul, lose life itself.... Furthermore, if life is to issue out of so genuine a death as this, a new divine act of creation is necessary. And this act of creation calls back to life not just a part of man, but the whole man - all that God had created and death had annihilated.⁵¹

Fudge insists that the Scriptures teach that Jesus was annihilated:

The Bible exhausts the vocabulary of dying in speaking of what happened to Jesus. He "died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3). He laid down His "life" (John 10:15). He was destroyed (Matt 27:20, KJV) or killed (Acts 3:15). Jesus compared his own death to the dissolution of a kernel of wheat... (John 12:23-26). Jesus "poured out His life unto death" and in so doing was as "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa 53:12; italics in original).⁵²

Fudge admits, "We naturally recoil from such a thought, that the Son of God could truly have perished - even for a moment." Yet this is what Fudge believes happened. He faults Calvin for his refusal to believe that "Jesus' 'soul' truly died."⁵³

In his conclusion Fudge writes:

Every scriptural implication is that if Jesus had not been raised, He - like those fallen asleep in Him - would simply have perished (1 Cor 15:18). His resurrection reverses every such estimation of affairs¹ assuring us instead of the death of Death (2 Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:14).⁵⁴

To be precise, Fudge concurs with Edward White who held that when Jesus died in crucifixion his humanity was annihilated, but not his divinity.⁵⁵

Fudge, therefore, seeks to strengthen his case for annihilationism by arguing that Jesus bore the pains of hell in his death, that is, he was annihilated. What are the systematic implications of such a view? Do they strengthen or weaken Fudge's case for conditionalism?

The systematic implications of holding that Jesus was annihilated when he died are enormous. Nothing less than orthodox Christology is at stake. The definitive statement concerning the Person of Christ was made by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Included in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon is the following formal confession of faith:

In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, th

the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin; begotten from the Father before the ages as regards His Godhead, and in these last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as regards His manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon and one hypostasis- not parted or divided into two prosopa, but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ Himself taught us about Him and the creed of our fathers has handed down.⁵⁶

John Cooper encapsulates the teaching of Chalcedon:

Since the Council of Chalcedon the church has officially recognized what is taught in the New Testament and held by the early church: that because of the incarnation Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human; that he is one person with two natures, one divine and one human; and that these natures are neither mixed together nor are they separable.⁵⁷

Next, Cooper highlights the disastrous implications of holding that Jesus was annihilated in his death:

Now if the extinction- re-creation account of Jesus' resurrection is true, then the teaching of Chalcedon is false. The two natures of Christ are separable and were in fact separated between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The human being Jesus completely ceased to exist.... So the divine-human person Jesus Christ did not exist for the interim. Only the nonincarnate Word, the wholly divine Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, existed during that time.⁵⁸

Furthermore, if Jesus were annihilated on Calvary, and his natures separated because his humanity ceased to exist, then his resurrection constituted another incarnation. This incarnation would differ from the first in that this time the Word would take to himself resurrected flesh. Notwithstanding, it would be a second incarnation.

I conclude: instead of Fudge's appeal to systematic theology strengthening his case for conditionalism, it weakens it considerably. Indeed, to hold that Jesus' humanity was annihilated on the cross, brings one into conflict with Chalcedonian Christology. Such a prospect ought to cause conditionalists to re-examine their views, for the Bible teaches that Christ did suffer the pains of hell, but not as they are conceived by annihilationists.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

Space prevents me from considering other aspects of Fudge's theological hermeneutic. I omitted one important aspect because it has been treated adequately by Kendall S. Harmon. That is Fudge's tendency to read into Scripture a period of penal suffering for the ungodly prior to their annihilation. To quote Harmon, "He often introduces a chronological lapse of time in New Testament passages which is not there in the texts themselves."⁶⁰

I have evaluated Fudge's use of the OT, appeal to linguistics, avoidance of texts and of opposing arguments, logical fallacies, and appeal to systematic theology. I have pointed out deficiencies in his methodological approach in these five areas. As a result, I conclude that Fudge's case for conditionalism is not as strong as he and others have thought. In fact, evaluated in terms of hermeneutics and theological method, his case appears to be weak.

* Robert Peterson holds a Ph.D. from Drew University and is Professor of Systematic Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary. A version of the present essay is forthcoming in a collected volume tentatively entitled *Hermeneutics: Select Essays from the 1994 Evangelical Theological Society* and is published here by permission. Prof. Peterson's new book, *Hell On Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1995), should be out in June.

1 Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment* (Houston: Providential Press, 1982). I thank Mr. Fudge for reading this paper and offering comments. I note that Fudge affirms the resurrection of the saved and the lost and rejects the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses that hell is only the physical grave.

2 Nigel M. de S. Cameron, ed., *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

3 John W. Wenham, "The Case for Conditional Immortality," *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, 164. My first footnote gives the bibliographical information for Fudge's book. The other three books are: Harold E. Guillebaud, *The Righteous Judge* (n.p., 1941); Basil Atkinson, *Life and Immortality* (n.p., n.d.); LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1965-66). Guillebaud's and Atkinson's books were published privately and

d are obtainable from the Reverend B. L. Bateson, 26 Summershard, S. Petherton, Somerset, U.K. TAI3 5DP.

4 In Cameron, ed., *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, 193-224.

5 *Ibid.*, 195-96.

6 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, xv.

7 Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton (*Let the Reader Understand. A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* , 65-67) helpfully discuss the relation between systematic theology and hermeneutical method.

8 One exception is Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1984), 19-33.

9 David Knowles, ed., *The City of God* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), XXI. 23 (pp. 1001, 1004, 1005); Vernon J. Bourke, trans., *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa contra Gentiles. Book Three, Providence, Part II*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 144.8 (p. 216), 145.5 (p. 219); D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, eds., *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries. A Harmony of the Gospels, vol. III* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 117-118; John H. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 75; W. G. T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986; first published 1885; second edition, 1887), 89.

10 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*. 87-117.

11 *Ibid.*, 98.

12 *Ibid.*, 100.

13 *Ibid.*, 100, n.10.

14 Fudge approvingly cites Froom, Petavel, and Constable in the notes of his chapter on the OT in *The Fire That Consumes*. He could have added Atkinson's name as well.

15 Edward Fudge, "The Final End of the Wicked," *JETS* 27.3 (1984): 326.

16 See chapter two of my *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1995) for the details of this study.

17 Fudge is not the only one to make this claim. For another example, see Clark H. Pinnock, "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," *Criswell Theological Review* 4.2 (1990): 250-52

18 At least two OT texts, Dan 12:2 and Isaiah 66:24, do speak of the fate of the wicked after death. Fudge agrees, but then errs when he interprets these as teaching the annihilation of the wicked after resurrection (see *The Fire That Consumes*, 110-115). To the contrary, both texts suggest the endless conscious torment of the wicked. See chapter two of my *Hell on Trial* for a theological exegesis of these passages.

19 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 296.

20 *Ibid.*, 297.

21 Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning. An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 38.

22 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 262.

23 D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 62.

24 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 192-202.

25 Knowles, ed., *The City of God*, XXI. 23 (p. 1001).

26 Alan W. Gomes, "Evangelicals and the Annihilation of Hell, Part One," Christian Research Journal 13.4 (1991): 17-18 . See also Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint, 1992), 89.

27 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 295-301.

28 *Ibid.*, 299.

29 *Ibid.*, 184

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, 185

32 *Ibid.*

33 How does Fudge attempt to reconcile annihilationism with Rev 20:10, where John asserts that the devil "will be tormented for ever and ever" in the lake of fire? He admits, "There is no easy solution." He concludes, however, "Whatever the case with Satan, the final punishment of the wicked is a different subject," *ibid.*, 304, 307. Fudge here tries to avoid the plain sense of Rev 20:10 and the fact that four verses later wicked humans too are cast into the same lake of fire.

34 Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 54-55.

35 Knowles, ed., *The City of God*, XXI. 23 (pp. 1001-1002).

36 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 195.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 53

39 *Ibid.*, 55.

40 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 411-422.

41 *Ibid.*, 419-420.

42 See John H. Gerstner, *Repent or Perish* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Den Gloria, 1990), 30; and Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 202-03.

43 Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 65.

44 Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 303.

45 *Ibid.*, 303-304.

46 *Ibid.*, 304.

47 *Ibid.*, 272-273.

48 *Ibid.*, 296.

49 *Ibid.*, 228-234.

50 *Ibid.*, 229.

51 *Ibid.*, 230.

52 Ibid

53 Ibid., 231.

54 Ibid., 233-234.

55 Ibid., 230-231.

56 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (2nd ed. New York: NY: Har-Row, 1960), 339-340.

57 John Cooper, *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting. Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 144.

58 Ibid., 144-145.

59 I thank my student Jimmy Agan for helping me to understand better the connection between the doctrine of hell and Christ's atonement.

60 Harmon, "The Case Against Conditionalism," 210-12. For two more examples of this error in *The Fire That Consumes*, see 47, 48.

Used by permission. *The Hermeneutics of Annihilationism: The Theological Method of Edward Fudge*, Robert A. Peterson. *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, Spring 1995.

www.issuesetc.org

Management Techniques Incorporated has provided this article archive expressly for Issues, Etc. The articles in this archive have been formatted converted for internet use, by Management Techniques, Inc.
Contact MTI webmaster

- posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/3 20:52

Wow! now that's one long post right yonder, I will have to read that with my 3 cups of coffee in the morning. :)

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 6:54

Whew doggy-- nothing like a long essay on hermeneutics to start the day off right!

I appreciate the article and I understand the points the author makes and he is persuasive.

The only problem is that every theologian supporting a particular position does the same thing, whether they are arguing for points of Calvinism or Arminianism, Preterism or Futurism, the doctrine of hell, spiritual gifts, etc etc. And of course it is always the opponent of a certain position saying the other side is not accurately dividing the word of truth. How could they not say this? Both sides cannot be right.

If scriptures were "perfectly clear" we wouldn't have such divergent opinions on seemingly vital issues. In fact when I listen to a debate over a certain point of scripture I often find myself agreeing with whichever person is speaking (assuming they are doing a good job in the debate). That is because there is enough unclarity to make this possible.

Now it is possible and probably likely that many Christians don't realize there is unclarity in scripture, or that there are differing views on some issues, because they have never been exposed to anything other than what they have been taught all their lives. I was certainly like this until the rise of the internet and theological discussion where I was surprised to learn, for example, that there are other legitimate eschatological views than "left behind" theology. The same can be said about Calvinism (I left that camp) and the doctrine of hell. I always thought that charismatics were all a bunch of wackos (of course some are) but until I actually took the time to learn about their theological position and actually got to know so

me that I realized how wrong I was.

My point in all this is to state that I don't think it is dangerous for a Christian to be willing to have an open mind about certain things- especially things that are not crystal clear in scripture.

My current view of the final fate of the wicked is unsettled. I have been involved on another forum and have participated in and read extensive debates on every aspect of this issue. I started out as a die-hard traditionalist but gradually I had to at least acknowledge the strength of other arguments and I could no longer state with any level of confidence that the Bible absolutely and without any doubt whatsoever teaches that God created hell as a place to torture unrepentant persons forever and ever. That seems so contrary to God's character as revealed in Scripture and so contradictory to his purposes. Now, that being said, I also cannot state with certainty that the Bible does NOT teach that. But I can say this: I hope that it does not.

In the end it is a moot point to some degree. Regardless of which view of hell is actually correct, I know of no one who would want to experience any of it. People get somewhat "freaked out" because they feel that if they can't tell people that hell is a place of eternal torment then they can't get them saved. I would say this is a bunch of hogwash and you didn't see Peter or Paul preaching like this. I would question the conversion of any person who does so to save their own skin. If they do, they are still doing it for themselves. They are still "me" centered. The Bible teaches that all men are to repent for CHRIST'S sake, not their own. If we can't get them to that point, there is a question as to whether they are saved at all.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 7:19

Honestly that is the problem. To leave the clear teaching of Scripture, the simplicity of Christ in His Word, and to listen to the opinion of men which is called theology, that is hogwash.

We are far safer to stay within the simplicity of Christ and His Word, and not try to water it down with the arrogant opinion of men who call themselves theologians.

Give a person a new Testament and the Holy Spirit and this person will know far more truth from Jesus than any theologian.

Blaine

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 7:38

The Lord wrote Scripture so that even a child can understand them. It is only when man in his arrogance complicates the Scriptures by giving us theology. Theology replaces the Holy Spirit and the theologian becomes the interpreter of scripture. This is how we get the erroneous teachings of universal reconciliation, annihilation, and everything else.

Even a child reading the New Testament would see that hell is an eternal place of suffering and is to be avoided by faith in Jesus Christ.

Blaine

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 7:42

Scriptures only become complicated because man and his arrogance make them complicated. Instead of submitting to the clear teaching of the New Testament that there is eternal punishment in a place called hell, one seeks to justify their own ideas about what is fair by running to word studies and theology. Thus invalidating the clear teaching of Scripture. That is a very dangerous game to play with the Word of God. And that will surely lead one to eternal destruction.

Blaine

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/4 9:35

Quote:
-----by TMK...People get somewhat "freaked out" because they feel that if they can't tell people that hell is a place of eternal torment then they can't get them saved. I would say this is a bunch of hogwash and you didn't see Peter or Paul preaching like this.

In my business we call that scare tactics, and I realize were not comparing apples to apples, but "HUMANS" don't like to be sold anything on scare tactics. The Bible say's "You will know them by their fruits" not their scare tactics. You sell them on Jesus Christ by your light or your fruits. If that does not work, well you planted the seed, God will send someone else to do the watering, God made it pretty simple.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 10:34

Basically, annihilationist believe there is no eternal conscious punishment for rejecting a holy God.

Therefore, if you don't want to come under Christ's authority on earth, you can eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow there is no conscious punishment or retribution for our sins. We are annihilated.

No punishment? Hmmm, "such a deal", the Slippery One would have us believe.

This is why I don't believe in annihilationism. It smells of the Evil One.

Of course, then we are accused of taking glee in eternal torment. But not so, that is God's business. I have nothing to do with that and want nothing to do with that.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 10:56

Just-in--

Some annihilationists may believe that but not evangelical ones. If you would read the articles I linked to you would see this.

Evangelical annihilationists believe that unrepentant sinners will be tossed into hell and tortured (punished) as long as God's justice requires then they will be snuffed out of existence. I know if no person who wants to be tortured in hell for even 10 minutes. And it might be billions of years.

The bible has many references to "destruction" being the final fate of the wicked.

Like you I would object strongly to the concept that sinners simply cease to exist when they die. But that is not what mainstream evangelical proponents of annihilationism state so your argument is a straw man.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 11:03

Ok, so I am not addressing the right audience. There is an audience that believes in immediate annihilation. As far as addressing the Evangelical one, I hope you don't mind, but I really don't feel led to try to prove anything, because I simply cannot and I don't think anyone else can, either.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 11:18

Hey just-in

No need for you to prove anything. We are just discussing.

I agree with you about that extreme form of annihilationism. My dad would call that "hippie talk".

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 11:34

I guess what I am trying to say, is that I have reach the end of what I am able to contribute and it would just be vain jangling on my part. Not saying that for you or others, just me.

Re: - posted by noone (), on: 2014/3/4 12:43

Quote by Bearmaster:

"Even a child reading the New Testament would see the hell is eternal place of suffering and is to be avoided by faith in Jesus Christ."

Me:

That may be a stretch.....

Quote by Bearmaster:

"the doctrine of eternal punishment has been a truth the historic church has taught. It has been taught from the word. It has been hammered out and reflected in various creeds and confessions from various theological view points.

Thus historic Christianity does hold that those who reject Jesus Christ will suffer eternal torment in a fiery hell."

Quote by Bearmaster:

"Honestly that is the problem. To leave the clear teaching of Scripture , the simplicity of Christ in His Word, and to listen to the opinion of men which is called theology, that is hogwash.

We are far safer to stay within the simplicity of Christ and His Word, and not try to water it down with the arrogant opinion of men who call themselves theologians."

Me:

So do you want us to trust the Historic Church, which is man's opinion/theology or not?

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 12:55

Maybe I do have something else to contribute. I will let you judge these scriptures.

Does Evangelical theology believe that the Lake of Fire is annihilation?

Because, at the end of Rev 20:10 it says, "tormented day and night for ever and ever".

Rev 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And, further down.

Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

So, the devil, beast, false prophet and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

This is the plain scripture of Rev 20:10 and 20:15.

What else are we to believe?

I know there are teachings that go into the "greek" and teach that "forever and ever" does not mean "forever and ever", so those who believe that have come to the conclusion the Lake of Fire is not forever and ever. They rationalize the plain speech of scripture means something else.

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2014/3/4 13:27

Quote:

by just-in on 2014/3/4 12:55:51

I know there are teachings that go into the "greek" and teach that "forever and ever" do not mean "forever and ever", so those who believe that have come to the conclusion the Lake of Fire is not forever and ever. They rationalize the plain speech of scripture means something else.

Actually what you find when you look at the Greek word used there is that it DOES mean "forever and ever". You can easily check the Greek words with e-sword. The one used there is:

G165

ἄϊναι

αιον

Thayer Definition:

- 1) for ever, an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity
- 2) the worlds, universe
- 3) period of time, age

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from the same as G104

Citing in TDNT: 1:197, 31

People who are playing with the meanings of the words write or say things such as: "You have given the reasons why eternal (Aion) can mean "forever and forever.""

They quickly point out that the word CAN have other meanings. This is true for most ALL words in all translations. As a bilingual, I deal with that issue all the time. Just because a word CAN MEAN something else in another setting they throw in the idea that it is possible that it does not mean what it CLEARLY says. To add emphasis here, the writer of Revelation in both places (ch. 14 and ch. 20) adds the DAY AND NIGHT issue making it very clear that it is a perpetual situation of perpetual torment.

As a bilingual, it angers me with holy indignation when I see people use such flimsy misleading arguments as "it CAN mean something else" in order to negate what MANY professional translators have clearly translated it to mean! A real translator "knows his stuff" (to put it in my Southern terminology). When I translate from Spanish to English or from English to Spanish, I translate phrase for phrase the exact MEANING of the passage. Mechanical translators (like Google Translate) make frequent blunders, but a really good human translator can translate exact meanings even if it takes extra words to do so.

On another thread, Greg listed several different translations of Rev. 14:10. It all says the same thing. Those who cling to the misleading argument that the Greek words CAN mean something else are willfully ignoring the plain meaning of the text that even a child could understand.

We have translators going throughout the world translating God's eternal Word into as many known languages as possible. They have strict guidelines for exact translations. In English, we have MANY translations to compare. Those who choose willful blindness will answer for it. To whom much is given, much shall be required.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 13:41

Why wouldn't the greek writers use a different greek word that exclusively means eternal/everlasting? like "Aidios" G126
Aionian G166 would have a clear messianic-age flavor to it to the early Jewish readers. wouldn't it?

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 13:48

Hi Lorddoitagain,

I am aware of the translating games played today. In the middle ages, God's word was burned all at once (whole bibles) in the town square. Today, His word is being burned again (destroyed), but this time word by word and by "scholars" from within.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 14:16

Lorddoitagain and Just-in.

To put it laymanly, I am "hardcore" too with Scripture and topics that are vital. But more towards the actual hebrew and greek, ever since I discovered e-sword with NASB study set. If the authors exclusively used Aionian (G166) for the topic of humans life or death, that means something. To me it does. If the writers used Aidios G126 for angels' judgement. That says something to me.

Idea 1. When Jude talked about Sodom he said "Aionian Fire" in the very next verse after using "Aidios bonds" for angels.

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal(G126) bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal (G166) fire.
(Jude 1:6-7 NASB)

Is there something to that? I think I must consider it.

Also. Jesus said "God has the power to destroy the body and soul in Hell," not "He WILL destroy your body and soul in hell". If language usage is not clearly "one-way" how can you say its "one-way" for sure?

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
(Matthew 10:28 NASB)

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 14:57

Lorddoitagain--

Your esword references quote Thomas Thayer, the famous lexicographer of the scriptures. You might be surprised to learn that he was a staunch advocate of Universal Reconciliation.

You can read his article regarding how he sees scripture in regard to this topic:

<http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/tbhell.html>

P.S. Bear-- this article has a very interesting discussion on the story of Lazarus and the rich man. You may find it enlightening and I recommend you read it. In short, the story was not original with Jesus.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2014/3/4 15:49

I found this while searching some scriptures, might order this book.
<http://blogs.christianpost.com/guest-views/hell-glorifies-god-20266/>

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 15:56

I would also recommend :

All You Want to Know About Hell: Three Christian Views of God's Final Solution to the Problem of Sin by Steve Gregg
http://www.amazon.com/dp/1401678300/ref=cm_sw_r_udp_awd_L2Jftb0TCWN7Y

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2014/3/4 16:11

Wow, I had no idea that David Servant was an annihilationist like JWs. Very saddened to hear this.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 16:20

Brothren I ask the same question that our dear sister Enid asked earlier in this thread, "Why is heaven eternal and hell is n't?" You are trying so hard to refute the reality of an eternal hell. You may as well refute reality of an eternal heaven.

In Mat. 25:46 the unrighteous go into eternal punishment while the righteous go into eternal life. Simple observation will show the word eternal being used to the destination of both the unrighteous and the righteous. If you are going to reason that hell is only temporary for the unrighteous then you will have to reason also that heaven is only temporary for the righteous.

Likewise if you're going to say that heaven is eternal for the righteous then you will have to also reason that hell is also eternal for the unrighteous.

You cannot have heaven be eternal and hell temporal and do justice to Matthew 25:46.

Blaine

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 16:58

Quote:

-----by MrBillPro on 2014/3/4 15:49:17

I found this while searching some scriptures, might order this book.
<http://blogs.christianpost.com/guest-views/hell-glorifies-god-20266/>

I can definitely understand how hell glorifies God when it comes to the Devil. It glorifies His righteousness and justice and the protectiveness of a Shepherd. The devil is unrepentant and would wreak havoc in heaven and defile it, if allowed to stay. It also glorifies God that those whose father is the devil, are in hell, too.

So, why do we have a difficult time for those who die in their sins? They will die unrepentant. I believe the Scriptures teach that how you die is how you stay. You will be cursing God forever. The character you die in is your character forever. We are only of the character of Christ because Christ lives in us and we have turned to Him in faith. Others who die in their sins are frozen in the character of the Devil (their father the devil).

These will defile heaven.

Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Frozen in character.

Rev 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 18:08

Oracio wrote:

"Wow, I had no idea that David Servant was an annihilationist like JW's. Very saddened to hear this."

I don't know anything about David Servant, but I checked his website and his statement of faith seems to say he believes in eternal damnation.

But let's say he does believe in annihilationism. Why would that sadden you? Is he no longer a brother? Is he no longer qualified to preach or teach? Is his character somehow besmirched?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 18:13

Hey Bear--

How would you respond to this argument:

Eternal punishment for temporal crimes seems unjust even by God's stated standards of justice (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth). A debt or penalty that takes forever to repay will never be fully repaid, and there can never be any final justice or resolution of the problem of sin in the universe;

The Bible speaks of degrees of punishment of the wicked (e.g. Matt.10:22, 24/ Luke 12:47-48). If all sinners suffer eternally, then all receive equally infinite (not proportionate) punishment.

Re: , on: 2014/3/4 19:34

TMK,

He still would be a brother to me. Many brothers believe in annihilationism. In fact, I know many brothers that believe in some pretty weird things (at least in my estimation) and they probably think I do to, but we all gather around Christ seeking unity, not conformity. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We are conformed to Christ not each other. Based on experience, I can't help but be suspicious of a group where everyone believes the same thing.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/3/4 22:03

Amen to that just-in. It would be pretty boring too.

I love discussing scriptures with other brothers and sisters. What makes it fascinating is that each person sees something a tad differently perhaps because of life experience and perhaps because the way the Holy Spirit has opened a passage to them. We can always learn from each other if we are willing to close our mouths and listen.

I also wanted to point something out about me. I have led various Bible studies and taught classes in church etc but I have never taught or argued for anything other than the traditional view of hell. I have been tempted to believe me. But this has been my own private journey. My wife is not open to any alternative view. I discuss it here because I view this as a discussion forum.