

Hell is a Kingdom: the Missing Motif Reconstructed Sinner Irenaeus

Abstract

This article encourages readers to press past recent debates on the nature of eschatological hell to examine those NT uses of *gehenna* and *hades* that cannot be interpreted as afterlife states. The author demonstrates how these texts—Jms. 3:6, Matt. 23:15 and Matt. 16:18—treat hell as a kingdom, present among us and within us.

The author suggests James' use of *gehenna* may *not* in fact be a departure from Jesus' use of the term, but instead, a cipher for interpreting him, given that James often functions as a commentary on Matthean Jesus-sayings (esp. the Sermon on the Mount).

The author also sees the importance of this 'shadow-kingdom of hell' motif as crucial to the church's purpose and the believer's spiritual formation, particularly as we locate and storm the *gates of hades* among us and within us.

The Deconstruction, Defense and Denial of Hell

After nearly a decade of renewed deconstruction, one might think 'hell' has been parsed as far as it can be. Our debates focused on more carefully defining and distinguishing terms like *sheol*, *hades*, *gehenna* and *tartarus*. We plumbed ever more deeply into the abyss of mythological backstories, historical contexts and theological developments surrounding the criteria for divine judgment, and the nature and duration of afterlife states. Nuanced eschatologies began to coagulate, until eventually most settled into a spectrum covering three (very general) positions: (i.) conventional [mislabeled 'traditional'] eternal conscious torment; (ii.) conditionalism (including conditional immortality and annihilationism); and (iii) universalism (loosely termed if we include hopeful inclusivism). Each of these positions privileges particular biblical texts and either subordinates or marginalizes others. The honest student of Scripture admits that harmonizing all the texts is virtually impossible without some iffy exegetical gymnastics. Meanwhile, less responsible (or less nerdy) Bible readers have retreated to the opposing trenches of defending hell or denying that it exists. In the end, it may well be that we simply convince ourselves of the position we most prefer—a more troubling prospect for those in the conventional camp.

Eschatological projection or/and Existential reality

Another response to the question of 'hell' has been to shift the conversation from eschatology (as a future state) to an existential reality (a present condition). The NT

already makes this move from the Synoptics to John's Gospel, where 'eternal life,' 'perishing,' 'judgment' and 'condemnation' are all immanent realities. Eternal life is experienced in this life through communion with God ("This is eternal life, that they know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" – John 17:3). And perishing or condemnation 'already' experiences for those who have not yet believed (John 3:16-18).

The apparent difference reflects, in part, the pre-resurrection perspective (accommodation) of Jesus' discourses in the Synoptics vis-à-vis the post-resurrection perspective of John's Gospel reflections, in which Judgment Day *has come* into the world as the Light of Christ (John 3:19; 9:39; 12:31) and the 'prince of this world' is condemned and driven out (John 14:30; 16:11). It also reflects different rhetorical strategies by the Evangelists, with the Synoptics generally preferring eschatological *paideia* while John opts for existential categories.¹

In this existential sense, heaven and hell are not some-day places, but our current path of being versus non-being—attaining the likeness of our true humanity in Christ or a slipping from that likeness. As Merton would say (cf. *New Seeds of Contemplation* or *The New Man*), the seeds of eternity are in us now; we are becoming or diminishing. In J.R.R. Tolkien's world, we will become either our true selves or a perversion of our selves: elves or orcs, halflings or Gollum, Gandalf or Saruman. How we cultivate those seeds and what we nourish them with determines how they grow into beauty or wither into ugliness. As Christ's parable of the wheat and tares indicates, the seeds of eternity (new being) exist side-by-side with the hellish weeds (of resistance) that obstruct or sabotage our growth. And at the End, a winnowing does take place.

The question, then, is not whether heaven and hell are *either* existential *or* eschatological. Nor is it that the eschatological is 'literal' or 'actual' while the existential is 'symbolic' or 'metaphorical.' Both are symbolic descriptions of a corresponding and ineffable reality. Since our lives truly mean something, the seeds of our existence today will sprout, blossom and inevitably bear eschatological fruit, whether heavenly or hellish. But thanks be to God, Paul foresees the obstructions (wood, hay and stubble) ultimately consumed by the divine fire, while the seeds themselves (gold, silver and gems) are—or become by grace—eternal (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

The Missing Motif

However, *none* of the approaches above adequately acknowledge a serious textual problem common to all of them. By assuming all this 'hell' language (whether *hades* or *gehenna*) refers to either (i.) afterlife punishment, (ii.) permanent eradication, or even (iii.) this-world destruction (e.g. the fall of Jerusalem foreseen in Jeremiah's prophecies or Jesus' 'little apocalypse'), certain biblical passages don't fit any of those positions and are ignored or marginalized. This is unfortunate, because these texts hold interpretive keys for other passages we had smuggled into our own

systems (whether eschatological or existential) at the expense of a grander NT cosmology.

The word translated ‘hell’ in most modern translations of the NT is *gehenna* (γέεννα). It is used twelve times in the NT (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15; 23:33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; Jms. 3:6), attributed to the Synoptic Jesus all but once. In ten of the twelve occurrences, the word describes a fate that endangers Christ’s hearers (usually his disciples – Matt. 5:1) for a variety of misdeeds. In all but two of these passages, it is a sentence of condemnation, an unquenchable fire into which one might be cast (soul and body). *Gehenna* is the damnable alternative to ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ These descriptions of *gehenna* have been central to the hell debates and each camp responds with its own interpretations.

All but two. The critical exceptions are Matt. 23:15 and Jms. 3:6. To these we now turn, beginning with the latter.

“Set on fire by hell”

The text reads as follows:

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell [τῆς γέεννης]. (Jms. 3:6 NASB)

For James, ‘hell’ or *gehenna* is *not* a destination at all; it is the *source* of flames for the accusing tongue and it is the governing power behind the ‘world of iniquity.’ James is not describing an eschatological oven into which people are cast. Nor is he referring to psychological torments that many now experience. It is *not* where wicked people *go* at death (for those who conflate the *hades* of the Lazarus parable with *gehenna*, as did Jesus’ contemporaries). Nor is it the Lake of Fire, where the wicked are sent after the Final Judgment (for those who identify *gehenna* with the Lake of Fire in Rev. 19–21). One might receive or reject other *gehenna* texts on those terms, but that is not what James is doing. So then, what *is* James doing? What *is* he describing?

Before we answer that, we must ask how or why the brother of Christ would use the term so differently than Jesus, such a significant departure from the *gehenna* to which Jesus refers in the Sermon on the Mount. What if he doesn’t? Readers may recall that the Epistle of James is very much a pastoral commentary, explaining and applying the Sermon on the Mount (and other mainly Matthean sayings). Take note of these samples, all probable reflections by James on Jesus words:

Jms 1:4	Matt 5:48
Jms 1:5	Matt 7:7
Jms 1:6	Matt 21:21
Jms 1:12	Matt 10:22

Jms. 1:22	Matt. 7:24-27
Jms. 2:5	Luke 6:20
Jms. 2:13	Matt. 5:7
Jms. 2:14	Matt. 7:21
Jms. 3:12	Matt. 7:16
Jms. 3:18	Matt. 5:9
Jms. 4:4	Matt. 6:24
Jms. 4:10	Matt. 23:12
Jms. 4:11-12; 5:9	Matt. 7:1
Jms. 5:2-3	Matt. 6:19-21
Jms. 5:12	Matt. 5:34-37

For those without time to compare these, one poignant example is James' interpretation of the 7th beatitude (Matt. 5:9), which says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." As if anticipating the common misuse of this beatitude to spin violent intervention as peacemaking, James clarifies, "Peacemakers are those who sow *peace* [not violence] to bring about a harvest of justice" (Jms. 3:18).

Thus, given James' awareness of the words of Christ, and his propensity for clarifying his meaning, might James' use of *gehenna* reflect an interpretation of (rather than departure from) Jesus' own understanding? Certainly James is moving beyond the idea of *gehenna* as either the earthly destruction foreseen by Jeremiah or the afterlife torment imagined by first century Jewish rabbis. But is there any evidence that Jesus shared or even inspired James' sense of *gehenna*?

Yes. This leads to the second exceptional passage, this time from Jesus.

"Sons of hell"

Jesus said in Matt. 23:15,

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell [υιὸν γέεννης] as yourselves."

What is a 'son of hell'? Someone merely 'fit for hell,' as in Holmann's translation? No, that's not the sense of the text here, and almost no one else has dared to translate it that way. Rather, Jesus speaks along parallel lines when he says,

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

Thus, *gehenna* here is not so much a destination as a shadow-kingdom of which these scribes and Pharisees were offspring. A *son of hell* whose *father is the devil*

does what his father does: the *son of hell* is a liar and ultimately a murderer. As in James, the father of lies (the accuser) and fires of hell spark the accusing, cursing tongue, manifest particularly in the conspiracy to murder Jesus.

“The Gates of Hades”

Beyond the specific use of *gehenna*, we may also see the notion of kingdom in Jesus’ use of *hades*. Several factors can obscure this meaning:

- First, if we are too committed to a blanket definition of *hades* as *always* identical with the Hebrew *sheol*—as in ‘death’ or ‘grave’ (because it often does mean that).
- Second, if we are too committed to a blanket definition of *hades* as *always* reflecting an underworld place of torment as in Greek mythology or the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (because sometimes it does mean that).
- Third, by assuming there is no semantic drift over the centuries in the terms, when it is evident that *hades* and *gehenna* refer to quite different concepts at different times and in various cultures, even within the Bible.²
- Fourth, by resisting the fact that the popular meanings of *hades* and *gehenna* were conflated as much in first century Judaism as they are in English when the KJV translated them both as ‘hell.’³

There is a cost to such reductions, because again, the fixation on post-mortem states and eschatology diverts our attention to the immanent cosmology of clashing kingdoms in this life and this world.

At the foundation of the Christian *ekklesia*, Jesus says,

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower [or prevail against] it.”
(Matt. 16:18 NASB)

In this commission, does Jesus imagine *hades* as an afterlife prison created by God to torment the wicked? Does the church somehow need reassurance that they will withstand the assault of God’s retribution ... a fiery dungeon separated from the church by a fixed chasm no one can cross? Or if the promise is reversed—if *hades* cannot withstand the assault of the church, will God’s armies storm the afterlife underworld successfully, joining Jesus as he “binds the strongman and plunders his goods” (Matt. 12:29)? When would this happen? Even the *descensus* of Holy Saturday is a conquest secured by Christ alone. How does the *ekklesia* (not really launched until Pentecost) participate? None of these options actually work in this context.

Unless. Unless *hades* in this text is not a place at all and has nothing to do with the afterlife. *Hades* in Matt. 16 is either a kingdom or personification (as in Greek

mythology and Orthodox liturgy and iconography) of the forces of death at work in our world. Chris Hoke⁴ put it to me this way:

The church—*the ekklesia*—is a movement that faces and overcomes *hades* in this world, in this life. Jesus aims the church at the *gates of hades*, not heavenward. The movement is a downward arrow, from heaven down to hell on earth. What are the gates? Where are the gates? When the church does not know, it has lost its way. But at the foundation of his movement, Christ lays out his purpose: to overcome *hades* and rescue its prisoners.⁵

In this model, ‘hell’ or *hades* is a kingdom, located wherever people are imprisoned and oppressed by ‘the powers’ and death-dealers of ‘this *present* darkness’—whether it’s the military-industrial-complex, corporate and political beasts, or any personal affliction, addiction or obsession of choice.

Here is an important reversal: Jesus is *not* calling the death-snares of this world *hades* metaphorically in anticipation of the actual subterranean post-mortem *hades*. Just the opposite: the afterlife mythology of *hades* is a metaphor for the actual human condition ‘here above.’ The rhetoric of hell is less about the eschatological future and more about educating us in the ‘two ways’ or ‘two kingdoms’ competing for our allegiance here on earth.

A Pauline Parallel

This is exactly how Paul conceives the state of things in his epistle to the Colossians:

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:13-14)

What is the kingdom of *gehenna* (or the *gates of hades*) other than this ‘domain of darkness’ from which we have been transferred into the ‘kingdom of His beloved Son.’ So while Rev. 20 imagines the Lake of Fire as a future destination prepared by God for Satan and his entourage, Paul and at least some Gospel texts think in terms of hell (*gehenna* or *hades*) as the kingdom of evil, ruled by ‘the evil one,’ against which Christ and his church *now* stand.

In this sense, just as the kingdom of heaven is within and among you, so the kingdom of hell is within and among you (or at least in me). As Archbishop Lazar Puhalo has said in his homilies at All-Saints Monastery (Dewdney, BC), “What is hell but the fires of malice in your own heart, and what quenches those fires but the wellspring empathy and co-suffering love?”

Just as we can enter the kingdom of heaven (now), so we can be rescued from the kingdom of hell (now). Further, if one can enter the kingdom of heaven *now* through

relationship with Christ (right?), so one enters the kingdom of hell *now* through participation in the powers of ‘the evil one.’

A Terrestrial Shadow Kingdom versus Cosmic Dualism

Both the Gospels and Epistles contrast two ways and two kingdoms, but we must stop far short of the cosmic dualism of the Manichean heresy. Neither the kingdom of hell nor the figure of Satan stand as equivalent universal competitors alongside the kingdom of heaven or the person of Christ. While Christianity affirms Christ as the Creator of the universe, whatever the kingdom of hell and its nefarious prince represent, they are terra-centric: a local, worldly pseudo-kingdom somehow intrinsic to human rebellion on this globe. This always leads to the question: is satan ‘real?’

If Scripture and tradition have anything to say about it, of course satan is real. But the question remains, what is Satan? The debate is not whether satan exists so much as (1) whether the mythological backstory is even biblical (*very thin*), (2) how the sense of ‘satan’ develops throughout Scripture (it morphs *a lot*), and (3) how the biblical conception should be transposed into modern actualities without dismissing the very real evil to which it points (Rene Girard is a good example).

The satan of Scripture personifies temptation, embodies rebellion and serves as a metonym for the worldly shadow kingdom. The satan of Scripture is also mythically personified as a serpent, a devil, a dragon, a lion, a fallen angel—pictured variously as extremely dangerous or utterly defeated. Even where the tradition treats satan as an ‘individual’ (as in Jesus’ temptations or John 8), that individual is less than cosmic, lacks the basic essentials of either true ‘personhood’ or ontological ‘being.’ In the Bible, the images of satan shift as to the referents of satan. That is in no way problematic, except for those driven to flatten the text to a dull unison. What *is* problematic is an insistence on nailing down any one of these images/referents as satan’s definitive ontology when the tradition says evil has no ontology. Evil is a negation of—a turning from—the Good.⁶

What truly *does* matter is when, how and why Christ might turn to me and say, “Get behind me, Satan” (Matt. 16:23). In fact, he tells us: Satan ‘enters our hearts’ (John 13:27; Acts 5:3) when, for example, we become a tempter (‘a stumbling block’) because we “do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’ Note how just as James conceived of the kingdom of hell in tandem with the ‘world of iniquity,’ so Jesus ties the temptations of Satan to ‘having in mind the things of men.’ For the NT authors, the world (systems), the flesh (ego) and the ‘devil’ are inextricably linked *and thereby limited*.

When we raise doubts about the full personhood or ontology of Satan, it’s not that we deny the phenomenon of real evil. It’s that we demand a closer examination of the satanic nature of the world systems ... for which and in which humans are somehow responsible participants. If Jesus used an anthropomorphism to describe

very real temptations, he does not insist that we literalize the symbols. Talking serpents, ten-headed dragons, the beasts—these are all ‘real; ... but *how* are they real? It's not just that postmoderns could no longer stomach the notion of mythological beasts: it's that we've read the Book of Daniel, which overtly explains, “The beasts are empires.” The ancients used their apocalyptic imagery rhetorically, often ingeniously; they weren't crass literalists.

Charles Baudelaire once said, “The loveliest trick of the Devil is to persuade you that he does not exist.” The greater trick might be that satan hides right under my nose—in *me*—as self-will, as ego, as the delusion of radical autonomy. Or literalizes the myths into a cartoonish persona as a diversion to satan's controlling stake in big-box stores, the Pentagon or even the Church. In this way, the kingdom of hell equates to the great -isms and our bondage to them—whether consumerism, militarism, religious -isms, etc.

Now and in the Age to Come

So which are we to believe? Hell as an eschatological future? An existential reality? Or a kingdom against which we war? Since all three are revealed in the NT, then one mustn't privilege one sense to the exclusion of others. But since the conception of hell as a kingdom has been so neglected, it is worth bringing to the fore again. Readers are challenged to ponder the significance of the statements, “Hell is a kingdom” and “the kingdom of hell is in your midst.” We might meditate further on how the three approaches co-relate (rather than compete) and may also be integrated.

Surely there is an already/not yet dynamic at work. For example, many Scriptures speak of the kingdom of hell as already judged, disarmed and defeated. Other texts assume the work is still in process: the work of the church in this world and the culmination of the finished work of Christ on the final Day of the Lord. So too, the ‘prince of the world’ is said to have already been judged, bound and driven out (esp. in John's Gospel and Col. 2). And yet we also read that he continues to prowl around (Peter 5:8) and having been thrown down, continues to thrash about violently with great wrath (Rev. 12:7-9, 12). So this kingdom and prince have been conquered (esp. at Calvary), are being conquered (esp. through the church), and will be conquered and condemned (at the Last Day).

The Language of ‘Entering Into’

Father Michael Gillis is a good example of one who enfolds all three ideas (hell as a kingdom, an existential present and an eschatological future) together. As he has pointed out,⁷ in addition to our ongoing studies of the etymology and interpretation of *hades* and *gehenna*, the language of ‘entering into’ is equally important.⁸ He lays it out as follows.

1. *Hell as a kingdom.* When we ‘enter into’ the kingdom of heaven or hell, we are referring to participation in a matrix of relationships or attitudes. ‘Kingdom’ is a political term and what are ‘politics’ but systems of relationships and how they work. The Col. 1 passage is a clear example of ‘dominion,’ socially and spiritually understood in political terms. It speaks of what reigns, has dominance and demands allegiance.

Further, in the Orthodox world, *hades* is the personified ruler of the kingdom of darkness (often appearing under Jesus feet in icons of the Resurrection). The conquest of *hades*, accomplished in the *descensus* of Holy Saturday, is a (literally) life-giving and life-changing victory for the kingdom of heaven. It plays out in this life as “the darkness *is fading* and the true light is *already shining*” (1 John 2:8).

2. *Hell as an existential present.* Hell is not only a kingdom; it is also an experience. It is an experience we are perhaps *already* in (born, as we are, into the broken world system) and into which we may also *enter* (by participation). For just as we enter and experience heaven now through relationship with Jesus Christ, so hell is an experience that we enter and experience now in a plethora of ways—i.e. by participation in and allegiance to the matrix mentioned above. That is, entry into the hell experience is through relationship with or oppression by the hellish world system or the fallen ego (what Paul and James call the ‘flesh’ or what Jesus refers to as the ‘self’).

Thus the question, what is my hell or heaven right now? When I stumble, do I find my peace in God? Do I want to repent (or better, am I willing to accept the gift of repentance)? Am I willing to learn from my failings and live my amends? The way I relate to myself, to others and to my world in these moments determines how I experience my past and my present as either entering the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of hell.

3. *Hell as an eschatological future.* As we’ve seen, Jesus does not stop there. The majority of his *gehenna* sayings do indicate that the seeds of heaven or hell in this life will bear their fruit in the age to come. This is required for life to have meaning and for true righteousness (justice) to be fulfilled. But what does this mean?

Fr. Michael, following a significant stream of Orthodox tradition, proposes that what makes the age to come *final*—but not *static*—is that you cannot go back and relive your life. What you have done with your life, or with this day, is your offering to God. Period. Whatever life we’ve lived—heavenly or hellish—is the book of life we will ultimately present to God. This life is truly *finalized* upon our departure. BUT. How we relate to this life and eventually come to peace with it is another matter. And that’s where this life is final but the age to come is not static. The question of how this ‘works’ is surely a mystery, but the answer in God’s heart is the bridge between the *gehenna* texts (of existential torment and eschatological exclusion) and the hope-filled texts—the promises of every eye seeing, every knee bowing, every tongue confessing Christ is Lord to the glory of God who will be all and in all.

Whatever that looks like, for the fathers, death (though final) is not made static in *hades*.

Building from the ‘reaching forth’ of Phil. 3:13, Gregory of Nyssa uses the term *epektasis* to describe the eternal draw of the soul towards God in the coming eternity of ages. It speaks of humanity’s ever-growing capacity for and ever-moving trajectory into deeper union with God. Just as we ‘*enter into*’ the kingdom of heaven or hell, for Gregory, the age to come features a ‘*moving out of*’ in continuous *epektasis* (‘*pressing forward*’) of further discovery.⁹ ‘Farther up and farther in,’ to quote C.S. Lewis.

In Conclusion or Inconclusion

The primary purpose of this article has been to remind readers that debates about the nature of eschatological hell and entreaties regarding an existential hell—while important in themselves—cannot account for a number of *gehenna* and *hades* texts in the NT. These texts—esp. Jms. 3:6, Matt. 23:15 and Matt. 16:18—indicate that besides these other meanings, hell is also a kingdom, present among us and within us.

At the level of biblical scholarship, it behooves us to ask how James’ use of *gehenna* may *not* in fact be a departure from Jesus’ use of the term, but instead, a cipher for interpreting him, especially given the obvious role of James as a commentary on Matthean Jesus-sayings.

At the pastoral level, recalling this motif is crucial to our perception of the church’s purpose and our own spiritual formation, particularly as we identify the *gates of hades* among us and within us. By following Paul in acknowledging a dominion of darkness fueling and fueled by human participation, we might shift our focus from the hell to come for others to the hell we’re complicit in today. Meditating on the kingdom of hell here and now might animate our participation in the kingdom of heaven here and now. Indeed, to do so *is* to inherit and enter the kingdom of heaven.

¹ Cf. Meghan Henning, *Educating Early Christians through the Rhetoric of Hell* (Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Definitive!

² For example, in the prophecies of Jeremiah, the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom (the origins of the Greek *gehenna*) was *always* a metonym for the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, whereas Hebrew inter-testamental apocalypses to identify *gehenna* with post-mortem punishments. That Jesus cites or alludes to every chapter in Jeremiah that mentions the Valley led me to believe (in *Her Gates Will Never Be Shut*, Wipf and Stock, 2009) that Christ had in mind the Jeremiah tradition rather than the visions of Enoch or Esdras—especially when Jesus quotes Jer. 7 in the same context as his prophecies of the coming Roman siege. *Gehenna*, he warns, is about to happen again, as in the days of Jeremiah. Yet somehow the popular Jewish

and Christian use of *gehenna* (as post-mortem judgment) won the day in the centuries to follow.

³ Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 155 n67:

While scholars have typically tried to distinguish between “Hades” and “Gehenna” in the NT, there is no evidence that the NT authors or readers would have appreciated this distinction. Duane F. Watson, “Gehenna,” *ABD* 2:927, has argued that “Hades” is the interim abode of the dead prior to judgment while “Gehenna” is a place of final punishment. ... This hypothesis is problematic because 1) the two terms are not juxtaposed directly in any of the NT texts, and 2) the only instance in which Hades is used to indicate a temporary dwelling place (the book of Revelation) does not contain a reference to Gehenna. For good summaries of the use of these terms in the first century, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 268-69, 632-34; Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke’s Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 271-5.

⁴ Chris Hoke is a prison chaplain, working with Tierra Nueva in Washington state. He is the author of *Wanted: A Spiritual Pursuit Through Jail, Among Outlaws and Across Borders* (HarperOne, 2015).

⁵ Personal conversation, Dec. 10, 2015.

Cf. Chris Hoke, “What is Church? A Movement Invading Hades” Video - *Clarion Journal* (12-10-15)

http://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2015/12/chris-hoke-what-is-church-a-jesus-movement-invading-hades.html.

⁶ This was probably the theological motive for picturing satan as a fallen angel. It is a demotion from pagan ideas that satan is either eternal or the dark side of the divine. It also enables us to say that God only created good, so any evil is a turning by a good from the Good. But if evil is not eternal, the devil is only a fallen angel and God reconciles *all* things to himself, including invisible and heavenly things (as Col. 1 promises), then is there hope even for Lucifer? The church had to ask those questions in the 3rd-4th century.

⁷ Personal conversation, Dec. 17, 2015.

Cf. Fr. Michael Gillis, “Suicide and Hell,” *Praying in the Rain* (12-12-15).

<http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/prayingintherain/2015/12/1646/>.

⁸ This section comes from my notes of our most recent meeting. The principle ideas are his, but readers should be aware that my reflections are included and may sometimes taint his intention.

⁹ Cf. *From glory to glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa’s mystical writings*, Intro. Jean Danielou (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001).