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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 7—Chapter 10

**OF THE FINAL STATE OF THE
WICKED IN HELL**

When the judgment is finished, and the sentence pronounced, the wicked will go into "everlasting punishment," (Matthew 25:46). What that punishment will be, and the duration of it, are the things to be considered. With respect to the punishment itself, I shall,

1. First, prove that there will be a state of punishment of wicked men in the future world. There is a punishment of the wicked in their souls, which takes place at death; as appears from the parable of the rich man, (Luke 16:23 and there is a punishment of them in soul and body, after the resurrection, and the last judgment, (see Rev. 20:12,15), which latter is the continuation and perfection of the former. And this will appear,

1a1. From the light of nature among the heathens; being owned and spoken of, not only by their poets, but by their philosophers, and those the more wise, grave, and serious among them. The poets, indeed, say many fabulous things of Pluto, the king of hell; of Rhadamanthus, and others as judges there; of Charon the ferry man, and of the infernal rivers; yet under these fables some truth lies disguised; nay, Tertullian, charges the heathens with borrowing these things from the sacred writings; "When we speak of God as a Judge, and threaten men with hell fire, we are laughed at; but, says he, the poets and the philosophers erect a tribunal in hell, and speak of a river of fire there: from whence, says he, I beseech you, have they such like things, but from our mysteries?" But not the poets only, but the more serious and wiser sort of the heathens, believed these things. Caesar was reproved by Cato, for deriding punishments after death; as if there were neither joys nor torments beyond it, but that that puts an end to all. Many of the philosophers wrote

of things done in "hades," or hell; and Plato denies that death is the last thing; but that the punishments of hell are the last; and says all the same things the poets do; yea, declares them to be rational, and not fables: hence Arnobius, an ancient defender of the Christians against the heathens, says, "Dare ye deride us when we speak of hell, and of unquenchable fire, into which we know souls are cast? Does not your Plato say the same, in his book of the immortality of the soul? Does he not make mention of the rivers Acheron, Styx, Cocytus, and Periphlegeton, in which he asserts souls are rolled, plunged, and burnt?" Epicurus thought the punishment of hell to be a poetical figment. So Horace, who was an Epicurean, says, "Morsultima linea rerum est," death is the last line of things. But Zeno the Stoic believed and taught, that the godly and ungodly will have different habitations; the one delightful, and the other uncomfortable. Indeed, some of the Stoic philosophers derided these things; but then it is thought they only meant the fables of the poets about them, since their founder, as now observed, believed and taught them. Hierocles, a Pythagorean and Platonic philosopher, speaks of *εν αδου κολαστηρια*, "punishments in hell."

1a2. A state of punishment hereafter, appears from the impressions of guilt and wrath on the consciences of men now, for sins committed, being struck with the fear of future judgment, and of punishment that shall follow; and which are observable in heathens themselves, whose consciences accuse, or excuse, one another; hence, as Cicero says, "Every man's sins distress him; their evil thoughts and consciences terrify them; these, to the ungodly, are their daily and domestic furies, which haunt them day and night." Such may be observed in Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, and other wicked persons; in whom there was nothing but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which shall consume them in hell. And these are emblems, earnest, presages, and pledges of wrath to come. Yea, there is sometimes, some things in good men which bear a resemblance to this; and while they are under the sense of them, apprehend themselves as in a condition similar to it; as David, Heman the Ezrahite, and Jonah (Ps. 116:3; 88:6,7,15,16; Jonah 2:2).

1a3. This may be argued from the justice of God. If there is a God, he must be believed to be just; and if there is a just God, there must be a future state of punishment; and, indeed, the disbelief of these commonly go together. It is certain there is a God; and it is as certain that God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; and will render to every man according to his works. Now it is certain, that justice does not take place, or is not so manifestly displayed in this world; it seems, therefore, but just and reasonable, that there should be a change of things in a future state, when the saints will be comforted, and the wicked tormented: it is but a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to wicked men hereafter, who have had their flow of worldly happiness, and abused it. God is a God of vengeance, and he will show it, and it is proper he should.

1a4. This is abundantly evident from divine revelation, from the books both of the Old and the New Testament. David says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell" (Ps 9:17). And our Lord speaks of some sins which make men in danger of hell fire, and

of the whole body being cast into hell for them; and of both body and soul being destroyed in hell (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28). But these, and such like passages, will be considered hereafter.

1a5. This may be further confirmed, from the examples of persons that already endure this punishment, at least in part; as the fallen angels, who, when they had sinned, were cast down from heaven, where was the first abode of them, to Tartarus, or hell, a place of darkness, where they are delivered into chains of darkness, and held by them; and though they may not be in full torments, yet they are not without them, and are reserved unto judgment, which, when over, they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, (2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 20:10). Another instance is, the men of the old world, who, by their sins, brought a flood upon it; and not only their bodies were destroyed by the flood, but the spirits, or souls of these men, who were disobedient in the times of Noah, were laid up "in prison," that is, in the prison of hell, where they were when the apostle Peter wrote his epistle (1 Pet. 3:19,20), these are, by some, thought to be meant by "the congregation of the Rephaim," of the giants (in Prov. 21:16). The men of Sodom and Gomorrah, had not only their bodies and their substance burnt, in the conflagration of their cities; but their souls also are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7). So Korah and his company, not only went down alive into the pit of the earth, that opening and closing upon them, but perished in their souls; since wicked men are said to "perish, in the gainsaying of Korah," for the same sins, and in like manner, though not temporally and corporally; but in soul, and eternally (Jude 1:11). The case of the wicked rich man, who lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment there, though it be a parable, relates to a fact, and ascertains the truth of it, and which yet some take to be an historical fact.

1b. Secondly, I shall next consider the names, words, and phrases, by which the place and state of future punishment are expressed; which will still give a further proof of it, and lead more into the nature of it.

1b1. First, the names of the place; I call it a place, and not a state only; though some speak of it only as such; but the scriptures make mention of it as a "place of torment" (Luke 16:28), and Judas is said to "go to his own place" (Acts 1:25), to which he was appointed, being the Son of perdition: and a place seems necessary, especially for bodies, as after the resurrection; though where it is, or will be, is hard to say: some make it to be the air; others the body of the sun; some the fixed stars; others the earth, either the center, or the cavities of it, or under it; since the heaven is represented as high, and this as low; and sometimes called hell beneath (Job 11:8; Prov. 15:14; Isa. 14:9). But it should not be so much our concern to know where it is, as how to escape it, and that we come not into this place of torment (Luke 16:28).

1b1a. It is called destruction, or Abaddon, which is the name of the king of the bottomless pit, (Rev. 9:11 which signifies a destroyer, and is rendered destruction in Job 26:6, Proverbs 27:20 and 15:11 where "hell and destruction" are mentioned together, as signifying the same thing, the one being explanative of the other. Indeed

the grave, which the word used for hell sometimes signifies, is called the pit of destruction and corruption, because bodies laid in it corrupt and waste away; but here it seems to signify the place of the punishment of the wicked, where body and soul are destroyed with an everlasting destruction; which is not to be understood of an extinction of soul and body, as by the Epicureans and Socinians; for this is contrary both to the immortality of the soul which cannot be killed, and to the resurrection of the body, which, though it rises to damnation and everlasting contempt, yet dies not again; and to what purpose should it be raised, if it becomes immediately extinct? hell, or a state of punishment, follows upon death, and the resurrection, and is connected with them; it follows upon the death of the body; the rich man died, with respect to his body, and in hell he lift up his eyes; that is, he found his soul in torment, and therefore not extinct. And when the body is raised and united to the soul, and has passed the general judgment, and received its sentence, both will go into everlasting punishment; and therefore neither of them extinct. Besides, there would otherwise be no meaning in those words of Christ, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born," (Matthew 26:24 since for a man to be extinct, or to be in a state of nonexistence, and not to be born, are the same; at least, if a man is extinct, it is as if he had never been born; and therefore no comparison can be made between them; nor better nor worse be said of them. But when hell, or the punishment of the wicked in it, is called destruction, it does not mean a destruction of the being of a person, but of all happiness to him; he is deprived of all, both in soul and body; no light of joy; but darkness, horror, and distress; nothing but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

1b1b. Another name or word by which it is expressed, is Sheol, which is often rendered the "grave"; as in Genesis 42:38 and 44:31 and should be where it is sometimes translated "hell," as in Psalm 16:10 yet in some places it seems as if it could not be understood of that, but of the state or place of punishment of the wicked; as in Psalm 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell": now to be turned into the earth, or to be laid in the grave, is not peculiar to wicked men; it is the common lot of all, good and bad; it is the house appointed for all living (Job 30:23), but to be enveloped with all darkness, and consumed in a fire, not blown, and an horrible tempest rained on them, is the peculiar portion of wicked men from God (Job 20:26,29; Ps. 11:6). Besides, the phrase being "turned" into it, denotes indignation, contempt, and shame; and is the same with the New Testament phrase, so often used, of being "cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29,30; 8:12) so when this word is used of the adulterous woman, and her ways, that her steps take hold of hell, and her house is the way to it; and that her guests are in the depths of it (Prov. 5:5; 7:27; 9:18) to understand it of the grave, seems not to be strong enough, and to give too low a sense of it; and does not sufficiently express the danger persons are in through her; and into which they are brought: as well as it is not ascribing enough to the way of life, above to the wise, that it secures a person from the grave beneath; and which yet it does not; but rather that it delivers him from the punishment of hell (Prov. 15:24), in like manner, when it is said of hardened and desperate sinners, that they with hell are at an agreement; they seem to outbrave, deride, and bid defiance to more than death and the grave; even to mock at hell, and its torments they give no

credit to. It has its name, "Sheol," from *lav* because it asks and has, and is never satisfied; and applied, whether to the grave or hell, denotes the insatiableness thereof, (Prov. 27:20 30:16; Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5).

1b1c. Another name for hell is "Tophet"; which was a place in the valley of the son of Hinnom, where the Israelites burnt their sons and their daughters in the fire, sacrificing them to Molech; and that the cries of the infants might not be heard, to affect their parents, drums or tabrets were beat upon during the time; and from hence the place had the name of Tophet, "Toph" signifying a drum, or tabret (see Jer. 7:31,32); and this seems to be used of the place and state of the punishment of the wicked; "Tophet is ordained of old," &c. (Isa. 30:33), which the Targum interprets of hell, prepared from ages past for the sins of men; and which words, Calvin on the text, understands of the miserable condition, and extreme torments and punishments of the wicked; and, indeed, they seem fitly to describe them: "Tophet was ordained of old," as hell is from eternity; and is that condemnation wicked men were of old ordained unto: it was "prepared for the king"; so everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, for the prince of devils, and all his subjects: it is made "deep and large"; so hell is the bottomless pit large enough to hold the whole posse of devils, and all the wicked, from the beginning to the end of the world. The "pile," the fuel, for the fire, is much "wood," wicked men, comparable to thorns and briers, straw and stubble, withered branches of vines, and dry trees; a fire "kindled," and blown up by "the breath of the Lord," at whose blast, and the breath of his nostrils, men perish and are consumed; a fire, not blown by men, but by the breath of the Almighty; "like a stream of brimstone," such as destroyed the cities of the plain.

1b1d. From Gehinnon, the valley of Hinnom, where Tophet was, is the word used in the New Testament, *γᾶεννα* (Matthew 5:22,29,30; Mark 9:43,45,47), for the fire of hell; there, as just observed, children were burnt with fire, and sacrificed to Molech; which horrid custom the Israelites borrowed from their neighbors the Canaanites, or Phoenicians; and who carried it into their several colonies, and particularly to Carthage; where, as Diodorus Siculus relates, the inhabitants had a statue of Saturn, the same with Molech, whose hands were put in such a position, that when children were put into them, they rolled down, and fell into a chasm, or ditch, full of fire; a fit emblem of the fire of hell, often called in scripture a "lake of fire".

1b1e. Sometimes this place is called the deep abyss, or bottomless pit: the devils, when they came out of the man, in whom was a legion, besought Christ that he would not order them to go "into the deep," which seems to be their place of full torment, since they deprecated going into it (Luke 8:31), and is the same with the bottomless pit Abaddon is king of, and into which Satan, when bound, will be cast (Rev. 9:1,11 20:3).

1b1f. Another name it has in the New Testament, is Hades, which signifies an invisible state, a state of darkness. Some derive it from the word "Adamah," earth, from whence the first Adam; so that to go down to Hades, is no other than to return

to the earth, from whence man was; and the word may signify the grave, in Revelation 1:8 and 20:13,14 but it cannot be so understood in Luke 16:23 when the rich man died, was buried, and his body laid in the earth, it is said, "in Hades, in hell he lift up his eyes"; which can never be meant of the grave; it is spoken of as distinct from that; and as elsewhere, it is said to be a place of torment; whereas the grave is a place of ease and rest; between this, and where Abraham and Lazarus were, was a gulf, that divided them from one another; whereas in the grave all lie promiscuously: so the gates of hell, in Matthew 16:18 must mean something else, and not the gates of the grave.

1b1g. Another word by which it is expressed, is "Tartarus"; and this also but in one place, and comprehended in a verb there used (2 Pet. 2:4). "God spared not the angels that sinned"; but, **ταρταρωσας**, "cast them down to tartarus," or hell; which word, though only used in this place, yet that, with others, belonging to it, is to be met with frequently in heathen writers, who speak of the Titans, and others, that rebelled against the gods, much in the same language as the apostle does of the angels, as bound and cast down to Tartarus; which they describe as a dark place, and as distant from the earth, as the earth is from heaven: and, indeed, the story of the Titans seems to be hammered out of the scriptural account of the fallen angels; and so Plato speaks of wicked men, guilty of capital crimes, as cast into Tartarus, or hell; and also of a place where three ways met, two of which leads the one to the Islands of the blessed, the others to Tartarus. Some derive this word from a Greek word, which signifies "to trouble," it being a place of tribulation and anguish: and others from a Chaldean word, which signifies to "fall," to subside, to go to the bottom, as being a low, inferior place; hence called "hell from beneath".

1b2. Secondly, There are words and phrases by which the future punishment of the wicked is expressed; and which may serve to give a further account of the nature of it. And,

1b2a. It is represented as a prison; so the fallen angels are said to be cast into hell, as into a prison, and where they lie in chains, and are reserved to the judgment of the great day. And the spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah, are expressly said to "be in prison" (2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:19,20). Wicked men are not only criminals, but debtors; and whereas they have not with which to pay their debts, and no surety to pay them for them, to prison they must go till the uttermost farthing is paid, which never will be (Matthew 5:26). So Plato speaks of Tartarus as a prison of just punishment; for those who have lived unrighteously and ungodly.

1b2b. It is spoken of as a state of darkness, "of blackness of darkness," (Jude 1:13 of the grossest, thickest darkness that can be conceived of; of "outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12), those in it being without, shut out of the kingdom of light, the inheritance of the saints in light; and so like the darkness of the Egyptians, and such as might be felt; when the Israelites had light in all their dwellings: or, like the kingdom of the beast, said to be full of darkness: all which sets forth the very

uncomfortable condition of the wicked, being without the light of God's countenance, and the joys of heaven.

1b2c. It is set forth by "fire" (Matthew 5:21), than which nothing gives more pain, nor is more excruciating; by a "furnace of fire" (Matthew 13:42,50), like that which Nebuchadnezzar caused to be heated seven times hotter than usual, for Daniel's three companions to be cast into, who refused to worship his image, than which nothing can be conceived of more dreadful; and by "a lake of fire," and of "brimstone" also, which enrages the fire, and increases the strength of it (Rev. 20:10,15; 21:8), in allusion to the sulphureous lake Asphaltites, where Sodom and Gomorrah stood: all which serve to give an idea of the wrath of God, poured out on the wicked like fire, and the quick sense they will have of it.

1b2d. It is expressed by a "worm that never dies" (Mark 9:44,46,48; Isa. 66:24), to die such a death as Herod did, to be eaten of worms, to have a man's flesh gnaw off of his bones by them till he dies, must be very dreadful, (Ac 12:23 but what is this to the continual gnawing of a guilty conscience; that "stimulus perpetuae conscientiae," that sting of a perpetual conscience; or that perpetual sting of conscience Charite threatened Thrasylus with? This continued consciousness of guilt, and feeling of divine wrath for sin, are but faintly expressed by the heathens, by vultures feeding on the heart of Tytius in hell; or by a serpent eating out his liver, which grew again as fast as eaten.

1b2e. This is what is called the second death (Rev. 21:8), of which good men shall not be hurt, and on whom it shall have no power (Rev. 2:11; 20:6), but wicked men will ever abide under it, shall not become extinct, neither in soul nor body, though they may wish for it. This is death eternal, so called, not from a defect of life; nor from the quality of living, being always dying, yet never die.

1b2f. A variety of phrases is used, to signify the terribleness of the future punishment of the wicked; as by tearing them in pieces, as a lion tears his prey; by cutting them asunder, in allusion to punishments of this kind, as Agag was hewed to pieces by Samuel; or to sacrifices, cut up when offered as victims; and by drowning men in perdition, which denotes the utter destruction of them; and by weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, through grief, malice, and envy.

1b2g. By the wrath of God, which comes upon the children of disobedience; by wrath to come, men are warned to flee from; and from which Christ only can deliver them; and by indignation and wrath on every soul of man that does evil. And this is what is chiefly intended by the various words and phrases before observed; and in a sense of which the future punishment of the wicked will greatly lie; as will appear by considering,

1c. Thirdly, the species and sorts of that punishment; or the parts of which it consists, and wherein it lies: it is usually distinguished into "poena damni," punishment of loss; and "poena sensus," punishment of sense; nor is the distinction

amiss, provided they are considered as together, and meeting in the same subject, as they do in the fallen angels; who sinning, were cast out of heaven, were driven from the presence of God, and so lost their original happiness; and were cast down to hell, and so punished with a sense of divine wrath: and both may be observed together in the sentence pronounced on the wicked at the general judgment; "Depart from me," there is the punishment of loss; ye cursed, "into everlasting fire," there is the punishment of sense; the one is the loss of the divine presence; the other a feeling of the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; and there cannot be the one without the other: some have thought, that only the punishment of loss, but not of sense, will be sustained by devils, and wicked men, before the day of judgment; but though the devils may not be in full torment till then, yet not exempt from any, since they are cast down to hell; and as for wicked men, they are immediately after death, in a state of pain, and under a sense of it, as the rich man in hell, "being in torment": and others are of opinion, that such as die without actual sin, and are only guilty of original sin, shall only suffer the former, but not the latter. But as the scriptures say little of the case of such, it becomes us to say little also, and leave it to the wise and just Disposer of all things; yet if eternal death is the demerit of original sin, it is not easy to say how there can be one sort of punishment without the other; where there is a loss, there will be a sense of it, or else it is no punishment; and a sense of it will give pain; though as there are degrees of punishment of sin, as will be seen anon, it is reasonable to believe, the punishment of such will be comparatively a milder one, as Augustin expresses it: no doubt there were many such among the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, when those cities were destroyed; and yet the apostle says of them in general, that they were "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7). But to proceed,

1c1. First, there is the punishment of loss, which will consist of a privation of all good things. And,

1c1a. Of God the chiefest good; as the enjoyment of God is man's chief happiness, so a privation of that enjoyment is his greatest infelicity; the angels, when they sinned, and so Adam, when he sinned, were driven from the presence of God. And though wicked men desire not the presence of God, but say, depart from us, that is, this is the language of their lives and actions; yet when they come to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord"; a great part of that destruction will lie in an eternal separation from it; it will be dreadful to them, as it was an aggravation of the punishment of Cain, and made it intolerable to him, though a wicked man; "From thy face shall I be hid!" so to be everlastingly banished from God, without any hope of his favor, will be dreadful: the words of an ancient writer are, "Many men only fear hell fire; but I say, the loss of that glory (the glory of God and of heaven) is much greater than hell, or the punishment of sense: if it cannot be proved by word, it is not to be wondered at; for we do not know the happiness of good things, till we clearly know the misery of evil things, from the privation of those good things."

1c1b. Of Christ, the light and life of men, the light of grace, and the light of glory, in whom all salvation is; as death is the privation of life in a natural sense, eternal death is a privation of eternal life in Christ; as blindness is a privation of sight, and darkness of light; so the judicial blindness and darkness of the infernal state is a privation of the sight of Christ, and of light, life, and salvation by him; as the happiness of glorified saints, will lie in beholding Christ, and seeing his glory; the miserable state of the wicked will lie in being eternally deprived of such a sight; and therefore this is always in the awful sentence pronounced on them by Christ; "Depart from me, ye cursed"; or "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matthew 7:23 25:41; Luke 13:27).

1c1c. Of the grace, peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost, of which they are destitute now, and will for ever be deprived of it; which will be in perfection in the kingdom of heaven; and instead of that, nothing but distress, anguish, and horror of mind; having no rest, no ease, nor peace, day and night (Rev. 14:11).

1c1d. Of the company of angels and saints: they will be tormented in the presence of the angels, without receiving any benefit by them, or relief from them: they will be sensible of the happiness of the saints, which will aggravate their misery; they will not be able to come at them, and share with them in their bliss; nor have the least degree of consolation from them; the rich man saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, but could not obtain one drop of the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. This seems to be the Tantalus of the heathens, or what they mean by Tantalus; a man athirst and hungry, standing in water up to his chin, and pleasant fruits just at his lips, and yet he not able to quench his thirst with the one, nor to satisfy his hunger with the other: yea, they will not have the least pity shown them by God, angels or men; God will mock at their destruction; angels will applaud his righteous judgment; and the holy apostles and prophets, and all the saints, will rejoice over them, as they will over Babylon, and at her destruction, because of the justice of God being glorified by it.

1c1e. Of the kingdom of heaven, from whence they will be excluded, and of the glories and joys of it, of which they will be for ever deprived; they will see the patriarchs and prophets, and all the saints, in the kingdom of God, and they themselves "thrust out"; the door will be "shut" upon them, and no entrance allowed them; they will be obliged to stand "without," where dogs are; and will be "cast into outer darkness," for ever deprived of the light of joy and comfort.

1c2. Secondly, there is the punishment of sense, and which will lie both in body and soul; for both will be destroyed in hell, and be sensible of the fire of it.

1c2a. The body: hence we often read of the whole body, and of the various members of it with it, being cast into hell (Matthew 5:29,30; Mark 9:43,45,47), now though these are proverbial, or parabolical phrases, yet they have a meaning in them, and have respect to corporal punishment, which will be endured in the body, some way or another. The body is subservient to the soul in the commission of sin; its

members are yielded as instruments of unrighteousness; that little member the tongue, is a world of iniquity, defiles the whole body, and is productive of many evils; and it is but just therefore, that the body should have its share in the punishment of sin; and for this purpose is the resurrection of the body, that sinful men may receive the just demerit of their sinful actions done in their bodies. It is a question moved, Whether the fire of hell is a material fire? No doubt that it is not the only thing meant by it, nor the chief, which is the fire of divine wrath, in which figurative sense it is often taken; though it seems to be sometimes taken in a proper sense, since it has those things ascribed to it which belong to fire properly so called, as smoke, flame, heat, &c. and, indeed, how the body can be affected with any other, is not easy to say, unless by sympathy with the soul, sustaining the fire of divine wrath; nor is it any objection, that the bodies of the wicked will be raised immortal, as never more to die; whereas they would be liable to be consumed, if cast into material fire. To which it may be answered, they may be preserved, by the power of God, from being consumed by it; as the three men in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace were preserved in the midst of it for their safety, so may wicked men be preserved in the furnace of fire for their punishment. And there are such things in nature which are not consumed by fire; as a sort of flax, and cloth made of it, cleansed by burning it; and a precious stone, set on fire, which is not to be quenched; for which reason both have the name of "asbestos," unquenchable: and there is a sort of fly, called "pyrausta," or the firefly, which lives in the fire. Besides, this fire may not be, as doubtless it is not, the same with our culinary fire; it may be, like that, excruciating, but not consuming; as we see with respect to lightning, or fire from heaven, which sometimes will scorch and burn, and yet not consume and destroy bodies, or reduce them to ashes; as in the case of Nadab and Abihu: but this is not very material to determine; since,

1c2b. The soul will be filled with a sense of wrath, which will be poured forth on the wicked, and burn like fire (Ps. 79:5; Nahum 1:6) this is the fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries of God and Christ in hell (Heb. 10:27) that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which will come upon every soul of man that does evil, (Rom. 2:8,9) that fire which the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, will kindle (Isa 30:33) and which the body, by its near conjunction with the soul, will feel the effects of.

1d. Fourthly, the degrees of this punishment; for it seems such there will be, since wicked men will be judged, and so punished, according to their evil works, whether more or fewer, greater or lesser. But then these cannot be understood of the punishment of loss; one cannot lose more nor less than another; all are equally excluded from the presence and communion of God and of Christ, and of the Spirit; and from the company of angels and saints, and from the kingdom of heaven and the glories of it: but can only be said of the punishment of sense; some are lesser sinners and others greater; some are only guilty of original sin, and not of actual transgressions, at least of very few, and so are deserving of a milder punishment only, as before observed; and of actual transgressions some are guilty of more, and of more heinous ones (see John 19:11); and their guilt and punishment are in

proportion to them; some are attended with greater aggravations, and so are deserving of a greater punishment; some are done in ignorance, and others against light and knowledge; one knows his master's will and does it not, and so deserves to be beaten with many stripes; and another knows it not, and yet does things worthy of stripes, and therefore to be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:47). Some have had the advantage of a written law, the law of Moses, as the Jews had, and this explained with the sanctions of it; when others, as the Gentiles, had only the light of nature and the law of it to guide them; and as both will be judged according to their different laws, so will they be punished in a different manner, (Ro 2:12. Some have had the advantage of a preached gospel, and have despised it, and have been disobedient to it, which is an aggravation of their condemnation; so that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them (Matthew 11:20,21). The scribes and Pharisees who, against the clearest evidence, and the conviction of their own consciences, denied that Jesus was the Messiah, and blasphemed his miracles, which were proofs of it; and under a pretence of religion devoured widows' houses, justly receive the greater damnation, (Matthew 12:25-32 23:14 and those who have treated contumaciously the great doctrines of the gospel, respecting the person and blood of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit of Christ; of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, than those who have only broken the law of Moses? (Heb. 10:28,29; 2 Thess. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:17). Some have been favored with greater mercies in providence than others, and have abused them, and despised the goodness of God extended to them, and so have treasured up more wrath against the day of wrath; and having their good things here, will have their evil ones hereafter, with redoubled vengeance (Rom. 2:4,5 Luke 16:25).

2. What remains to be considered is, the duration of the punishment of the wicked in hell. It will always continue and never have an end, and is therefore called "everlasting punishment," and "everlasting destruction" (Matthew 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9), and this will admit of proof both from reason and revelation, from the light of nature, and from the sure word of prophecy. The heathens had not only knowledge of the future punishment of the wicked in hell, but of the eternal duration of it. Lucretius, the Epicurean philosopher, though he disbelieved it, bears a full testimony to the truth of it, even while he derides it; he wrote many years before the coming of Christ, so that what he says could not be derived from the writings of the New Testament, but from a more ancient tradition handed down among the Gentiles time immemorial; he says, that the fears of "eternal" punishment after death, and as what would never have an end, were the cause of all the troubles and miseries of human life; under the bondage of which men lay oppressed, until Epicurus, a man of Greece, rose up, and delivered men from those fears and fancies; so that, according to him, till the times of Epicurus, who lived more than two hundred years before Christ, this sentiment had always obtained among the heathens. And from the sacred scriptures the eternity of future punishment is abundantly evident; as,

2a. From the punishment of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were made an ensample to those that after should live ungodly; the destruction of those

cities was an emblem of eternal punishment: they agree in the efficient cause of them, God; in the instruments, angels; in the matter and manner of the destruction, by fire and brimstone; in circumstances, suddenly, at an unawares; and in the nature of it, irreparable, and in a sense eternal; for those cities were reduced to such a state, as that they will not, nor can be restored again, and so a fit type of the everlasting punishment of sinners in hell; but more than this, the inhabitants of those cities are now "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7), they are not only now suffering the vengeance, but the vengeance is eternal, and expressed by fire that is everlasting.

2b. From the sense and fears of sinners in Zion, expressed in Isaiah 33:14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" the Targum interprets this of the everlasting burnings of hell; and many Christian interpreters, of the wrath of God, and the tortures of a guilty conscience there; which are represented as what will endure for ever, and as intolerable; the desert which those sinners were conscious of, and that the outward form of religion would not deliver from them.

2c. From the resurrection of the dead, and the issue of it, as described in Daniel 12:2. "Some of whom awake to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt": this twofold resurrection is called, the one "the resurrection of life"; the other "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29), and as the life some are raised to is everlasting life, the damnation that follows the resurrection of the other, must be everlasting damnation; here called, "everlasting contempt"; for such will be had in contempt for ever, by God, the holy angels, and good men: the word "everlasting" must have the same sense, and denote the same duration, with respect to the one as to the other.

2d. From the sentence pronounced on the wicked (Matthew 25:41), to depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: if the punishment of the devil and his angels will endure for ever, and have no end, then the punishment of the wicked will also endure for ever, without end, since the same punishment is prepared for the one as for the other; and which is here expressed by "everlasting fire"; and as elsewhere by "unquenchable fire," by "fire that never shall be quenched" (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:45), by "smoke of fire and torments, that ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11), and by "blackness of darkness reserved for ever" (Jude 1:13).

2e. From the execution of the sentence (Matthew 25:46). "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"; as the happiness of the saints in heaven is everlasting, and there is no reason to believe it ever will have an end; so the punishment of the wicked in hell will be everlasting, and without end: the same word here rendered "everlasting," is frequently used of the future life and happiness of the saints (John 6:40,47,54), yea, it is used of it in this passage; for it follows, "but the righteous into life eternal": now no reason can be given why the word in the one clause, which is the same, should be understood of an eternal duration, and in the other of a limited

one. Besides, the opposition of the two states of the respective persons requires, that it should be understood in the same sense, and as of equal extent.

2f. From the immortality of the soul. The soul of man, of every man, is immortal, and cannot die, or become extinct, as has been abundantly proved; if therefore it is immortal, and lives for ever, it must be for ever either happy or miserable; the souls of the righteous being immortal, shall be for ever happy; and the souls of the wicked, being so likewise, shall be always miserable: he that is unjust and filthy now, will be after death unjust and filthy still, and ever remain so, and therefore always unhappy and miserable (Rev. 22:11).

2g. From the parts of future punishment; the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense. The loss of all good sustained will be irretrievable; and the sense of pain and torment will be constant, and without intermission; there will be no rest day nor night; the soul being immortal, the worm of conscience "dieth not," but will be always gnawing, stinging, accusing, and upbraiding, and therefore the punishment will always endure.

2h. From an incapacity of ever being relieved, through the use of means, the ministry of the word; or by a being brought to repentance; or by having sin pardoned, and satisfaction made for it; all which will be out of the question: the ministry of the word of peace and reconciliation will be no more; the door of the gospel will be shut; no place will be found for repentance; men will blaspheme God because of their pains, but not repent of their sins; there will be no remission of sin in the world to come; nor satisfaction to be made for sins; sinners cannot satisfy for them themselves by all that they endure; and there will be none to satisfy for them, for there will be no more offering for sin.

2i. From the impossibility of an escape, or a remove out of it. The place of torment is bounded by a great gulf, so that there is no passing from that to a state of happiness; which gulf is no other than the eternal and immutable decree of God, which can never be disannulled, but will remain fixed and unalterable. The heathens themselves represent Hades and Tartarus, by which they mean the same as hell, as so closely locked and shut up, that there is no return from thence; and as strongly fortified with iron towers and gates, with walls and adamantine pillars, as impregnable, and never to be broke through.

2j. From the perfections of God: the veracity of God makes eternal punishment for sin necessary. He has threatened sin, the breach of his law, with eternal death; for such is the demerit of it; and his truth and faithfulness are engaged to fulfil the threatening, unless a compensation is made for sin committed. "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" The justice of God also requires it; not to punish sin, would not be doing justice to himself, and to the glory of his Majesty; it would be a denying himself, a concealing his perfections, and suffering his supreme authority over his creatures to be subject to contempt; his justice, and the honor of it, make it necessary that sin should be punished, either in the sinner, or in a surety for him:

wherefore no satisfaction being made to justice, nor can there be any made in a future state, the punishment must continue for ever. It is pretended by some, as if it was contrary to the justice of God, that a transient, temporary action, as sin is, should be everlastingly punished. To which it may be replied, that though sin, as an action, is a transient one, yet the evil, the guilt, the demerit of sin continue, unless purged by the blood of Christ, and atoned for by his sacrifice. Besides, sin is continued to be committed in a future state, though not the same sorts of sins, some of them, as murders, adulteries, &c. yet blasphemy, malice, envy, and the like; and therefore as they continue to be committed, it is but just that the wrath of God should remain upon them: moreover, though sin is a finite action, as an action, for nothing else can be done by a finite creature; yet it is, objectively, infinite, as committed against an infinite Being; and therefore is justly punished with the loss of an infinite good. And as the demerit of sin, as to the punishment of sense, cannot be inflicted "intensively" on a finite creature, that not being able to bear it; it is inflicted "extensively"; or is continued, "ad infinitum," for ever. Nor is this contrary to the mercy and goodness of God; God is just, as well as merciful and good: and these attributes are not to be opposed to one another; justice must be satisfied, as well as grace, mercy, and goodness displayed; and besides, the displays of those, or the actings thereof, are according to the sovereign will and pleasure of God; and when men have despised his goodness in providence, and his grace and mercy held forth in the gospel, and in salvation by Christ; it can be no reproach to his mercy and goodness thus despised, to punish such with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9).