

Hell. The word 'hell' is used in English translations of the Bible to represent both the Hebrew **Sheol* (q.v.), meaning the place of the departed, and the Greek **Gehenna* (q.v.), which came to denote the divinely ordained place of punishment for the wicked after death. In Christian theology it normally signifies the place or state to which unrepentant sinners are held to pass after this life, whereas the redeemed go either to **Purgatory* (q.v.) or direct to **Heaven* (q.v.). Its character is inferred from biblical teaching, esp. Christ's words in the Gospels about the fate of those who refuse the opportunity of entering the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Matt. 13: 42; 25: 30 and 41). In Rev. the 'second death' (2: 11; 20: 14, etc.) is depicted symbolically as the fate of being cast into a 'lake which burneth with fire and brimstone' (21: 8; cf. 19: 20 and 20: 10). From such texts as this, often understood over-literally, the popular idea of hell was derived.

It is clear that in the NT hell in this sense is an ultimate state or destiny into which souls pass only by God's final and irrevocable judgement, whether that is conceived as the **Particular Judgement* at death or the **General Judgement* on the last day. Acc. to the traditional Scholastic theology, souls experience in hell both the *poena damni*, i.e. the exclusion from God's presence and loss of all contact with Him, and a certain *poena sensus*, denoted in the Bible by fire, which is usually interpreted as an external agent tormenting them. Modern theology tends rather to stress the fact that hell is but the logical consequence of ultimate adherence to the soul's own will and rejection of the will of God, which (since God cannot take away free will) necessarily separates the soul from God, and hence from all possibility of happiness. This exclusion from heaven (in which the unrepentant person would from his very character be both unable and unwilling to share) is held to be contrary neither to God's justice nor to His love, since He will not force response to the good from any creature against his will.