

# ***Destroyed For Ever: An Examination of the Debates Concerning Annihilation and Conditional Immortality***

**Tony Gray**

***Themelios* 21.2 (January 1996): 14-18.**

**(Reproduced here by permission of the author)**

*Tony Gray, who completed his doctoral studies at Oxford, was formerly RTSF secretary.  
This was his first article for Themelios.*

There is no doctrine I would more willingly remove from Christianity than [hell], if it lay in my power ... I would pay any price to be able to say truthfully: 'All will be saved.'<sup>1</sup>

C.S. Lewis states clearly what is probably true for most modern Christians. Hell may well be unique amongst Christian doctrines, if not for the lack of attention that it has received in the past decades, then for the unwillingness with which many orthodox Christians believe in it. Fundamentalists may preach vividly about the fires of hell, and liberals have long heralded the downfall of eternal damnation, but what can we say about a doctrine which leaves many people highly embarrassed? More recently, the doctrine has received the renewed interest of a specific debate amongst evangelicals concerning whether hell is eternal conscious torment or whether the wicked are annihilated after judgment.

This article will attempt to outline the nature of these recent debates. The main aim will be to present the various arguments and highlight certain themes that need further attention. If the arguments for conditionalism (which I shall define later) appear at times to be stronger than the others, then this is not due to a hidden assumption that conditionalism is the correct interpretation, but rather to a desire that the arguments should at least be heard. It is my belief that traditionalists have often not listened to the arguments themselves. I hope that in this article conditionalism is given a fair hearing at least.

One note of caution. Theology is always close to home when we have a vested interest in the subject, and this is even more the case when it comes to the doctrine of hell. It concerns our future destiny, and more pointedly, the future of those whom we love. Discussion of the matter often becomes extremely emotional, and no excuse should have to be made for this. People dissenting from more traditional views are accused of doing so for 'emotional' reasons, whatever they may actually be. However, it seems right that we should never be afraid of feeling the force of our emotions, as long as they are never allowed to be the overriding force. Truth remains the same, whatever our reactions to it or feelings about it may be. I may often feel that God is far away, but the experience of my feeling does not alter the truth that God is closer than I can ever imagine. It is when I make my decisions on those feelings alone, and ignore the witness of

Scripture, that danger comes. So, be warned: hell is an emotional subject, but we must let the Scriptures be the final arbiter on the truth of the matter.

## **Definitions**

*Conditional immortality* is the name given to the doctrine that states that human beings are not inherently immortal, but rather have immortality conferred upon them as part of the experience of salvation. In the debates, immortality is usually taken to mean the inability of the person to perish. Therefore, all the redeemed will be immortal, and life in heaven will be everlasting and consist of a perfect and glorious existence. It is often said that this heaven will be eternal both quantitatively and qualitatively, the former referring to duration, the latter referring to the type of eternal existence. *Annihilationism*, which is usually associated with conditional immortality, states that the wicked will not suffer conscious torment for ever, but that after death and judgment they will be destroyed, ceasing to exist. Annihilationism is thus virtually a corollary of conditional immortality, for if immortality were inherent, then it follows that annihilation would not be a satisfactory explanation of hell.

However, several comments must be made at this point. Annihilationism is to be distinguished from the humanist belief that there is no life after death, and thus all persons cease to exist once life in this world has stopped. Evangelicals believing in annihilation wish to distance themselves from this belief, and generally accept that destruction occurs after judgment and appropriate punishment. Secondly, although conditionalism makes an important point concerning anthropology (which will be explored later), both sides of the annihilation / traditional debate tend to agree that whether immortality is inherent or not, God alone has the power to give and take away life in all its forms. Thus a traditionalist will argue that inherent immortality exists due to God's grace, and that God in principle does have the ability to annihilate; yet, because of the way he has fashioned creation, annihilation is not a possible interpretation of hell.<sup>2</sup>

## **Recent history**

Conditional immortality and universalism are often viewed as the two main challenges to traditional views about hell. However, universalism's pedigree extends right back to the early church and Origen's theory of *apokatastasis*, the idea that everything, perhaps even the devil, will eventually be restored to God. Condemnation of universalism has been widespread, and it is a doctrine which has never been accepted by evangelicals. In contrast, conditional immortality has a much shorter history, and the suspicion that this is a 'new' idea has caused evangelicals, whichever position they take on the debate, to be hesitant when discussing the matter. The assumption is that if this is a biblical doctrine, then why did it not appear until recently? Some attempts have been made to trace the history of the doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

Conditionalism, in its various forms, received the most attention it has ever had during the debates of the nineteenth century, and this is well documented by various scholars. Geoffrey Rowell's work, *Hell And The Victorians*, is the most comprehensive, and together with the essay by David Powys on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates, it is well worth consulting.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, conditionalism and annihilationism have been given a wider public airing as a result of two important works. The first was by John Wenham, in *The Goodness Of God*,<sup>5</sup> where, in a chapter dealing with the moral difficulties of believing in hell, he presented conditionalism as a possible option. Then, fourteen years later, John Stott advocated a well-argued, yet tentative, case for the annihilationist position, when questioned by David Edwards in *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*.<sup>6</sup> The fact that one of the most respected leaders of modern evangelicalism supported the doctrine made people listen, and hence brought the debate to the attention of a wider Christian public.<sup>7</sup> Since then, a range of books on both sides of the Atlantic has been published, most of them attacking the conditionalist position. In the States the attack has been focused on Clark Pinnock, who over recent years has taught conditional immortality, along with other perhaps less traditional doctrines with which some evangelicals do not agree.<sup>8</sup> However, others (such as Stott) develop conditionalism without going this extra step, and so conditionalism must never be seen as part of a package of beliefs. It seems that many of its advocates can quite rightly be labelled as pillars of conservative orthodoxy.

The debate between conditionalists and those believing in the traditional model of hell has largely taken place on two levels. The first concerns the biblical texts, and how these should be interpreted. The second concerns more theological arguments, but necessarily feeds off (and informs) the first. Without a doubt, one of the key issues thrown up by the whole debate is that of hermeneutics. Caution must be exercised when using the biblical texts, as in all debates. Only when we have considered context, setting and other variables can we make a fully informed decision. There is not room here to provide this whole structure, only to indicate the form of the debate. Suffice it to say that any weighing of the cases must be done carefully and with prayer!

### **The biblical case**

For this section I depend largely on two of Stott's four main arguments as they are presented in a helpful summary fashion (the other two, concerning justice and universalism, come under our heading of 'the theological case'). I will supplement some of this with material from other conditionalists, and then consider the responses made by a number of traditionalists.

**Stott's first argument** is from *language*. He maintains that much of the biblical wording points towards ultimate destruction. The use of *apollumi* (to destroy), when employed in an active form, points towards extinction (as when Herod plotted to kill Jesus: Mt. 2:13). The same meaning has more particular reference when Jesus warns his disciples to 'fear him who can destroy both soul

and body in hell'. However, the verb can be in a middle form, and then has the connotation of perishing (e.g. 2 Pet. 2:9). Nevertheless, this does not discourage Stott, as he maintains that it would seem strange ... if people who are said to suffer destruction are in fact not destroyed; and ... it is 'difficult to imagine a perpetually inconclusive process of perishing'.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionalists may agree that the word can have different meanings, yet assert that in the context of references to hell it denotes something perishing or being ruined - the object remains in existence.<sup>10</sup>

**Stott's second argument** concerns the biblical imagery of fire. He argues that the main purpose of *fire* is not to inflict sensory pain, but to destroy. Although we associate conscious torment with fire, annihilation would be the outcome, and thus an appropriate interpretation of the texts.

Objections to this interpretation are numerous, and Stott himself attempts to deal with some of them, albeit briefly. What about the undying worm and unquenching fire of Mark 9:48? Stott points out that Jesus does not mention everlasting pain when he uses the imagery of Isaiah 66:24 here, whereas Judith 16:17 does use such language. Conversely, Fernando replies that this use in Judith shows that the natural interpretation of fire in the Jewish mind was concerned with pain, not destruction.<sup>11</sup> Stott maintains that it is reasonable to assume that although both the worm and the fire are everlasting, the consequence may still be destruction. Blanchard emphasizes the use of 'their' worm, suggesting that the 'worm' refers to the sinner's conscience.<sup>12</sup> Fudge acknowledges this position, but argues that this cannot be so, as the imagery from Isaiah refers to a devouring worm that eats what is already dead.<sup>13</sup>

Matthew 25:26 appears to parallel eternal life with fire. Or does it? Stott's case is that our preconceptions force us to read it in this manner, whereas the passage never actually defines the nature of those eternal states. Thus, the parable contrasts life with punishment rather than equating their duration. The punishment of this verse could then be destruction - punishment all the same. Travis states that a better translation would be 'the punishment of the age to come' and 'the life of the age to come'.<sup>14</sup> The traditionalist response has been to wonder whether the word 'eternal' could change meaning so quickly in such close proximity.

What of the rich man and Lazarus? Throughout the literature, opinions abound as to how this text should be interpreted - is it a parable; does it refer to the intermediate state; can we lift details from such a text, etc? There are therefore numerous hermeneutical questions that must be answered, and until we work through them, we should build our case on what is undoubtedly contained in the teaching, not on what is disputable. Stott assumes that this passage does refer to the interim state, but that an alternative interpretation need not preclude the idea of annihilation subsequent to punishment. The two main thrusts of the story are the reversal of fortunes and the irreversibility of the two states.<sup>15</sup> Traditionalists emphasize the physical aspects to this story. For

instance, the rich man in the story refers to his physical body by begging Abraham to send Lazarus to dip water onto his tongue. Traditionalists therefore believe that the parable must be referring to the final state, when all are reunited with physical bodies. A note of caution must be inserted here - some argue from the physical pains to conclude that this must refer to the final state. Others, convinced that this refers to the final state, then argue that physical pain must be in mind! Here is a clear indication of the difficulty in knowing how this text should be handled and where we should start from in its interpretation. Perhaps Travis's advice concerning the interpretation of this story is to be welcomed: 'Jesus is here making use of a popular Jewish tale, and so we would be rash to press the details of the story.'<sup>16</sup>

Revelation 14:10 is interpreted by Stott and others to refer to the moment of judgment, rather than to everlasting conscious torment. The smoke, not the torment, ascends for ever and ever. Pawson, however, wonders why this should be so, once the fire has finished its job of destroying. Blanchard emphasizes the personal pronoun - the smoke is of 'their' torment, and thus the suffering must be everlasting. How can hell have an end, when there is explicitly 'no rest day or night' (Rev. 14:11)?

The last objection that Stott tackles is the declaration in Revelation 20:10 that the wicked 'will be tormented day and night for ever and ever'. He notes that this refers to the devil, the beast, and the false prophet - plausibly interpreted as powers of evil in the world, rather than as individual persons, and thus offering the interpretation that all evil and resistance to God will ultimately be destroyed. It follows, then, that these personifications cannot suffer everlasting torment, as suffering cannot be experienced by symbols. Michael Green follows a similar explanation, maintaining that this isolated verse is not enough on which to build what he refers to as the savage doctrine of eternal suffering.<sup>17</sup> Traditionalists reply in two ways. Pawson, turning the argument on its head, believes that the devil and his henchmen are persons - otherwise, how could they be tormented?<sup>18</sup> Cotterell then adds that 'it really will not do to dismiss this statement on the grounds that this is so stated only once'.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion to this study of the biblical material, and having attempted to reply to the objections against his position, Stott concludes that

the most natural way to understand the reality behind the imagery is that ultimately all enmity and resistance to God will be destroyed. So both the language of destruction and the imagery of fire seem to point to annihilation.<sup>20</sup>

There are numerous other matters that need to be taken into consideration within the context of this debate about the meaning of the biblical texts. One is the use and meaning of *aionios*, the word generally translated as 'eternal'. It is now recognized that this word may have both a qualitative and a quantitative aspect - thus 'the age to come' is a possible phrase to describe the concept, and this would cohere with some annihilationist apologetic. However, it is also possible

that Jesus and his contemporaries thought in terms of an ‘age to come’, yet this age was, in their minds, totally without end, especially when linked with the phrases ‘for ever and ever’ or ‘to the ends of the ages’.

There are other uses of the term ‘fire’ that could be examined (for example, God as a consuming fire, the use of fire in Jude 7, and the lake of fire in Rev. 20:10). We could also investigate the use of ‘darkness’ (Jude 13); the use of separation (2 Thes. 1:9); the meaning of the second death (Rev. 20:14). Thus, any biblical investigation into this topic requires the examination of a large amount of material. For the moment we will leave these directly biblical considerations, and turn to the arguments that are generally theological in nature.

### **The theological case**

The main theological arguments can be broken down into four categories: immortality, love and justice, victory, and the blessedness of the redeemed.

#### ***Immortality***

We have described the position of conditionalism, which attacks one of the premises of the traditional understanding of hell on the grounds that the wicked will not be given immortality and hence shall not suffer in torment for ever. The accusation is that most theologians interpret hell in the traditional manner for two reasons: (a) because their tradition has always done so, and their tradition precedes their interpretation of Scripture; (b) because the force behind that tradition has been the false assumption that men and women are created immortal, and so those who reject Christ endure for ever, suffering the consequences of their rejection. Travis summarizes the conditionalist argument thus:

However, the claim of the conditionalist is that the ‘traditional orthodoxy’ of eternal torment arose in the early church precisely because biblical teaching was (illegitimately) interpreted in the light of Platonic philosophy, which involved belief in the immortality of the soul and in everlasting punishment.<sup>21</sup>

There are several difficulties with these arguments, applying both to traditionalists and conditionalists. The first arises from the need to construct a rigorous and proper biblical anthropology. Many evangelicals have recoiled from notions of soul and body dualism, to speak of a ‘holistic identity’, which can refer to a variety of concepts and ideas, but basically means that soul and body are two inseparable aspects of the person, not two distinct substances where the soul is identified with the real person. Some work therefore needs to be done in reconstructing anthropological doctrine and its history, in order to evaluate whether it actually has been developed and interpreted in the light of Platonic philosophy.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand,

many traditionalists are prepared to acknowledge the influence that Platonism may have had, yet still maintain that the anthropology which they have reached remains biblical - that is, an anthropology consisting of an immortal soul. Thus, the conditionalist may challenge received notions of anthropology, but if Scripture teaches eternal suffering to be the case, then they have not got far in connection with the doctrine of hell.

Therefore, any consideration of this argument must look at the biblical grounds for immortality. Conditionalists base their argument on 1 Timothy 1:17, 1 Timothy 6:16 and 2 Timothy 1:10. Thus, Stott states that: 'According to Scripture only God possesses immortality in himself (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16); he reveals it and gives it to us through the gospel.'<sup>23</sup> Helm admits 'that Scripture does not teach the immortality of the soul in so many words'.<sup>24</sup> However, sufficient teaching on hell exists to make the case irrelevant. Pawson and Fernando take a similar line, whereas Davies and Blanchard argue that immortality is assumed throughout Scripture (as is the Trinity, of which there are also no explicit statements). Hints exist in the creation account (man and woman made in the image of God, made for life and not mortality, made for communion with God, and so possessing something of God's immortality) and in Ecclesiastes 3:11: 'He has put a sense of past and future into their minds.' It is argued that not only does this passage indicate that humans are created with a capacity to appreciate the eternal importance of the world, but also have a 'desire for eternal things which in turn implies a spiritual dimension and nature in men'.<sup>25</sup> The implication of this argument is that, as human immortality is assumed in Scripture, those passages which speak of God having immortality alone are referring to a quality of life that God possesses and subsequently gives to the redeemed, rather than to an expression of duration of existence.

On the annihilation side, Fudge believes that even if conditional immortality were true according to Scripture, the existence of positive teaching on eternal conscious torment would convince him otherwise - if it existed. The motive behind Fudge's belief, which must be applauded, is that whatever he finds in Scripture, he will follow. Unfortunately, if he is convinced that immortality is a gift of salvation, then eternal punishment (the punishment of something which would be immortal) could not follow from conditional immortality thus stated.

Therefore, is the issue of immortality irrelevant in the face of positive teaching about eternal torment, as Fudge implies? Not necessarily. The argument does cause us to re-evaluate our reasons for believing in the specific structure of certain doctrines. Conditionalism sits on a scale involving other judgments that need to be made, and if not used as the decisive argument in the debate, it may then tip the balance one way or the other. If conditionalism has had a small hearing historically due to misplaced Platonic influence, then we should not be so scared of discussing the idea today - there may then be a case for going against 2,000 years of thought. However, in contrast to this, the traditionalist may argue that conditionalism has had a small

hearing due to positive biblical teaching to the contrary. If this is the case, then the arguments concerning conditional immortality become less crucial.

### *Love and justice*

Whenever and wherever hell is discussed, it always raises questions concerning God's love and justice which bring with them strong emotional feelings. However, even if we are prepared to accept the reality of an eschatological dualism, as all evangelicals are, what useful purpose does eternal suffering provide?

This vindictiveness is incompatible with the love of God in Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever anyone says, unending torment speaks to me of sadism, not justice.<sup>27</sup>

The argument is forceful: where is the love and justice in eternal (i.e. everlasting) conscious torment? Is there not a grave level of disproportion between crimes committed in 70 years, and punishment administered for eternity?

Traditionalists respond in a number of ways. First, such argument inevitably leads to a diminishing of the seriousness of sin. However, most conditionalists do still wish to emphasize this - judgment and punishment still exist, yet justice for conditionalists seems to be administered fairly, as the punishment appears not to be out of proportion with the sin. Secondly, most traditionalists major on the glory of God. The punishment of the wicked serves to glorify the righteousness and justice of the divine judge. Gerald Bray provides the most explicit statement of this view:

... if the non-elect have no hope of salvation and God does not want them to suffer unduly, why were they ever created in the first place? Their existence must serve some purpose, and once that is admitted the view that their eternal punishment glorifies the justice of God seems perfectly logical.<sup>28</sup>

God's justice is glorified in that sinners receive their due punishment. Perhaps sin against God requires infinite punishment, because God is an infinite being. Yet Christ's atonement was made by a finite event, his death on the cross - thus an infinite punishment would, according to the conditionalist argument, appear to be inappropriate.<sup>29</sup>

Another popular response is to parallel annihilation with euthanasia in modern-day medical science. The apparent illusion of justice in the act of destroying the person hides the fact that annihilation takes away any dignity the person may have. However, the conditionalist replies: what dignity is there in eternal suffering - surely all dignity of those in hell has already been destroyed?



Perhaps the strongest argument used by traditionalists is the idea that those in hell are continually impenitent. Thus the wicked consistently refuse God, repeatedly sin, and therefore deserve eternal punishment.<sup>30</sup> Even if this is not the case, it is not clear whether annihilation (eternal death) is any easier to justify than conscious hell (eternal suffering).

### ***Victory***

This line of argument parallels discussions of universalism in many ways. Again, Travis summarizes the point well: 'Eternal torment involves an eternal cosmological dualism, which is impossible to reconcile with the conviction that ultimately God will be "all in all".'<sup>31</sup>

Many people may feel the strong attraction of universalism, even if their theological convictions lead them to conclude otherwise. Conditionalists acknowledge this, yet resist the doctrine in order to preserve the biblical insistence on human freedom, judgment and division. However, does not the doctrine of annihilation allow the full force of the supposedly universalist verses (such as Rom. 5:18; 11:32; 1 Cor. 15:28) to come out? True, we must interpret them in their correct context, but even so, the victory of God becomes even more apparent when we believe that the wicked will eventually cease to exist. God is victorious in that he has wiped out all evil and resistance to his will for ever. No-one remains in some eternal prison, forever spoiling God's creation.

Understandably, traditionalists view this as an easy way out. Hell, in fact, is not incompatible with God's victory - hell glorifies God's justice, and all in hell are subject to God, even if they are rebellious. The existence of hell and heaven side by side presented no problem for the biblical authors, and so it should not for us. We need to exercise caution in this whole area, as it is all too easy to import contemporary ideas of victory and justice into a situation of which we know very little.

### ***Blessedness of the redeemed***

This issue is connected with the third: how can the redeemed in heaven be unaffected by the existence of the wicked in hell? For conditionalists, memories of the lost remain, but perhaps heaven contains healing and understanding. Some traditionalists argue that the redeemed will in fact agree with God's judgment and glorify him for it, even over the loss of our loved ones.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps perfect joy and regret can co-exist in the light of God's glory, or maybe the life of heaven entails learning to live with the realization that not all wanted to embrace God's love.

## Further considerations

Recent studies of the whole debate have raised a number of general considerations. Kendall Harmon has been critical of conditionalists for importing a timescale of events into biblical material which in itself provides no warrant for such detail.<sup>33</sup> Thus, conditionalists envisage death for the sinner, then subsequently resurrection, then punishment, and then destruction. Where in the biblical material do we find such an explicit scheme? Harmon has also criticized Fudge's inadequate use of the inter-testamental literature in interpreting the terms and words used in the NT. The work of David Powys<sup>34</sup> has attempted to demonstrate that taking the inter-testamental material into consideration can aid our understanding of the NT texts and thus lead to an annihilationist position. Powys's material may in fact be the most able defence of one specific form of annihilationism thus far. Nevertheless, even his extensive investigation leaves questions unanswered concerning the interpretation of specific texts (especially the use of Is. 66:24, and how best to understand Rev. 14:11 and 20:10).

Turning to a broader theological position, many philosophers of religion have recently been considering the doctrine of hell. Amongst those who have examined annihilationism, Jonathan Kvanvig has questioned whether this doctrine in fact masks the major problem of hell (see the discussion above under 'Love and justice'). The problem consists in being able to justify an eternal sentence for crimes committed in a finite amount of time. Although justifications may be provided for this apparent problem, it seems that they must be independent of the annihilationist debate. Kvanvig maintains that even if the fate of those in hell is extinction, hell remains morally problematic because the sentence of being eternally separated from God is still inflicted for a finite amount of sin. In effect, annihilationism masks the larger problems of hell.<sup>35</sup> It may be unfair to criticize annihilationists for believing such a doctrine because it appears to be the easier 'option'. On the other hand, some may have chosen this option because of uncertainty concerning the biblical data and the assumption that annihilationism does solve the moral problems associated with hell. If this is the case, and if this misplaced assumption has become the determining presupposition, then such annihilationists will need to reconsider the case and return to the biblical material.

Once again, there are other issues that could have been discussed. The questions of hell as a moral deterrent and hell as an impetus for evangelism are important ones for anyone concerned with preaching the gospel, and it may be thought that such issues should be considered under the main areas of debate. However, it seems that these topics can all too easily distract from the biblical and theological discussion in hand. If hell is eternal torment, then we must preach it so. However, if annihilation is true, a gospel still remains to be taught, and it is a gospel that is just as desperately needed. If one wishes to use hell as a departure point for preaching the gospel (and that is a heavily disputed point), then the prospect of annihilation still engenders fear. Although some writers argue that this is not the case, others argue just as cogently that fear of a conscious

judgment followed by ‘nothingness’ is just as real as fear of eternal pain.<sup>36</sup> As for hell as a moral deterrent, such a case arguably misses the Christian understanding of ethical action, and may lead to confusion in the doctrine of justification by faith. Do we perform good deeds to avoid hell? Even more so, do we turn to Christ to avoid hell? Is the true nature of repentance, and the true basis for good works, fear, or love? These are issues which we can only highlight here, but are important topics in themselves.

## Conclusion

As indicated in the introduction, this survey of the issues may seem biased. If so, the main reason is that the torrent of books and articles against annihilationism may have left some of its arguments ignored or in the background.<sup>37</sup> Although the conclusion of this survey is that annihilation is at the very least an option which ought to be considered fairly and honestly, there remain major problems which proponents of the doctrine must tackle. Much work needs to be done (especially on hermeneutics, concepts of justice, and assumptions concerning immortality) and much is left for future discussion and debate. With John Stott we ‘plead for frank dialogue among evangelicals on the basis of Scripture’.<sup>38</sup> In all this speculative debate, it is perhaps best to end with the wise words of John Wenham:

And let it be quite clear that these realities are awful indeed. Jesus and his disciples taught again and again in terrible terms that there is an irreversible judgment and punishment of the unrepentant. Warnings and loving invitations intermingle to encourage us to flee the wrath to come.<sup>39</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1940), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> The varying uses of terminology are helpfully explored by Kendall S. Harmon in ‘The Case Against Conditionalism: A Response to Edward William Fudge’, in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), pp. 198-9.

<sup>3</sup> See especially L. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers* (Washington: Review & Heal Publishing Association, 2 vols, 1965, 1966), and E. Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes* (Texas: Providential Press, 1982) (revised and compressed edition - Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994, in which Fudge responds to his critics).

<sup>4</sup> G. Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), pp. 181ff.; David Powys, ‘The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Debates About Hell and Universalism’, in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, pp. 93ff.

<sup>5</sup> J. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (Leicester: IVP, 1974); the work also provides helpful warnings concerning decisions on the issue, and a brief history of how Wenham learnt of the doctrine; the chapter dealing with hell has been revised and stated less cautiously in *The Enigma of Evil* (Guildford: Eagle, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> J. Stott and D. Edwards, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988); Eryl Davies, *An Angry God?* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1991), p. 14, notes that at least ten years earlier Stott expressed his agnosticism concerning the precise nature of hell.

<sup>7</sup> An explanatory note must be made with reference to Stott's position. His explanation and use of definitions is likely to confuse, as he distances himself from the label of conditional immortality. He implicitly accuses conditionalists of believing that no-one survives death except the redeemed - thus the wicked are destroyed at death. However, most evangelical conditionalists do believe in the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked to judgment, and distance themselves from the materialist connotations of the term 'annihilation'. See Stott, *Essentials*, p. 316, for the confusion of terms.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), and 'The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent', *Criswell Theological Review* 4/2 (1990), 243-259.

<sup>9</sup> Stott, *Essentials*, p. 316.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Fernando, *Crucial Questions About Hell* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1991), p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> J. Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1993), pp. 148, 230.

<sup>13</sup> Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, p. 185.

<sup>14</sup> S. Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), p. 199.

<sup>15</sup> Note that David Powys has proposed a new interpretation of this material, which he believes was used to attack the Pharisees' understanding of the post-mortem state. The case is presented in his doctrinal thesis, 'The Hermeneutics of "Hell": The Fate of the Unrighteous in New Testament Thought', *Australian College of Theology*, 1993, forthcoming from Paternoster Press.

<sup>16</sup> Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus*, p. 197; see also Stott, *Essentials*, p. 316f.

<sup>17</sup> M. Green, *Evangelism in the Local Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> D. Pawson, *The Road to Hell* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), pp. 42, 150f.

<sup>19</sup> P. Cotterell, *Mission and Meaninglessness* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Stott, *Essentials*, p. 318.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man* (Leicester: IVP, 1980), p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> On this whole area, see the work of J. Cooper, *Body, Soul and the Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); see also Powys, 'The Hermeneutics of "Hell"'.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Stott, *Essentials*, p. 316.

<sup>24</sup> P. Helm, *The Last Things Now* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), p.118.

<sup>25</sup> Davies, *An Angry God?*, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Wenham, 'The Case for Conditional Immortality', in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, p. 187.

<sup>28</sup> G. Bray, 'Hell: Eternal Punishment Or Total Annihilation', *Evangel* 10.2 (Summer 1992), p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Although this argument may not take into account the infinite nature of the one making the atonement offering.

<sup>30</sup> See D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Leicester: IVP, 1990), p. 103; see also L. Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992), p. 127.

<sup>31</sup> Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> See Fernando, *Crucial Questions About Hell*, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Kendall Harmon, 'The Case Against Conditionalism', in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, pp. 191-222.

<sup>34</sup> See n. 15 above.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 68-71. "See on one side, Pawson, *The Road to Hell*, p. 40; on the other, Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, p. 37, and Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 68-71. "See on one side, Pawson, *The Road to Hell*, p. 40; on the other, Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, p. 37, and Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> It is a shame that Jim Packer, who usually writes at great depth and with much wisdom, gives conditionalism such a brief and summary treatment - see 'The Problem of Eternal Punishment', *Evangel* 10 (1992), 13-19.

<sup>38</sup> Stott, *Essentials*, p. 320.

<sup>39</sup> Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, p. 41.

© 1996 Tony Gray. Reproduced by permission.

[http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_destroyed\\_gray.html](http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/article_destroyed_gray.html)