

a paper:

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HELL

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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Biblical and theological evidence for The Presence of GOD in Hell and how That Presence would relate to the condition of the souls of the damned Therein.

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ABSTRACT

The Scriptures clearly proclaim, and The faithful Church teaches, that GOD is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. This suggests that therefore The LORD’s Presence must also be in Hell, for He created also Hell as a specific realm of creation. But if the chief punishment of Hell is to be eternally separated from GOD, cast out of His Presence, how are we to understand this? To say that GOD’s Presence is not also in Hell is to diminish His omnipresence as The Almighty. But it may be, that we are talking about 2 kinds of Divine Presence, the one “spacial” and the other “relational.” Perhaps we may more correctly say that The LORD has no “relational” Presence with damned sinners in Hell, but that He has a real “spacial” or “ontological” Presence Therein.

The “spacial” Presence of GOD, or more correctly the “ontological” - that is, “being” Presence of The LORD, for He is not limited or contained within any physical time and space - must then be there in Hell. The supernatural flames of Hell result from the unholy damned soul - having rejected GOD’s Love and Grace in earthly life and thus being at enmity with GOD forever - now dwelling inescapably in eternity before The holy GOD. Yet the damned souls of Hell are outside of any “relational” Presence of The Almighty, having foolishly rejected The Divine Mercy in earthly life.

The punishment of Hell, its eternal fires of torment of which Scripture speaks throughout, may reasonably be seen as a supernatural reflection of physical fire. The anguish of unjust souls in Hell is directly related to forever dwelling before The Glory and Presence of The LORD Therein, having nowhere to escape from His holiness, their unforgiven sins being ever before them. To be burned in physical fire is a most painful trauma in this life. To be engulfed in flames and be consumed by them means a horrible earthly death. Yet the supernatural flames of Hell, though they are said to consume the unrighteous, do not annihilate their souls.

The terribleness of Hell lies in knowing forever that you have rejected the forgiveness of CHRIST at The Cross, and having to bear the burden of your full sins of a lifetime on your own shoulders before The King of the universe, drowning in agonized lamenting tears for eternity. This terribleness of Hell, if nothing else, should serve as an impetus for the evangelism of the lost by The Church and a more than adequate incentive for the unrighteous to repent and receive The Grace and Mercy of GOD! The Lord calls all men to repent at The Cross of JESUS CHRIST. He declares his Love for us and offers us the means by which we may receive That Love, both now and forever. Why reject GOD’s Grace and Mercy and insist on eternal damnation?

EPIGRAPH

“Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith The Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye!” [EZEKIEL 18:31-32] ¹

DEDICATION

In Hell, “the pain of punishment will then be without the fruit of penitence. Weeping will be useless and prayer ineffectual. Too late, those persons will believe in eternal punishment who would not believe in eternal life!” – Saint Cyprian. ²

¹ KJV, EZEKIEL 18:31-32.

² Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards,” p 249, paragraph 2nd entry. “Cyprian (c. 250, W), 5.464-465.”

I. INTRODUCTION

What is the nature of suffering of the damned in Hell? Is it related to GOD’s Presence being there also in Hell? Consider first, if GOD is omnipresent, then He must be present in Hell too. Second, consider the unrepentant, damned sinner in Hell. He is alienated from The Almighty forever. For he has rejected The Divine Love and Grace offered to him during his earthly life. Third, consider that condemned soul dwelling forever in The Presence of The LORD and yet hating That same Divine Presence. Fourth, consider the unending state of torment and pain of that same unrepentant and damned soul. He is in constant antipathy towards GOD. And yet he must dwell with The LORD’s immediate and inescapable Presence as His Enemy forever in Hell!

The supernatural flames of his unholy sins, kindled by The inescapable Presence of The holy King of the universe, bring unending and all consuming torment and lament. But first we must examine several issues. We must consider the nature of GOD in His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. We must examine the various words used in Holy Scripture for Hell. And we must understand what these words say of the understanding of Hell as it was revealed from The Old Testament, through the intertestamental period and into The New Testament.

For only if The Presence of The LORD is not excluded from That Place, the true dreadfulness of Hell and the eternally needless suffering of the souls of the damned Therein may be more apparent! The damned in Hell have no partaking of GOD’s loving “relational” Presence, but must be excruciatingly aware of GOD’s “spacial” – or more correctly, His “ontological” or being Presence – before Which they must dwell and suffer forever. Such are the agonies of Hell.

II. THE OMNIPOTENCE, OMNISCIENCE AND ONMINPRESENCE OF THE LORD

GOD is omnipotent, meaning that He possesses all power. There is nothing that GOD can not do, either within and through nature or outside of the natural laws of creation which He has established, as long as the thing to be done is not contrary to His Nature. Saint John testifies in REVELATION 19:6, “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for The Lord GOD omnipotent reigneth.”³ The Greek Text uses the word παντοκράτωρ – Pantokrator of The Lord, meaning that GOD is “He Who holds sway over all things” as “The Ruler of all” that is. He is therefore “almighty,” the very definition of GOD.⁴

³ 1, KJV, REVELATION 19:6.

⁴ 2, Strong’s Data, 3841 παντοκράτωρ – Pantokrator, meaning: 1) he who holds sway over all things 2) the ruler of all 3) almighty: GOD. Usage: Almighty 9, omnipotent 1; 10.

GOD is omniscient, meaning that He possesses all knowledge in perfect holiness and truth. Moses declares of The LORD in DEUTERONOMY 32:4, “He is The Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a GOD of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.”⁵ Saint Paul says in I TIMOTHY 1:17, “Now unto The King Eternal, immortal, invisible, The only wise GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”⁶ The LORD is The only “wise” GOD, the word σοφός – sophos here as an attribute of The Almighty, meaning He is above all others in His skill, expertise and knowledge. For He alone is The Holy One, The Creator and Sustainer of all things, The Ruler of the universe. GOD alone knows and forms “the best plans” and employs “the best means” for the execution of what He wills.⁷ His knowledge is absolute in fullness and perfection.

GOD is omnipresent, meaning that He is present in all places and at all times in the entire created universe – and outside the universe in infinity – simultaneously and without diminishment. This must include Hell, since He created That Place, and it is a realm within the creation. So David declares in PSALM 139:7-8, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Hell, behold, Thou art there.”⁸ So Matthew Henry observes, “...If GOD is omnipresent, He must needs be omniscient; but He is omnipresent; this supposes the infinite and immensity of His being, from which follows the ubiquity of His presence; Heaven and earth include the whole creation, and The Creator fills both...; He not only knows both, and governs both, but He fills both. Every part of the creation is under GOD's intuition and influence...”⁹

The Spirit of GOD - רִיחַ – RUACH, is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.

¹⁰ The Presence or face - פְּנִיָּם – PANIYM of The LORD is everywhere and at all times beholding men in all that they do and are, both in this life and in the next. Man turns in any direction, and the face of The LORD is there beholding him in all things and at all times. There is nowhere, either within or beyond time or space, where a man may hide

⁵ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 32:4.

⁶ 1, KJV, I TIMOTHY 1:17.

⁷ 2, Strong's Data, 4680 σοφός – sophos, meaning: 1) wise 1a) skilled, expert: of artificers 1b) wise, skilled in letters, cultivated, learned 1b1) of the Greek philosophers and orators 1b2) of Jewish theologians 1b3) of Christian teachers 1c) forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution.

⁸ 1, KJV, PSALM 139:7-8.

⁹ 3, Matthew Henry Notes: PSALM 139, Verses: 7-16, I.

¹⁰ 2, Strong's Data, 7307 רִיחַ - RUACH - meaning: 1) wind, breath, mind, spirit...

1d) spirit (of the living, breathing being in man and animals) 1d1) as gift, preserved by GOD..., departing at death, disembodied being 1g) [The] Spirit of GOD 1g6) ancient angel and later Shekinah.

“from The Presence” of The LORD or be absent “from before the face of” GOD.”¹¹ As Saint Anselm writes, O GOD, "... we believe that Thou art a Being than Which nothing greater can be conceived!"¹²

For GOD can only be The Almighty. He can only be omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. The all encompassing power, knowledge and presence of The Creator beholds the lives and souls of men – in both this world and the next – fully and completely. So we read in JEREMIAH 23:24, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith The LORD. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? saith The LORD.”¹³ Not only men in their earthly existence, nor only the saints in Heaven, but also the damned in Hell. His Presence must be, in some form, in That Place as well.

III. THE CONCEPT OF HELL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT - SHE'OL OR HADES

In The King James Version Bible, we find the English word “Hell” throughout The Old Testament: In The TORAH Moses writes in DEUTERONOMY 32:22, “For a fire is kindled in Mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell...”¹⁴ Job sees that man can never fully know The Almighty completely, as he says in JOB 11:7-8, “...canst thou find out The Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Hell; what canst thou know?”¹⁵

Of the harlot, PROVERBS 7:27 says, “Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death.”¹⁶ David writes in PSALM 9:17, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget GOD.”¹⁷ When the devil thought to rebel against The LORD, the prophet Isaiah records in ISAIAH 14:15, “Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the pit.”¹⁸

Here the word in The Hebrew Text from The Old Testament is שְׂאוֹל – SHE'OL. It is used in Scripture 65 times: as “the grave” 31 times, as “Hell” 31 times and as “the pit” 3 times. So SHE'OL means then “the grave, Hell, the pit” of death. It is “the underworld” and “the abode of the dead, a place of no return” to the world of earthly life for men. It is a place where the “wicked are sent for punishment” as a place “the place of exile” from the land of the living. It is a “place of extreme degradation in sin” of

¹¹ 2, Strong's Data, 6440 פָּנִים – PANIYM - meaning: 1) face 1b) presence, person 1g1) in front of, before, to the front of, in the presence of, in the face of, at the face or front of, from the presence of, from before, from before the face of.

¹² 4, "Anselm's Ontological Argument". Saint Anselm.

<http://www.princeton.edu/~grosen/puc/phi203/ontological.html>

¹³ 1, KJV, JEREMIAH 23:24.

¹⁴ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 32:22.

¹⁵ 1, KJV, JOB 11:7-8.

¹⁶ 1, KJV, PROVERBS 7:27.

¹⁷ 1, KJV, PSALM 9:17.

¹⁸ 1, KJV, ISAIAH 14:15.

the souls of [wicked] men.”¹⁹ In The Greek Septuagint Text, we find the word ᾗδης – Hades, meaning “the underworld as the place of the dead.”²⁰

שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL is however also in The Old Testament a place where the “righteous” are “not abandoned” by GOD.²¹ So David confesses his hope in eternal life with GOD forever in a place of joy beyond SHE’OL in PSALM 16:10-11, “For Thou [O LORD] wilt not leave my soul in Hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy Presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”²²

Fausset observes that SHE’OL was viewed, even in The Old Testament, as the place of residency for the souls of both the just and the unjust, “...having a distinction between the godly and the ungodly.”²³ Charles Hodge observes that SHE’OL was “...represented as the general receptacle or abode of departed spirits...; some in a state of misery, others in a state of happiness. ...the pagan idea of Hades corresponds to the scriptural idea of SHE’OL,” an abode of the just souls and another abode for the unjust souls, both within SHE’OL.²⁴ This is suggested as early as in PROVERBS 14:32, “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”²⁵ Or further as in PSALM 1:6, “For The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”²⁶

IV. THE 2 COMPARTMENTS OF SHE’OL IN INTERTESTAMENTAL THINKING

By the time of The First Advent of CHRIST, 400 or so years had passed, since the close of The Old Testament Jewish canon. JESUS CHRIST gives in His parable in LUKE 16:19-31 a picture of both the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL, that is ᾗδης - “Hades” in Greek. Here these two souls, one godly and the other ungodly, are in the same “realm of the dead.” We find ᾗδης - Hades is used to

¹⁹ 2, Strong’s Data, 7585 שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL, or שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL, meaning: 1) Sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit 1a) the underworld 1b) Sheol - the OT designation for the abode of the dead 1b1) place of no return 1b2) without praise of GOD 1b3) wicked sent there for punishment 1b4) righteous not abandoned to it 1b5) of the place of exile (fig) 1b6) of extreme degradation in sin. Usage: AV - grave 31, Hell 31, pit 3; 65.

²⁰ 5, BLM Morphology + Gingrich, ᾗδης, ΟΥ, ὅ Hades (Hebrew, SHE’OL), the underworld as the place of the dead LUKE 6:23; personified REVELATION 20:13. [pg 4].

²¹ 2, Strong’s Data, 7585 שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL, or שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL.

²² 1, KJV, PSALM 16:10-11.

²³ 6, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “Hell,” 1584.02.

²⁴ 7, Four Views of Hell, p 15, paragraph 2. “Hell in The Old Testament.” John F. Walvoord, in “The Literal View” of Hell, quotes Charles Hodge.

²⁵ 1, KJV, PROVERBS 14:32.

²⁶ 1, KJV, PSALM 1:6.

mean “Hell” 10 times and “the grave” once in Scripture, meaning “a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits.”²⁷

The intertestamental era saw much debate and speculation among Jewish theologians on the nature of life after death. Walvoord notes, “Generally speaking, the Pharisees taught that there was everlasting punishment, while the school of Hillel taught that the punishment of the ungodly would last only a year before they would be annihilated.” The Hillel school held that the more wicked would be punished after death for a longer time. But as Walvoord observes, such intertestamental period Jewish theological opinions “are not decisive, as they lack the further revelation of The New Testament [and] their conclusions are not backed by Scripture.”²⁸

In The Lord’s parable of LUKE 16, it is a two-compartment abode of men’s souls, one for the righteous and the other for the unrighteous. There Father Abraham says of the divide that separates him and Lazarus from the rich man in LUKE 16:26, “...between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”²⁹ Bishop Frederick Knecht observes from this parable that we see within Hades “the abode of the just” dead and of the unjust dead. In the first, Lazarus awaited in “Limbo,” the temporary home of “the just souls departed,” where “he rejoiced in speakable consolation, and waited in the sure expectation of eternal happiness in Heaven. When our Lord ascended into Heaven, He took Lazarus with Him into everlasting Glory.”³⁰

Knecht compares this to the fate of the condemned rich man in the abode of the unjust dead, the very picture of Hell itself, “...a place of torment in which the soul is completely buried [in torment]... caused by the flames of a supernatural fire, kindled by the anger of GOD. There is, therefore, no relief, no hope for the lost soul. It is separated from the abode of the just by a great chaos.” Even the smallest drop of cooling water can not cross the divide to comfort the damned, who “...must remain for ever and without hope in the torment of Hell.”³¹ So we read in LUKE 16:24 how the rich man cried out, “...Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!”³²

²⁷ 2, Strong’s Data, 86 ᾍδης – Hades, meaning, 1) name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions 2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead 3) later use of this word: the grave, death, Hell. Usage: Hell 10, grave 1; 11. Misc: In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. Usually Hades is just the abode of the wicked, LUKE 16:23, REVELATION 20:13,14; a very uncomfortable place.

²⁸ 7, Four Views of Hell, John F. Walvoord, p 18-19, “The Intertestamental Period.”

²⁹ 1, KJV, LUKE 16:26.

³⁰ 8, Practical Commentary on Holy Scripture, “Chapter XLVI, The Parable of Dives and Lazarus,” p 571, “Limbo.”

³¹ 8, Ibid., p 571, “Hell.”

³² 1, KJV, LUKE 16:24.

It was to this two-compartmentalized “abode of the dead” that The Scriptures proclaim JESUS CHRIST descended to, as I PETER 4:6 reveals, stating that “...The Gospel [was] preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to GOD in the spirit.”³³ Is this not the event foreseen by righteous Job of salvation history in JOB 19:25-27, that he would see and hear The Gospel of salvation preached to him face-to-face after his death by CHRIST?

Job’s confession of faith requires that his just soul would be held safe in Abraham’s Bosom within שְׂאוֹל – SHE’OL, that is ᾗδης – Hades. Recall that Job confesses with all certainty, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”³⁴

As The Catechism of The Catholic Church observes, “...It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham’s Bosom, whom CHRIST The Lord delivered when He descended into Hell... [not] to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the Hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before Him.”³⁵ Indeed, The faithful Church confesses in “The Apostles’ Creed” that our Lord JESUS CHRIST, The only Son of GOD, “...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day He rose again...”³⁶

V. THE CONCEPT OF HELL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT – GEHENNA

In The New Testament we find the English word “Hell” throughout. In MATTHEW 5:29-30, CHRIST warns of its fearfulness, “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell.”³⁷ And The LORD warns in MATTHEW 10:28, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”³⁸

Here the Greek word used is γέεννα – Geenna or “Gehenna of fire,” meaning “the place of the future punishment.” JESUS appropriates this word as a picture of Hell from what was “...originally the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned - a fit symbol of the wicked and

³³ 1, KJV, I PETER 4:6.

³⁴ 1, KJV, JOB 19:25-27.

³⁵ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 633, p 180. “CHRIST Descended into Hell.”

³⁶ 9, Ibid., p 56. “The Apostle’s Creed.”

³⁷ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 5:29-30.

³⁸ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 10:28.

their future destruction” in eternal punishment. The word is used 12 times in The New Testament, nine times as “Hell” proper and 3 times for “hell fire.”³⁹

Herbert Locker et al note the horrific history of this sad valley, where “the Canaanites worshiped Baal and the fire-god Molech by sacrificing their [live] children in flames in this terrible, idolatrous practice...”⁴⁰ The practice of live child sacrifice in flames to these false deities continued under various wicked Israelite kings, such as Ahaz⁴¹ and Manasseh.⁴² The righteous King Josiah of Judah at last put an end to child sacrifice among GOD’s people, as we read in II KINGS 23:10, “And he defiled Topheth [that is, the “place of fire”⁴³], which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.”⁴⁴

The instrument of King Josiah’s defilement of the valley of Hinnom, as Fausset notes - so as to make it unusable for anyone in order to prevent future child sacrifice there - was in “...making it a receptacle of [animal] carcass and criminals' corpses, in which worms were continually gendering. A perpetual fire was kept to consume this putrefying matter; hence it became the image of that awful place where all that are unfit for the holy city are cast out a prey to the ever gnawing ‘worm’ of conscience from within and the ‘unquenchable fire’ of torments from without, a fit figurative picture of eternal Hell.”⁴⁵

We may see the upright King Josiah of Judah as a type and shadow of The Lord in His righteous judgement of what is wicked. As Josiah cast down the foul abominations of child sacrifice, witchcraft and idolatry into the dust, burning them with

³⁹ 2, Strong’s Data, 1067 *γέεννα* – Geenna, meaning: 1) Hell is the place of the future punishment call "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire". This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction. Origin: of Hebrew origin... Usage: Hell 9, hell fire 3; 12.

⁴⁰ 10, Illustrated Dictionary of The Bible, “Hell,” p 473, paragraph 2.

⁴¹ 1, KJV, II CHRONICLES 28:1-4, “Ahaz... reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of The LORD... [he] made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom The LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.”

⁴² 1, KJV, II CHRONICLES 33:1-7, “Manasseh... reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: But did that which was evil in the sight of The LORD... For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them... And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the... The House of The LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards... And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in The House of GOD... in Jerusalem...”

⁴³ 2, Strong’s Data, 8612 *תֹּפֶת* - TOPETH, meaning: Tophet or Topheth = "place of fire" 1) a place in the southeast end of the valley... of Hinnom south of Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ 1, KJV, II KINGS 23:10.

⁴⁵ 6, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “Hell,” 1584.01.

physical fire in the earthly valley of Hinnom, that is, the earthly **Γέεννα** – Geenna, so The Lord Himself casts down all the foul abominations of the unrepentant wicked into Hell, burning them with supernatural fire in the eternal valley of Hinnom, that is, the everlasting **Γέεννα** – Geenna!

The purging of child sacrifice from the valley of Hinnom by King Josiah is placed in about 621 BC, who ruled over Judah in Jerusalem, from about 640 to 609 BC.⁴⁶ Some of GOD’s people at least, here most especially King Josiah, were painfully aware of The Divine justice which had judged the northern Kingdom of Israel and wiped it away in 722 BC. There was no doubt in King Josiah’s heart that, if Judah did not repent and return to The LORD and Him alone, they would suffer a similar just end.

Yet GOD was merciful to Josiah, for even though he died the death of a soldier-killing in battle, he was spared seeing Jerusalem and Judah destroyed – with all of its terrible accompanying human suffering – in 586 BC. As The New Jerome Bible Commentary observes, “Even though he was killed in combat, Josiah can still be said to have died peacefully, since he was spared witnessing the annihilation of his nation.”⁴⁷ We may surely trust that, in GOD’s abundant Grace and Mercy, Josiah entered into “the abode of the just” in **שְׂאוֹל** - SHE’OL, that is, “Abraham’s Bosom” in **ᾗδης** - Hades. When Hades was emptied of the just souls therein at the preaching of CHRIST, they ascending into Heaven with our Lord, we may anticipate that good King Josiah was among them.

So by the First Advent of JESUS CHRIST, the valley of Hinnom had long become “the garbage dump of Jerusalem,” where continuous fire “burned constantly” to consume the filth and refuse of the city, including the bodies of dead animals and those of “executed criminals.” It was a foul place where “maggots worked in the filth” and where “at night wild dogs howled and gnashed their teeth as they fought over the garbage.” When the wind blew the stench of this place over the city, it must have been stifling.⁴⁸ If the valley of Gehenna was the physical garbage dump of earthly Jerusalem, Hell may be likened to the spiritual garbage dump of the cosmos, The Eternal **Γέεννα** – Geenna!

VI. THE CONCEPT OF HELL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT - TARTAROO

Saint Peter declares in II PETER 2:4-9, “...GOD spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous

⁴⁶ 11, New Jerome Bible Commentary, II KINGS 22:1-23:30, p 184. “(C) Josiah (640-609).”

⁴⁷ 11, Ibid., II KINGS 22:1-23:30, p 184. “(C) Josiah (640-609).”

⁴⁸ 10, Illustrated Dictionary of The Bible, “Hell,” p 473, paragraph 4.

man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”⁴⁹

The Greek word used for Hell here is **ταρταρόω** – Tartaroo, the only place it appears in The New Testament. It means “the subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds.” **ταρταρόω** – Tartaroo, is equivalent to the Jewish word “Gehenna.” It means “to hold captive” in Hell and to be cast down into “the deepest abyss of Hades.”⁵⁰ Fausset adds that this is a pagan Greek word “...for the place of enchainment of the Titans, rebels against GOD, ...[and] the lost angels,” who are cast down into the “bottomless pit” of eternal damnation by The LORD.⁵¹ Walvoord observes, “This word is frequently found in Jewish Apocalyptic literature, where it refers to a place even lower than Hell where the [most] wicked are punished.”⁵²

Now what we should observe here from Saint Peter is, as The New Jerome Bible Commentary observes, “. . .that GOD justly rescues the just, but holds the wicked for judgment, even if that reckoning is not evident on earth” in the present.⁵³ Peter reminds us of The Almighty’s past historical judgements upon the wicked: first the rebel angels who dared to try to usurp the very throne of GOD in Heaven, who were cast down into **ταρταρόω** – Tartaroo; second the wicked generations of men, whom GOD washed away into death and Hell, saving only the upright Noah and his family; third casting into Hell the abomination-loving sinners of Sodom and Gomorrha, delivering only Lot and his family from those meccas of sin.

Why then should it be doubted that The Creator will not also judge all men, sending every wicked unrepentant soul into the dark abysses of eternal Hell? “See!” says Peter, “The Lord knows how to deliver His saints out of temptation and evil, but equally to deliver the wicked and ungodly unto eternal damnation!” Let then the saints of GOD not be vexed by how the wicked may seem for a time to prosper in their wickedness. They are not out of sight of The King of the universe, nor shall they escape His just wrath upon them in due time.

⁴⁹ 1, KJV, II PETER 2:4-9.

⁵⁰ 2, Strong’s Data, 5020 **ταρταρόω** – Tartaroo, meaning: 1) the name of the subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds; it answers to Gehenna of the Jews 2) to thrust down to Tartarus, to hold captive in Tartarus. Origin: from Tartaros (the deepest abyss of Hades). Usage: cast down to Hell 1.

⁵¹ 6, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “Hell,” 1584.02.

⁵² 7, Four Views of Hell, p 22. on Tartaros.

⁵³ 11, New Jerome Bible Commentary, II PETER 2:4, p 1020.

Divine blessing upon the righteous and Divine cursing upon the unrighteous is as sure as the rising and setting of the sun upon the horizon! Recall in JUDE 14-15 how the righteous ancient Enoch prophesied, “...saying, Behold, The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”⁵⁴

VII. THE CONCEPT OF HELL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT - HADES

CHRIST declares that Hell shall never overtake His Church in MATTHEW 16:16-18, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art The CHRIST, The Son of The living GOD. And JESUS answered... And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.”⁵⁵ Saint Peter declares in ACTS 2:30-32 that David foresaw The Resurrection of The Messiah and that His soul would not be left in Hell, “Therefore [David] being a prophet, and knowing that GOD had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up CHRIST to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of The Resurrection of CHRIST, that His soul was not left in Hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This JESUS hath GOD raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”⁵⁶

Saint John records in REVELATION 1:18 The Words of The exalted JESUS CHRIST, The Lamb of GOD, “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of death.”⁵⁷ And to John these future events were revealed in REVELATION 20:13-15, “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in The Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”⁵⁸

The word for Hell in These Texts is ᾍδης – Hades, meaning, “the realm of the dead” or “the nether world.” It is used to mean Hell 10 times and the grave once in The New Testament. Hades is said to be “the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits,” but also meaning “the abode of the wicked.”⁵⁹ Hades in The New Testament is often used as SHE’OL in The Old, where the unjust dead are already suffering for their sins, but have not yet received the final judgement.

⁵⁴ 1, KJV, JUDE 14-15.

⁵⁵ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 16:16-18.

⁵⁶ 1, KJV, ACTS 2:30-32.

⁵⁷ 1, KJV, REVELATION 1:18.

⁵⁸ 1, KJV, REVELATION 20:13-15.

⁵⁹ 2, Strong’s Data, 86 ᾍδης – Hades.

So REVELATION 20:13-15 cited above suggests that the just dead of Abraham’s Bosom are there as well, already receiving blessing, awaiting also the final judgement. Walvoord comments, “John implies that the grave will some day give up the bodies of the wicked dead and that they will be resurrected in order to enter into the eternal punishment of the lake of fire. The fact that they are still in existence indicates... [that] they are still alive and suffering torment in Hades, ‘the intermediate state’ up to this point. This state is then emptied, however, and those who are in it are cast into the lake of fire, the second death.”⁶⁰

We must note here that, just as the just departed souls of men are held to live forever in Heaven under GOD’s full blessing, the unjust departed souls of men suffer forever in Hell under GOD’s full wrath. So Walvoord adds, “The lake of fire does not provide annihilation, but continual suffering.”⁶¹ The unrighteous shall share the fate of the devil and the fallen angels for eternity, as Saint John records in REVELATION 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.”⁶² As Walvoord adds, “though the word Gehenna is not used [here], the lake of fire is, and it serves as a synonym for the eternal place of torment” of the unrighteous after the last judgement.⁶³

VIII. IN HELL SINFUL SOULS ARE FORCED TO DWELL BEFORE SINLESS GOD

The anguish of Hell may then rest from sinful souls having to dwell before The Presence of The sinless GOD forever, agonizing that they have in earthly life rejected The Grace and Mercy of The loving GOD. The Catechism of The Catholic Church warns, “We cannot be united with GOD unless we freely choose to love Him. But we cannot love GOD if we sin gravely against Him, against our neighbor or against ourselves [and refuse to repent]... To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting GOD’s merciful Love means remaining separated from Him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with GOD and the blessed is called ‘Hell.’”⁶⁴ This is a loss of any “relational” Presence of GOD in Hell, but not necessarily the absence of GOD’s ontological Presence Therein.

Saint Tertullian says of Hell, “By the sentence of The Judgment, we say that the wicked will have to spend an eternity in endless fire. The godly and innocent will spend it in a region of bliss.”⁶⁵ Either way men’s souls shall not escape The LORD’s Presence. The question is, will one’s soul be in blissful communion with Him forever? Or will it be in hateful animosity before Him forever? For after earthly life passes away, “...you still remain in existence and anticipate a day of judgment. ...according to your deserts, you

⁶⁰ 7, Four Views on Hell, p 23. On Hades and the last judgement.

⁶¹ 7, Ibid., p 23, paragraph 1.

⁶² 1, KJV, REVELATION 20:10.

⁶³ 7, Four Views on Hell, p 23, paragraph 1.

⁶⁴ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1033, p 292. “Hell.”

⁶⁵ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards,” p 245, 2nd entry. “Tertullian (c. 197, W), 3.127.

are assigned either to misery or to bliss. Either way, it will be forever...”⁶⁶ When The Church speaks of “the soul’s immortality as to believe it to be ‘lost,’” she speaks “...not in the sense of destruction – but of punishment, that is, in Gehenna.”⁶⁷

So the separation from The Almighty of the damned in Hell does not offer escape from His ontological Presence, but is rather not being in loving communion with GOD. They have denied themselves the “relational” Presence of The Almighty forever! The damned must face GOD’s judgement without His mercy forever, having spurned His Divine Love and Grace in earthly life, they now reap only The Divine Justice and Judgement in eternity. What we do in our earthly lives has most definite eternal consequences! No man escapes The LORD’s gaze in Heaven, nor upon the earth. Why should we think men may escape the consuming examination of GOD’s eye in Hell?

Matthew Henry observes that, even if we hold that Hell is buried in the deepest depths of the earth, there is no escaping GOD’s constant holy gaze. “Should we dig as deep as we can under ground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; GOD knows that path which the vulture’s eye never saw, and to Him the earth is all surface.” Or we can say Hell is the state of the dead generally before eternal reward or punishment. No matter. For “when we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of The living GOD; from His eye we cannot hide ourselves in the grave.” Or if we claim Hell as the eternal abode of the damned. It makes no difference, for as David says,⁶⁸ “if I make my bed in Hell..., behold, Thou art there, in Thy power and justice. GOD’s wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly...”⁶⁹

IX. THE EVERLASTING FIRES OF TORMENT IN HELL

Whatever the fires of Hell are, they are an everlasting torment of unspeakable intensity. Literal fire in the physical world consumes that which it burns. And it is well known that literal fire causes terrible and painful burn injuries to the bodies of men. To be burned to death is a most horrific way for a man’s body to die. We find that Scripture and The Church talk in terms of the consuming fires of Hell, a picture of the anguish of men’s souls in that eternal dark place.

As Saint Clement of Alexandria says, “All souls are immortal, even those of the wicked... For they are punished with the endless vengeance of quenchless fire. Since they do not die, it is impossible for them to have an end put to their misery.”⁷⁰ Hell is that place of the souls of the unrepentant enemies of CHRIST, of whom Saint John writes

⁶⁶ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards, p 245, 3rd entry. “Tertullian (c. 197, W), 3.177.

⁶⁷ 12, Ibid., p 245, 4th entry. “Tertullian (c. 210, W), 3.570.

⁶⁸ 1, KJV, PSALM 139:7-8, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Hell, behold, Thou art there.”

⁶⁹ 3, Matthew Henry Notes: PSALM 139, Verses: 7-16, I, 1., (2.).

⁷⁰ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishment and Rewards,” p 244, 9th entry. “Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.580, from a fragment in a post-Nicene manuscript.”

in REVELATION 14:10, “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of GOD, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in The Presence of the Lamb” of GOD, our Lord JESUS CHRIST.⁷¹

Saint Origen explains, “So when the soul has gathered together a multitude of evil works, and an abundance of sins against itself, at the appropriate time all that assembly of evils boils up to punishment and is set on fire to chastisements. The mind itself... will see exposed before its eyes a type of history... of all the foul, shameful and unholy deeds that it has done. Then will the conscience itself be harassed – pierced by its own goods – and will become an accuser and a witness against itself... From this it is understood that around the substance of the soul certain tortures are produced by the hurtful affections of sins themselves...”⁷²

How can we understand these fires of mortal sins not washed away from the souls of the damned in Hell? How are they related to their eternal punishment and suffering? Origen continues that we can glimpse a picture of such eternal fires of damnation, kindled by the unrepentant sinner’s own sins, by looking at how such people are so self-afflicted in earthly life, “...such as when a soul is consumed by the fire of [self] love, or wasted away by zeal or envy, or when the passion of anger is kindled, or when someone is consumed by the greatness of his madness or his sorrow.”⁷³

As The LORD pronounces in ISAIAH 50:11, “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”⁷⁴ The eternal flames of Hell are in fact of a man’s own making! The anguish of the flames of Hell involves men being in eternal enmity with GOD - having rejected His Love and mercy in their earthly lives - and yet being forced to be in The Divine Presence. GOD exposes their sins forever for all to see.

Saint Faustina, in her diary “Divine Mercy in My Soul,” shares her vision of the nature of the agonies of Hell, general and specific. The general agonies of Hell are suffered by all the damned: first, “loss of GOD;” second, “perpetual remorse of conscience;” third, knowledge “that one’s condition will never change;” fourth, “[spiritual] fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it;” fifth, “continual darkness... [in spite of which] the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own;” sixth, “constant company of Satan;” seventh, “hatred of GOD, [manifested in constant] vile words, curses and blasphemies.” The specific agonies of Hell are “special tortures destined for particular souls... related to the manner in which it has sinned...”⁷⁵

⁷¹ 1, KJV, REVELATION 14:10.

⁷² 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs,” p 246, 4th entry, paragraph 3. “Origen (c.225, E),4.294-295.”

⁷³ 12, Ibid., p 246, 4th entry, paragraph 3. “Origen (c.225, E),4.294-295.”

⁷⁴ 1, KJV, ISAIAH 50:11.

⁷⁵ 13, Saint Faustina, “Divine Mercy in My Soul,” # 741, p 296-297.

The unforgiven mortal sins of the soul in Hell are ever before the sinner’s own eyes, convicting him of his unrighteous unholiness before The righteous and holy Creator. His own evil kindles the flames of shame of his own defilement before The Eternal One. As Matthew Henry comments, O damned sinner, “The darkness darkeneth not from thee, for there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” in Hell from GOD! “No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before GOD. Secret haunts of sin are as open before GOD as the most open and barefaced villainies!”⁷⁶

X EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION IN HELL BEFORE GOD’S PRESENCE

Let us add one more affirmative reply to the question, “Is GOD’s Presence in Hell too?” Saint Paul warns the unrepentant sinner in II THESSALONIANS 1:6-9, “Seeing it is a righteous thing with GOD to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when The Lord JESUS shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not The Gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from The Presence of The Lord, and from The Glory of His power.”⁷⁷

There is then a never ending “judgement and raging [supernatural] fire” in Hell that consumes constantly, but does not destroy, the souls of “the enemies of GOD” - precisely because The King of the universe is present with the condemned unjust soul in Hell. As Matthew Henry comments, the certainty of eternal bliss and wrath upon the righteous and unrighteous is unavoidable in light of Who GOD is in His holiness and justice. GOD will therefore “...render to every man according to his works. The thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men and persecutors, and the great support of the righteous and such as are persecuted; for, seeing there is a righteous GOD, there will be a righteous recompence.”⁷⁸

Let us consider an analogy. Natural physical fire requires a combustible fuel, heat and oxygen. The consuming supernatural fires of Hell, whatever their exact nature, arise from the eternal contact between an unforgiven unholy human soul and The holy GOD. The unworthy and defiled soul is the fuel. The all penetrating and ever watchful eye of holy GOD is the heat. The lifetime of wickedness and sins not washed away in The Blood of The Lamb of GOD is the oxygen. The spark of GOD’s righteousness brings the sorrow, shame and sadness of the condemned soul in Hell to burn in eternal bitterness and anguish, all devouring, but never annihilating.

The Westminster Longer Catechism asks in question 29, “What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?” The answer is given, “The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from The *comfortable* Presence of GOD,

⁷⁶ 3, Matthew Henry Notes: PSALM 139, Verses: 7-16, I, 2.

⁷⁷ 1, KJV, II THESSALONIANS 1:6-9.

⁷⁸ 3, Matthew Henry Notes, II THESSALONIANS 1, Verses 5-10, II., 2., (1.).

and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever.” [emphasis added]⁷⁹ Martin Downes, in his article “Separation From GOD’s Presence,” comments, “Hell is not spatial separation from GOD; it cannot be because GOD is omnipresent. No, Hell is separation from The *comfortable* Presence of GOD. It is the unshielded experience of The Presence of GOD in His holiness and just wrath, and the absence of His Mercy and Grace.” [emphasis added]⁸⁰

As The New Jerome Bible Commentary observes, this “everlasting just punishment” of the damned is the “...definitive, everlasting dismissal upon confronting the face of The Lord” of the unjust, which causes the condemned in Hell to ever be out of loving fellowship with GOD, and yet ever under examination of “The Lord’s Glory in His unique, sovereignly effective power.”⁸¹ O such a tragedy of such needless eternal suffering that exists in Hell, wrought by men’s own rebellious hands in their earthly lives, when we refuse to seek GOD’s face and humbly accept His loving Mercy and Grace!

XI. HELL IS DREADFUL AND NO MAN’S SOUL NEED GO THERE!

The prophet Isaiah records The LORD’s warning in ISAIAH 66:24 of the fate of unrepentant sinners who have transgressed against GOD, “...for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched...”⁸² Saint Cyprian writes, “The pain of punishment will then be without the fruit of penitence. Weeping will be useless and prayer ineffectual. Too late, those persons will believe in eternal punishment who would not believe in eternal life!”⁸³ C. Matthew McMahon, in his essay “Hell’s Terror,” comments that the damned have eternally separated themselves “...from the blessing and glorious Presence of GOD in eternal bliss, not ‘departing; from GOD all together... Hell is Hell because the wrath of GOD is being poured out on the wicked. Hell is Hell because GOD is there...” And there is no rest or escape from the resulting supernatural flames of eternal sorrow and judgement!⁸⁴

But for the redeemed of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, eternal joy and peace in Heaven Above awaits. As Saint Clement says, “He will enjoy the immortal fruit of the resurrection... A blessed time waits for him. He will be joyful for an eternity without grief, living again above with the fathers [of The Faith].”⁸⁵ Why should any man be so foolish and so hardened in his heart, that he would choose eternal damnation over eternal

⁷⁹ 14, WCS, Westminster Longer Catechism, # 29.

⁸⁰ 15, Martin Downes, article, “Separation From GOD’s Presence,” paragraph 2. <http://against-heresies.blogspot.com/2007/12/separation-from-gods-presence.html>. Retrieved 1/02/2008 AD.

⁸¹ 11, New Jerome Bible Commentary, II THESSALONIANS 1:9, p 873.

⁸² 1, KJV, ISAIAH 66:24.

⁸³ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards,” p 249, paragraph 2nd entry. “Cyprian (c. 250, W), 5.464-465.

⁸⁴ 16, C. Matthew McMahon, essay, “Hell’s Terror,” paragraph 8. <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Tracts%20and%20Writings/Hell'sTerror.htm>. Retrieved 1/03/2008 AD.

⁸⁵ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards., p 242, 8th entry. “Second Clement (c. 150), 7.523.”

bliss? Why do men so often insist on turning from The loving Grace of GOD and instead boldly take upon their own heads The Divine judgement of damnation?

Matthew Henry observes that, those who rebel against The Light of GOD’s Revelation and obey not The Gospel of CHRIST, shall indeed receive Divine eternal condemnation in Hell. First, “Though sinners may be long reprieved, yet they will be punished at last.” Second, “Their misery will be a proper punishment for their crimes, and only what they have deserved.” Third, their wages of sins uncleansed will buy them everlasting damnation. “It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal GOD, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of the reach of Divine Mercy and Grace.” Fifth, GOD will be there in Hell with sinners. Thus, “destruction shall come from The Presence of The Lord, that is, immediately from GOD Himself.” And sixth, “Not only the justice of GOD, but This almighty power, will be glorified in the destruction of sinners...,” but not their annihilation.⁸⁶

But compare the alternative – eternal bliss in Heaven of the saints of GOD. For His loving Grace is offered to all men! Matthew Henry paints this happy picture: First, those who believe and obey The Gospel of CHRIST will be received into His Kingdom Above. Second, the saving of the saints will glorify GOD. “CHRIST JESUS will be glorified and admired by His saints. They will behold His Glory, and admire it with pleasure; they will glorify His Grace, and admire the wonders of His power and goodness towards them, and sing hallelujahs to Him in that day of his triumph, for their complete victory and happiness.” Third, “As His wrath and power will be made known in and by the destruction of His enemies, so His Grace and power will be magnified in the salvation of His saints.”⁸⁷

The prophet Ezekiel records The Words of The LORD to us in EZEKIEL 18:30-32, “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith The Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith The Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”⁸⁸ GOD calls us to His Grace at The Cross of our Redeemer JESUS CHRIST. How foolish when we refuse to hear and obey!

XII. IN CONCLUSION

In order to consider the question – “Is GOD’s Presence also in Hell?” – we have had to make an extensive study of the nature of Hell, as well as some study of the nature of GOD Himself. We have seen that The LORD is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Hell is a realm in the creation brought forth into being by the will of GOD. Therefore, The Presence of The Almighty must thus be there in Hell in some way. And

⁸⁶ 3, Matthew Henry Notes, II THESSALONIANS 1, Verses 5-10, II., 2.

⁸⁷ 3, Ibid., II THESSALONIANS 1, Verses 5-10, II., 2.

⁸⁸ 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 18:30-32.

so we have spoken of GOD’s “ontological” or “being” Presence, but not GOD’s “relational” Presence, being in Hell.

The Hebrew Old Testament word for Hell is **שְׂאוֹל** – SHE’OL. The Greek Septuagint Old Testament word for Hell is **ᾗδης** – Hades. This was viewed initially simply as “the abode of the dead,” where all the souls of men went after death. By the intertestamental period, we find an understanding of a separation of the righteous and unrighteous dead into 2 compartments in SHE’OL or Hades. The first is “the abode of the unjust” dead. The second is “the abode of the just” dead or “Abraham’s Bosom.”

The 2 abodes of SHE’OL are separated by an unbreachable chasm. The unjust dead are in suffering in this “intermediate state,” while the just dead are experiencing bliss, both resulting from The Presence of The LORD being fully there in SHE’OL: the righteous souls there in full communion with The “relational” Presence of GOD; the unrighteous souls in full enmity towards GOD and outside of His “relational” Presence. Both were understood to dwell before His “being” Presence Therein.

By the First Advent of JESUS CHRIST, we see this view of Hades more fully revealed in The Lord’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus in LUKE 16:19-31. In the Apostles’ Creed we confess that CHRIST descended into Hell upon His death. There He preached The Gospel to the souls in Hades. When He arose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven, the souls of the just dead ascended with Him into GOD’s Kingdom Above. Therefore, since The Cross, Hades and Hell proper are synonymous, containing only the souls of the unrighteous unsaved dead.

Entering the New Testament era proper, we find 3 words for Hell. First, **γέεννα** – Geenna or “Gehenna of fire,” which is an eternal reflection of the terrible earthly valley of Hinnom. This was for pre-Israelite Canaan a place of idol worship of the false gods Baal and Molech, where live human infants were sacrificed in flames. Wicked Israelite kings, such as Ahaz and Manasseh, sacrificed their live children in flames to these false pagan deities there. Righteous King Josiah of Judah put an end to the child sacrifice to Baal and Molech in Gehenna by defiling it with refuse, the bodies of dead animals and executed criminals. Continual fire were set there to consume the contents. It became the smoldering garbage dump of Jerusalem, a most fitting earthly picture of eternal Hell.

Second, **ταρταρόω** – Tartaroo, “the bottomless pit,” is used only once in The New Testament. It means a place of the deepest abyss of Hell where Satan, his fallen angels and the most wicked damned are cast down into by The Almighty. This was seen by the ancient pagan Greeks as the abode of the most wicked dead, who were eternally punished for their evil deeds. It is equivalent to the Jewish concept of Gehenna, a place of eternally tormenting fires to which the unrighteous souls of men are sent forever.

Third, **ᾗδης** – Hades, which is used in The New Testament as equivalent to SHE’OL in The Old, but only as a place of torment of “the abode of the unjust dead.” As in SHE’OL, the unjust are cursed with Divine wrath. From this intermediate state of

suffering and punishment, the unrighteous souls there will be called to stand before GOD at the last judgement. The unrighteous who have rejected CHRIST will be cast into the eternal lake of fire – along with the devil and the fallen angels. Abraham’s Bosom - the abode of the just dead in SHE’OL or Hades - was emptied when CHRIST, having died and His soul having descended to Hades, took with Him all the souls of the righteous when He was resurrected and ascended into Heaven.

Scripture speaks continually of the fires of Hell, which we may reasonably see as a supernatural reflection of physical earthly fire. The anguish of unjust souls in Hell is directly related to forever dwelling before The ontological Presence of The LORD Therein, but outside of the “relational” Presence of GOD. They have nowhere to escape from His holy gaze, their unforgiven sins being ever before them, their rejection of The Divine Mercy and Grace ever in remembrance. The anguish of the supernatural flames of Hell derive from this eternally lamentable state of the souls of the damned.

Natural physical fire requires a combustible fuel, heat and oxygen. The consuming supernatural fires of Hell, whatever their exact nature, arise from the eternal contact between an unforgiven unholy human soul and The holy GOD. The unworthy and defiled soul is the fuel. The all penetrating and ever watchful eye of holy GOD is the heat. The lifetime of wickedness and sins not washed away in The Blood of The Lamb of GOD is the oxygen. The spark of GOD’s righteousness brings the sorrow, shame and sadness of the condemned soul in Hell to burn in eternal bitterness and anguish - all devouring - but never annihilating.

This brings to the fore the sad and needless tragedy of men’s souls ending up in eternal damnation. The terribleness of Hell, if nothing else, should serve as an impetus for the evangelism of the lost by The Church and a more than adequate incentive for the unrighteous to repent and receive The Grace and Mercy of GOD. As ISAIAH 66:24 warns, in Hell “...their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched...”⁸⁹ Saint Cyprian warns of Hell, “The pain of punishment will then be without the fruit of penitence. Weeping will be useless and prayer ineffectual. Too late, those persons will believe in eternal punishment who would not believe in eternal life!”⁹⁰

So here is the urgent message that the existence of Hell should invigorate we The Church with: The Lord calls all men to repent at The Cross of JESUS CHRIST. He declares his Love for us and offers us the means by which we may receive That Love, both now and forever. This, so that we may live under His loving blessing in both this life and in eternity, in joyful communion with Him. Why reject GOD’s Grace and Mercy and insist on eternal damnation? GOD calls us in EZEKIEL 18:31-32, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith The Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye!”⁹¹

⁸⁹ 1, KJV, ISAIAH 66:24.

⁹⁰ 12, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Eternal Punishments and Rewards,” p 249, paragraph 2nd entry. “Cyprian (c. 250, W), 5.464-465.

⁹¹ 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 18:31-32.

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