

The state of the dead: Early Jewish understanding

HISTORIC MORTALISM

Mortalism is the belief that human beings are not naturally immortal, and that at death they are unconscious rather than continuing to exist consciously as an 'immortal soul'.

Conditional mortality is the belief that immortality is only granted by God at the resurrection and judgment. Historically, belief in conditional immortality (either as 'soul sleep'¹ or 'soul death'²), has been held marginally throughout the history of Christianity.^{3 4 5 6 7}

¹ The belief that people still exist in some non-physical form after death, but remain completely unconscious.

² The belief that people do not exist at all after death.

³ In the first place, **there have not been a few, both in ancient and modern times**, who have maintained the truth of a "Conditional Immortality"., McConnell, 'The Evolution of Immortality', p. 84 (1901).

⁴ At the same time **there have always been isolated voices raised in support of other views**. There are hints of a belief in repentance after death, **as well as conditional immortality and annihilationism.**, Streeter, et al., 'Immortality: An Essay in Discovery, Co-Ordinating Scientific, Psychical, and Biblical Research', p. 204 (1917).

⁵ **Many biblical scholars down throughout history**, looking at the issue through Hebrew rather than Greek eyes, **have denied the teaching of innate immortality.**, Knight, 'A brief history of Seventh-Day Adventists', p. 42 (1999).

⁶ **Various concepts of conditional immortality or annihilationism have appeared earlier in Baptist history as well.** Several examples illustrate this claim.

EARLY JEWISH MORTALISM

Beliefs concerning the afterlife varied even among the Jews of the Old Testament era,^{8 9} but the Scriptural teaching is consistent,^{10 11 12}

General as well as particular Baptists developed versions of annihilationism or conditional immortality., Pool, 'Against returning to Egypt: Exposing and Resisting Credalism in the Southern Baptist Convention', p. 133 (1998).

⁷ through the early part of the 1540s a number of English evangelicals continued to **claim that the souls of the dead experienced no consciousness before the Last Judgement.**, Marshall, 'Beliefs and the dead in Reformation England', p. 224 (2002).

⁸ "Who knows whether the breath of human beings rises up and the breath of an animal sinks down to the earth?" (Eccles 3:21). In Qohelet's day there were perhaps people who were speculating **that human beings would enjoy a positive afterlife**, as animals would not. **Qohelet points out that there is no evidence for this.**, Goldingay, 'Old Testament Theology', volume 2, p. 644 (2006).

⁹ **Almost any position one can imagine on the subject** appears to have been espoused by some Jews somewhere in the period between the Maccabean crisis and the writing of the Mishnah, roughly 200 BC to AD 200., Wright, 'The Resurrection of the Son of God', p. 129 (2003).

¹⁰ Barr is surely right to stress that the Genesis story as it now stands indicates that **humans were not created immortal, but had (and lost) the chance to gain unending life.**, Wright, 'The Resurrection of the Son of God', p. 92 (2003); Wright himself actually interprets some passages of Scripture as indicating alternative beliefs, 'The Bible offers a spectrum of belief about life after death', *ibid.*, p.129.

¹¹ 'Death means that the body returns to the dust, and the breath to God who gave it; **meaning not that an immortal part of the person goes to live with God**, but that the God who breathed life's breath into human nostrils in the first **place will simply withdraw it into his own possession.**', *ibid.*, p. 98.

¹² 'In contrast to the two enigmatic references to Enoch and Elijah, **there are ample references to the fact that**

^{13 14} and deliberately contradictory to the beliefs of Israel's neighbours.^{15 16 17 18 19 20}

death is the ultimate destiny for all human beings, that God has no contact with or power over the dead, **and that the dead do not have any relationship with God** (see, inter alia, Ps. 6:6, 30:9–10, 39:13–14, 49:6–13, 115:16–18, 146:2–4). If there is a conceivable setting for the introduction of a doctrine of the afterlife, it would be in Job, since Job, although righteous, is harmed by God in the present life. **But Job 10:20–22 and 14:1–10 affirm the opposite.**, Gillman, 'Death and Afterlife, Judaic Doctrines Of', in Neusner, 'The Encyclopedia of Judaism', volume 1, p. 176 (2000).

¹³ **Despite the fact that existence in Sheol means total oblivion**, in one sense there is a form of continued existence there. Jacob claims that when he goes to Sheol, he will never know his son Benjamin again (Gen. 42:38). Samuel too clearly existed in some sense while in Sheol. This suggests that Jacob, Benjamin, and Samuel were "there" in some mysterious sense. **This may simply reflect the psychological awareness that our dead are still "present" with us.**, *ibid.*, p. 198.

¹⁴ Finally, if one were to speculate on the reasons for the biblical emphasis on the finality of death, two possibilities arise. The first is to distance biblical religion from pagan religions that worshipped the dead. The second rests on **the biblical insistence that only God is immortal. Human beings die, and that is the difference between them and the deity.**, *ibid.*, p. 198.

¹⁵ 'A characteristic mark of the biblical understanding of death is **that it did not simply adopt the views found in surrounding cultures**. Neither the varied and developed Egyptian view (→ Egyptian Religion) nor the rites of Canaan **became relevant for the OT**. The speculations and practices of the world of the great religions relating to death **were, indeed, totally incompatible with faith in Yahweh.**, Schoberth, 'Death', in Fahlbusch & Bromiley (eds.), 'The Encyclopedia of Christianity', volume 1, p. 782 (1999-2003).

¹⁶ 'Even for holistic dualism, the starting point is the assumption that human beings comprise soul and body. **However these are understood, this is not an assumption that the Scriptures work with.**', Goldingay, 'Old Testament Theology', volume 2, p. 559 (2006).

Belief in an immortal soul going to bliss or torment after death entered mainstream Judaism after the exile²¹ and existed

throughout the Second Temple era, though both 'soul sleep' and 'soul death', were also held,^{22 23 24 25 26 27 28} as even certain modern defenders of hell acknowledge.²⁹

¹⁷ **'The life of a human being came more directly from God,** and it is also evident that when someone dies, **the breath** (rûah, e.g., Ps 104:29) or the life (nepeš, e.g., Gen 35:18) **disappears and returns to the God who is rûah.** And whereas the living may hope that the absence of God may give way again to God's presence, **the dead are forever cut off from God's presence.**²⁴¹ Death means an end to fellowship with God and to fellowship with other people. **It means an end to the activity of God and the activity of other people.** Even more obviously, it means an end to my own activity. **It means an end to awareness.'**, *ibid.*, p. 640.

¹⁸ 'The story of Samuel's visit with the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28) **does not provide evidence of belief in the spirits of the dead so much as it does that of a strict prohibition** (and teaching about the uselessness) **of any contacts with them.** Disinterest in the graves of the mighty men of → Israel (Deut. 34:6; 1 Kgs. 2:10) bears witness **to this rejection of overvaluation of the dead.'**, Schoberth, 'Death', in Fahlbusch & Bromiley (eds.), 'The Encyclopedia of Christianity', volume 1, p. 782 (1999-2003).

¹⁹ **'Qohelet is opposed to belief in the immortal soul.'**, Sacchi, 'The history of the Second Temple period', *Journal for the study of the Old Testament*, volume 285, p. 428 (2000).

²⁰ **'He saw death as annihilation.** Death, even the good death of old age, is nothing more than the final act of the weakening process that is old age. Death appears as **nothing but the fading away of the individual's vital capacities until their complete disappearance.'**, Goldingay, 'Old Testament Theology', volume 2, p. 428 (2006).

²¹ 'A second doctrine of the afterlife enters Judaism not **in the Bible itself but in the intertestamental period**, i.e., the first century B.C.E.-first century C.E. **This doctrine teaches that every human being is a composite of two entities, a material body and a non-material soul;** that the soul pre-exists the body and departs from the body at death; that, though the body disintegrates in the grave, the soul, by its very nature, is indestructible; and that it continues to exist for eternity.

Not even a hint of this dualistic view of the human being appears in the Bible.', Gillman, 'Death and Afterlife, Judaic Doctrines Of', in Neusner, 'The Encyclopedia of Judaism', volume 1, p. 200 (2000).

²² **'As good creational monotheists, mainline Jews were not hoping to escape from the present universe into some Platonic realm of eternal bliss enjoyed by disembodied souls after the end of the space-time universe.** If they died in the fight for the restoration of Israel, they hoped not to 'go to heaven', or at least not permanently, **but to be raised to new bodies when the kingdom came**, since they would of course need new bodies to enjoy the very much this-worldly *shalom*, peace and prosperity that was in store.', Wright, 'The New Testament and the People of God', p. 286.

²³ 'However, Strack and Billerbeck, noted authorities on Rabbinic literature, **suggest that the pseudepigraphal references to eternal punishment simply denote everlasting annihilation.** See Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Oskar Beck, 1928), 2:1096.', Fudge, 'The Old Testament', in Fudge & Peterson, 'Two views of hell: a biblical & theological dialogue', p. 210 (2000).

²⁴ **'Some sages believed that the soul remains quiescent**, with those of the righteous "hidden under the Throne of Glory"; others viewed the souls of the dead as having full consciousness.', Eisenberg, 'The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions', p. 116 (1st ed. 2004).

²⁵ **'Two independent doctrines of the afterlife for the individual emerged in Judaism**, probably during the last two centuries B.C.E.: the doctrine of the **resurrection of bodies** and that of the **immortality of souls.** In time (probably the first century C.E.), these two doctrines **became conflated** so as to yield the theory that, at the end of days, God will resurrect dead bodies, rejoin them with their souls, which never died, and the individual human being, **reconstituted as he or she existed on earth, will come before God in judgment.'**, Gillman,

'Death and Afterlife, Judaic Doctrines Of', in Neusner, 'The Encyclopedia of Judaism', volume 1, p. 196 (2000).

²⁶ 'Now, he differs from R. Simeon b. Lakish, who said: **There is no Gehinnom in the world to come,**', Epstein (ed.), 'The Soncino Talmud', Nedarim 8b (1990 ed.) .

²⁷ 'Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish as well as his colleague Rabbi Yannai, said that **there is no such thing as the popular concept of a hell, gehinnom, lasting a long time**, but that at the time when G'd passes out judgment **the wicked will be burned**', Chananel, et al., 'Hut ha-meshulash', p. 183 (2003).

²⁸ 'Thus we have one Rabbi **denying the very existence of hell.** "There is no hell in the future world," says R. Simon ben Lakish.', Darmesteter, 'The Talmud', p. 52 (2007).

²⁹ **'Psalms of Solomon 3:11-12; Sybilline Oracles 4:175-85; 4 Ezra 7:61; Pseudo-Philo 16:3.** Other presumed annihilation texts may be found in Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 125-54', Walvoord, 'The Metaphorical View', in Crockett & Hayes (eds.), 'Four Views on Hell', p. 64 (1997).

The state of the dead: Early Christian views

EARLY CHRISTIAN MORTALISM

The earliest post-apostolic Christian confessions of faith¹ do not refer to heaven or hell, but do mention the resurrection.

Most writers from the first to the seventh century believed in an immortal soul and eternal torment in hell.^{2 3}

Soul sleep⁴ or soul death⁵ was occasionally understood to be followed by eternity in heaven or hell subsequent to the resurrection.⁶

¹ The first century 'Didache' and the 'Old Roman Symbol', which came to be known as the 'Apostles' Creed'.

² 'Concerning its nature, many early fathers, including the apologist Justin (Dial 45.4) and the Latin fathers Tertullian (Deres 5ff) and Jerome (cf. Ep 119), assumed a fiery hell.', Bromiley, 'Hell', in Bromiley (ed.), 'The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia', volume 2, p. 677 (rev. ed. 1988).

³ 'While we freely admit that there are indications that some of the early fathers believed in the final annihilation or salvation of the wicked, it is clear that the majority of fathers believed in a conscious afterlife and eternal punishment.', Morey, 'Death and the Afterlife', p. 60 (1984).

⁴ The belief that people still exist in some non-physical form after death, but remain completely unconscious.

⁵ The belief that people do not exist at all after death.

⁶ 'Some have believed in the annihilation of the wicked after they should have undergone just punishment

Conditionalism was preserved by early Christians such as Arnobius,^{7 8} and among Syrian Christians such as Aphrahat,^{9 10}

proportioned to their sins. This supposition has had a considerable number of advocates. It was maintained, among others, **by Arnobius, at the close of the third century**, by the Socini, by Dr. Hammond, and by some of the New England divines.', Alger, 'The Destiny of the Soul: A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life', p. 546 (14th ed. 1889).

⁷ 'The theory of annihilationism in which the wicked pass into nonexistence either at death or the resurrection was first advanced by Arnobius, a 4th-century "Christian" apologist, according to standard reference works such as Baker's Dictionary of Theology (p. 184).', Morey, 'Death and the Afterlife', p. 199 (1984).

⁸ 'Already in the fourth century Arnobius taught the annihilation of the wicked.', Hoekama, 'The Bible and the Future', p. 266 (1994).

⁹ 'On the subject of the fate of souls after death. Aphrahat insists - as does Ephrem - **that as yet no one has received his reward. For the righteous have not inherited the Kingdom, nor have the wicked gone into torment**' (8.22; cf. 20). At present, the dead **simply "sleep" in their graves**, which are collectively referred to as Sheol, or the underworld. Their capabilities for activity and experience are, apparently, **almost non-existent**, "for when people die, **the animal spirit is buried with the body and sense is taken away from it**, but the heavenly spirit they receive [i.e. the Holy Spirit, given in baptism] goes, according to its nature, to Christ" (6.14). Aphrahat, however, seems to ascribe to the dead a kind of **anticipatory consciousness** of their own future **which is akin to dreaming in earthly sleep.**', Daley, 'The hope of the early church: a handbook of patristic eschatology', p. 73 (1991).

¹⁰ 'The wicked will be sent back to Sheol, the real of Death under the world (22.17.24; cf. 6.6), **where they will be punished in the measure and the way that their sins deserve** - some in "outer darkness," others in unquenchable fire, **others by simple exclusion from the presence of God** (22.18-22).', *ibid.*, p. 73.

Ephrem,^{11 12 13} Narsai,^{14 15} and Jacob of Sarug.^{16 17}

¹¹ 'Ephrem, too, conceives of the time between our death and the second coming of Jesus **as a "sleep," a period of inactivity in virtually every aspect of human existence.** Because his anthropology is more highly developed than Aphrahat's, and because he is so insistent - in contrast to Bardaisan and other earlier, more dualistic Syriac writers - **that the human person needs both body and soul to be functional**, Ephrem seems to imagine that this sleep as [sic] **deprived even of the "dreaming" Aphrahat mentions.** For Ephrem, the soul without the body is "bound," "paralyzed" (CN 476.6); it is like an embryo in its mother's womb **or like a blind or deaf person: "living, but deprived of word and thought"** (HP 8.4-6).', *ibid.*, p. 74.

¹² 'Because of his insistence on the positive role of the body in human life and its necessity for a full human existence (e.g., CN 47.4), **Ephrem sees eschatological reward and punishment as delayed until the resurrection of the dead.** Resurrection will begin when souls are **"awakened" from their sleep** by the angel's trumpet and the commanding voice of God (CN 49.16f.).', *ibid.*, p. 75.

¹³ 'Ephrem's picture of Gehenna is less detailed and more traditional than his picture of heaven. The damned there seem to **suffer most from their awareness that they have lost all hope sharing in beauty and happiness** (HP 2.3f.; 7.29).', *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴ 'Following in the tradition of Ephrem and Aphrahat, as well as that of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Narsai assumes that the souls of the dead **do not receive the reward or punishment for their deeds until they are reunited with their bodies in the resurrection**; until then, they must all wait in Sheol, the earthly place of the dead, in a state of **conscious but powerless inactivity that Narsai refers to as a "sleep."**', *ibid.*, p. 174

¹⁵ 'The Nestorian Narsai described the soul and the body as a pair of inseparable lovers who could not live the one without the other. From the moment that her lover deserted her, he recounts, *nepshesh* lost her speech **and fell into a deep slumber.** In spite of this, even in this

Syrian Christianity inherited both soul death and soul sleep^{18 19 20 21 22} from earlier Jewish teaching.^{23 24 25 26 27 28}

state of forced inertia, she maintained her essential characteristics: her galloping intellect, her acute judgement, the emotions that open up a view in the world. The reason that all her faculties had **ceased to function** is that they had no more any purpose to serve, since the body for the sake of which they operated was no longer there. *Nepshesh* recovered her sentience and her speech **at the end of time when, together with the body, she rose** to give an account for her deeds. **Till then she felt no pain or joy.** The vague knowledge she had of what was in store for her **scarcely disturbed her peaceful sleep.**, Samellas, 'Death in the eastern Mediterranean (50-600 A.D.): the Christianization of the East: An Interpretation', *Studien Und Text Zu Antike Und Christentum*, pp. 56-57 (2002).

¹⁶ **His eschatology remains within the Syriac tradition.** Thus he speaks often of death in personified terms, as the captor of an enslaved human race or as an insatiable glutton; **although Sheol, where the dead now exist, is a dark place of sleep.** Jacob also describes the experience of death as a dangerous journey across a sea of fire.', Daley, 'The hope of the early church: a handbook of patristic eschatology', p. 175 (1991).

¹⁷ **On the influence of hypnopsychism on the theology of Jacob of Sarug** see M. D. Guinan, "Where are the dead? Purgatory and Immediate Retribution in James of Sargu," in *Symposium Syriacum 1972*, pp. 546-549.', Samellas, 'Death in the eastern Mediterranean (50-600 A.D.): the Christianization of the East: An Interpretation', *Studien Und Text Zu Antike Und Christentum*, p. 56 (2002).

¹⁸ **The doctrine of the 'sleep of the soul' after death, a Syrian tradition** held in common with Ephrem, Narsai and others', Murray, 'Symbols of church and kingdom: a study in early Syriac tradition', p. 279 (2006).

¹⁹ **In virtually every period of Byzantine history,** critical voices denied that the souls of the dead could involve themselves in the affairs of the living or intercede on their behalf in heaven. Based on a more unitive, materialist notion of the self as irreducibly embodied, **some thinkers argued that the souls of the dead**

(sainted or otherwise) were largely inert, having lapsed into a state of **cognitive oblivion and psychomotor lethargy,** a condition sometimes described as a state of "sleep" in which the soul could only "dream" of its future punishment or heavenly reward. **Still others argued for the outright death of the soul,** which, they claimed, **was mortal and perished with the body,** and which would be recreated together with the body **only on the day of resurrection.**', Conostas, "'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream": The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature', in Talbot (ed.), 'Dunbarton Oaks Papers', No. 55, p. 94 (2001).

²⁰ **Till the end of the sixth century and beyond,** Christians in Nisibis and Constantinople, Syria and Arabia adduced Leviticus 17:11 which states that "The soul of the whole flesh is the blood" to argue **that the soul after death sank into non-existence, that it lost its sensibility and stayed inert in the grave together with the body.**', Samellas, 'Death in the eastern Mediterranean (50-600 A.D.): the Christianization of the East: An Interpretation', *Studien Und Text Zu Antike Und Christentum*, pp. 55-56 (2002).

²¹ **Others arose in Arabia, putting forward a doctrine foreign to the truth.** They said that during the present time **the human soul dies and perishes with the body,** but that at the time of the resurrection **they will be renewed together.**', Eusebius (a contemporary), 'Ecclesiastical History' (6.37.1), NPNF² 1:297.

²² 'It is unclear if **Arabian thnetopsychism** ['soul death'] is related to **the Syriac tradition of the soul's dormition** [sleep] espoused by writers like Aphrahat (d. ca. 345), Ephrem (d. 373), and Narsai (d. 502), **according to whom the souls of the dead are largely inert, having lapsed into a state of sleep,** in which they can only dream of their future reward or punishments.', Conostas, "'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream": The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature', in Talbot (ed.), 'Dunbarton Oaks Papers', No. 55, p. 110 (2001).

²³ 'In his comments on Aphraates, [Aphrahates, a Syrian Christian sage] Braun suggests that **he must have been acquainted with contemporaneous rabbinic teaching as to the condition of the soul and body after death.** In much the same vein Redepenning thinks that the 'heresy of the Arabians,' which caused the dissension that Origen had to settle, was none other than **a bit of Jewish tradition which the Church had taken over**', Gavin, 'The

Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (40.116), 1920.

²⁴ 'we can see that **its connections are Jewish** and perhaps also Persian.', Murray, 'Symbols of church and kingdom: a study in early Syriac tradition', p. 279 (2006).

²⁵ 'in VIII.397.15 he [Aphrahat] says **'our faith teaches us'** the doctrine of **the sleep of the soul after death,** which seems to come from various **but ultimately Jewish sources**', *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

²⁶ 'Gouillard notes that variations of **thnetopsychism** ['soul death'] and **hypnopsychism** ['soul sleep'] **existed alongside the views of the official church until the sixth century** when they were resoundingly denounced by Eustratios.', *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁷ **Thnetopsychism** ['soul death'] **continued to challenge the patience and ingenuity of church officials,** as evidenced by writers such as John the Deacon, Niketas Stethatos, Philip Monotropos (Dioptra, pp. 210, 220), and Michael Glykas, all of whom are **keenly interested in the survival of consciousness and memory among the souls of the departed saints.** John the Deacon, for example, attacks those who **"dare to say that praying to the saints is like shouting in the ears of the deaf, as if they had drunk from the mythical waters of Oblivion"** (line 174).', *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁸ 'The Syriac tradition of **the soul's "sleep in the dust"** (Job 21:26), **with its links to the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic, stands as a corrective to overly Hellenized views of the afterlife, and was canonized at a Nestorian synod in the eighth century (786-787)** presided over by Timothy I (d. 823), **who rejected anything else as blatant Origenism.**', *ibid.*, p. 111.

The state of the dead: 17th – 18th century views

EARLY MODERN ERA

Soul sleep¹ was a significant minority view from the eighth to the seventeenth centuries.²

Soul **death**³ became increasingly common from the Reformation onwards.^{4 5 6 7 8 9 10}

¹ The belief that people still exist in some non-physical form after death, but remain completely unconscious.

² Harold Fisch calls it 'a major current of seventeenth century protestant ideology'. Thomson, 'Bodies of thought: science, religion, and the soul in the early Enlightenment', p. 42 (2008).

³ The belief that people do not exist at all after death.

⁴ **Mortalism, in some form or other, had been around quite a while before the seventeenth century**, but for our purposes we can begin to investigate mortalism as it appeared at the time of the Reformation. Brandon, 'The coherence of Hobbes's Leviathan: civil and religious authority combined', p. 65 (2007).

⁵ 'we also know that such mortalist thought was **fairly widespread prior to the seventeenth century**.' ibid., p. 66.

⁶ 'The status of the dead was **among the most divisive issues of the early Reformation**; it was also arguably the theological terrain over which in the reign of Henry VIII **official reform travelled furthest and fastest**.' Marshall, 'Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England', p. 47 (2002).

⁷ 'In fact, during the Reformation both psychosomnolence—the **belief that the soul sleeps until the resurrection**—and thnetopsychism—the **belief that the body and soul both die and then both rise again**—were **quite common**', Conti, 'Religio Medici's Profession of

NOTABLE CONDITIONALISTS

- 16??: Sussex Baptists.¹¹
- d. 1612: Edward Wightman¹²
- 1627: Samuel Gardner¹³
- 1628: Samuel Przpkowski¹⁴

Faith', in Barbour & Preston (eds.), 'Sir Thomas Browne: the world proposed', p. 157 (2008).

⁸ 'All this suggests that mortalism, and the fear of it, was **widespread in England in the century after the Reformation**. But the English Revolution, in particular, was a crucible out of which radical new ideas boiled. **Mortalist ideas multiplied rapidly in the 1640s**', Almond, 'Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England', p. 43 (1994).

⁹ 'The most common form of seventeenth-century Christian mortalism claimed that **the whole individual died and was insensible until the resurrection and judgement**, when the whole individual would be resuscitated and enter on eternal life. **There was no continuation of an immaterial part of the individual, no feeling, thought, or suffering before the final general resurrection**.' Thomson, 'Bodies of thought: science, religion, and the soul in the early Enlightenment', p. 42 (2008).

¹⁰ 'On the contrary, mortalist views - particularly of the sort which affirmed that the soul slept or died - **were widespread in the Reformation period**. George Williams has shown **how prevalent mortalism was among the Reformation radicals**.' Almond, 'Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England', p. 38 (1994).

¹¹ **The Baptists in Italy and France had at times adopted Soul Sleeping**; such an association also existed in England, for we hear that **in Kent and Sussex Baptists were linked to a sect known as the Soul Sleepers**.' Burrell, 'The role of religion in modern European history', p. 74 (1964).

¹² 'he affirmed that **the soul sleeps in the sleep of the first death as well as the body**.' Vedder, 'A Short History of the Baptists', p. 197 (1907).

¹³ 'The Norwich minister Samuel Gardiner envisaged the dead **'sleep[ing] supinely in their lockers, careless and senseless of secular affaires'**, Marshall, 'Beliefs and the dead in Reformation England', p. 213 (2002).

- 1636: George Wither¹⁵
- 1637: Joachim Stegman¹⁶
- 1624: Richard Overton¹⁷
- 1654: John Biddle¹⁸
- 1655: Matthew Caffyn¹⁹

¹⁴ 'Przpkowski, like Sozzini, **affirmed that those who had not been exposed to the Gospel through revelation would not receive eternal torments for their ignorance of the Gospel**. Przpkowski remains consistent with Sozzini in stating that they **simply would not be raised and would remain eternally dead**.' Snobelen, 'Revelation and Reason: The Development, Rationalization and Influence of Socinianism', honors thesis, p. 54 (1993).

¹⁵ 'Another convinced adherent of moderate Puritan opinion, **the poet George Wither, gave mortalism even more substantial support**', Ball, 'The Soul Sleepers: Christian Mortalism from Wycliffe to Priestley', p. 73 (2008).

¹⁶ **'The mortalist position, on the other hand, was defended in the Brevis disquisitio published by the Socinian Joachim Stegmann in 1637.'** Méchoulan (ed.), 'La formazione storica della alterità: studi di storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò', Secolo XVI, p. 1221 (2001).

¹⁷ 'In 1644 he published a notorious tract, Mans Mortalitie, wherein he sought to prove 'both theologically and philosophically, **that whole man (as a rational creature) is a compound wholly mortal, contrary to that common distinction of soul and body: and that the present going of the soul into heaven or hell is a mere fiction: and that at the resurrection is the beginning of our immortality, and then actual condemnation, and salvation, and not before**.' Watts, 'The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution', p. 119 (1985).

¹⁸ 'The seventeenth-century Socinians **John Biddle and Samuel Richardson both disbelieved in eternal torment and were convinced that the wicked would be annihilated**.' Young, 'F. D. Maurice and Unitarianism', p. 249 (1992).

¹⁹ "'Matthew Caffyn said, **no man hath eternal life [immortality] now in him as possessing it, but a**

- 1658: Samuel Richardson²⁰
- 1608-1674: John Milton²¹
- 1588-1670: Thomas Hobbes²²
- 1605-1682: Thomas Browne²³
- 1622-1705: Henry Layton²⁴
- 1702: William Coward²⁵
- 1632-1704: John Locke²⁶

promise of it, I John ii. 25', Froom, 'The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers', volume 2, p. 144 (1966).

²⁰ Richardson, 'A discourse of the torments of hell: The foundation and pillars thereof discovered, searched, shaken and removed. With many infallible proofs, that there is not to be a punishment after this life for any to endure that shall never end' (1658).

²¹ 'In discussing the death of the body (chapter 13), **Milton espouses mortalism or Thnetopsychism**, the logical concomitant of his monist ontology.', Lewalski, 'The life of John Milton: a critical biography', p. 431 (2002).

²² 'Although he is not normally counted a Socinian, **Hobbes shares their commitment to the mortalist thesis**,', Jolley, 'The relation between theology and philosophy', in Garber & Ayres (eds.), 'The Cambridge history of seventeenth-century philosophy', volume 1, p. 383 (2003).

²³ 'Burns presents this view as held not only by Hobbes, but also by John Milton, **Sir Thomas Browne**, and Richard Overton.', Brandon, 'The coherence of Hobbes's Leviathan: civil and religious authority combined', p. 66 (2007).

²⁴ 'Between 1692 and 1706, Henry Layton had produced a series of pamphlets which, while endorsing the notion of a general resurrection on the last day, **had asserted the mortality of the soul primarily on physiological grounds though with the aid of Scripture**.', Almond, 'Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England', p. 62 (1994).

²⁵ 'Similarly, William Coward wrote a series of works from 1702 to 1706 in which he argued for the **mortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead on the last day**.', Almond, 'Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England', p. 62 (1994).

²⁶ 'Locke affirmed the doctrine of mortalism in the *Reasonableness* in his account of the consequences of

- 1643-1727: Isaac Newton²⁷
- 1676-1748: Pietro Giannone²⁸
- 1751: William Kenrick²⁹
- 1755: Edmund Law³⁰
- 1759: Samuel Bourn³¹
- 1723-1791: Richard Price³²
- 1718-1797: Peter Peckard³³

Adam's Fall.', Nuvo (ed.), 'John Locke: Writings on Religion', p. xxxiii (2002).

²⁷ '**Newton's mortalism** is of a piece with that of several Civil War sectarians.', Wood, 'Science and dissent in England, 1688-1945', p. 50 (2004).

²⁸ 'In the *Triregno* Giannone implicitly aligns himself with a materialist position: **the doctrine of the soul's immortality is presented as one of many corrupting influences that the Jews absorbed from the Egyptians**.', Suttcliffe, 'Judaism and Enlightenment', p. 207 (2005).

²⁹ '**He seems to have been a materialist, a mortalist** (that is, a believer that the soul expires at death), and an announced foe to priestcraft; the pages of the *London Review* resounded with **his defenses of Joseph Priestley's unorthodoxies**.', Johns, 'Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates', p. 141 (2010).

³⁰ '**Edmund Law, Archdeacon of Carlisle, who** (in a D.D. exercise at Cambridge in 1754, published as an "Appendix" to the third edition of *The Theory of Religion* [1755]) **had revived the Anabaptist theory of "soul sleep"**', Outler, 'John Wesley: Folk-Theologian', *Theology Today* (34.2.154), 1977.

³¹ 'Death, when applied to the end of wicked men in a future state, he says, **properly denotes a total extinction of life and being**,', Buck, 'A theological dictionary: containing definitions of all religious terms', p. 115 (1823).

³² 'He does not believe, for he cannot find in Scripture, the 'ultimate restoration of all mankind,' but he holds that **the future punishment will consist chiefly in the annihilation of being, not in the torture of living beings**', Stephen, 'History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century', p. 429 (1901).

³³ 'Peckard, on the other hand, adopted the anti-dogmatic mortalist line that between death and final judgment, the soul lay dormant, **that at death the**

- 1733-1804: Joseph Priestley³⁴
- 1765: Francis Blackburne³⁵

whole man died rather than just his physical being.', Ingram, 'Religion, reform and modernity in the eighteenth century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England', *Studies in Modern British Religious History*, p. 101 (2007).

³⁴ 'I suppose that the powers of thought **are not merely suspended, but are extinct, or cease to be, at death**.', Priestley, 'A free discussion of the doctrine of materialism, and philosophical necessity', p. 82 (1778).

³⁵ Blackburne, 'A short historical view of the controversy concerning an intermediate state and the separate existence of the soul between death and the general resurrection, deduced from the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, to the present times' (1765).

The state of the dead: 19th –20th century views

THE MODERN ERA

Belief in conditional immortality and the annihilation of the unsaved became increasingly common during the nineteenth century,^{1 2 3 4} entering mainstream Christianity in the twentieth century.^{5 6 7}

¹ **It emerged seriously in English-language theology in the late 19th century**, Johnston, 'Hell', in Alexander & Rosner (eds.), 'New dictionary of biblical theology' (electronic ed. (2001).

² **Yet many abandonments of the traditional view are to be noted**, including F. W. Newman (the Cardinal's brother who took refuge in Unitarianism), S. T. Coleridge, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, F. W. Robertson of Brighton, F. D. Maurice, Bishop Colenso of Natal, T. R. Birks of the Evangelical Alliance, Andrew Jukes, Samuel Cox, and others **who took up the cudgel for conditional immortality** like the redoubtable R. W. Dale of Birmingham and F. J. Delitzsch of Leipzig.⁷² Dale himself indicated he was drawn to Moody because of Moody's great compassion for the lost, but ultimately he came to deny everlasting punishment. **The defections were on the other side of the Atlantic also** and included such a household name as the Quaker writer and preacher, Hannah Whitall Smith, whose *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* was so popular.⁷ Larsen, 'Heaven and Hell in the Preaching of the Gospel: A Historical Survey' Trinity Journal (22.2.255-256), 2001.

³ In the 1900s, the United States saw a **minimal emergence of annihilationism**, primarily in new fringe groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists. But during that century England **saw the rise of several books defending this doctrine**, such as Archbishop of Durham Richard Wately's *A View of the*

From this point it is possible to speak in terms of entire groups holding the belief, and only the most prominent individual nineteenth century advocates of the doctrine will be mentioned here.

Scripture Revelations Concerning a Future State (1892), Congregationalist Edward White's *Life in Christ* (1846), English Baptist Henry Dobney's *The Scripture Doctrine of Future Punishment* (1858), and Anglican priest Henry Constable's *Duration and Nature of Future Punishment* (1868).⁴ Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', p. 197 (2004).

⁴ Referring to this subject, says Edward White, of London, ex-chairman of the great Congregational Union of England and Wales: **"It is the one form of evangelical faith, which seems likely to win the sympathy of modern Europe.... Some of the very greatest of men are lending their sanction to the movement." "It is espoused with ever increasing energy by evangelical scholars in all parts of the world."**, *ibid.*

⁵ In Germany Richard Rothe, in France and Switzerland Charles Lambert, Charles Byse, and E. Petavel, in Italy Oscar Corcoda, and in America C.F. Hudson and W.F. Huntington have been prominent advocates of conditionalist views, and have won many adherents. **Thus Conditionalism has at length, in the 20th cent., taken its place among those eschatological theories which are to be reckoned with.**, Fulford, 'Conditional Immortality', in Hastings & Selbie, 'Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics', volume 3, p. 824 (1908).

⁶ **The doctrine of conditional immortality is becoming popular, especially among Christian thinkers.**, Radhakrishnan, 'An Idealist View of Life; being the Hibbert lectures for 1929.', p. 283 (2nd ed. 1947).

⁷ R. A. Torrey, H. A. Ironside, Paul Rood, John R. Rice, Robert G. Lee, and many others preached on heaven and hell, **but they were a vanishing breed.**, Larsen, 'Heaven and Hell in the Preaching of the Gospel: A Historical Survey' Trinity Journal (22.2.257), 2001.

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT

Scientific conclusions concerning human mortality provided additional support.^{8 9}

LEXICOGRAPHICAL SUPPORT

Lexicographical studies had already cast doubt on the traditional doctrine.^{10 11}

⁸ We are confronted thus with the **problem of conditional immortality**. Henry Drummond said that **life depends on correspondence with the environment**. The human body needs food, drink and oxygen to breathe. But if the body is gone and the environment is spiritual **what correspondence can there be on the part of one who has lived only for the needs and lusts of the body?**, 'A Letter From Roland Bainton On Immortality', Church & Williams (eds.), 'Continuity and discontinuity in church history: essays presented to George Huntson Williams', p. 393 (1979).

⁹ **Science has learned no more than is expressed in Eccl. 3: 19:** 'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast.' "Said Lester F. Ward, A. M., at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.: "The consciousness, when scientifically examined, **reveals itself as a quality of brain....** It is a universal induction of science that modification of brain is accompanied by modification of consciousness, **and that the destruction of brain results in destruction of consciousness. No exception to this law has ever been observed.**", Grant, 'Positive Theology', chapter 4 (1895).

¹⁰ **Dr. Fulke saith plainly, that neither in the Hebrew, Greek, nor Latin, is there a word proper for hell,** (as we take hell for the place of punishment of the ungodly.) Fulke's Defence Translation, pp. 13, 37, 89. **Is not this a full testimony against their opinion of the torments of hell?**, Richardson, 'Torments of Hell', in Whittemore, 'The Doctrine of Hell Torments Overthrown: In Three Parts', pp. 10-11 (1833).

NOTABLE CONDITIONALISTS

- 1833: Millerites¹⁵
- 1846: Edward White¹⁶
- 1855: Thomas Thayer¹⁷
- d.1863: François Gaussen¹⁸
- 1865: Christadelphians¹⁹
- 1873: Henry Constable²⁰
- d. 1878: Louis Burnier²¹

discarded.’, Balfour, ‘An Inquiry Into the Scriptural Import of the Words Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, and Gehenna, Translated Hell in the Common English Version’, p. 9 (rev. ed. 1854).

¹⁵ The original group following the teachings of William Miller, who began preaching his distinctive beliefs in 1833; Miller himself did not believe in conditional immortality, but it was one of a number of beliefs held among the group.

¹⁶ ‘Congregational minister **Edward White**, whose *Life in Christ* (1846) espoused the view **that immortality was not necessary but conditional on right belief**. Instead of suffering perpetual torture, **the unsaved were annihilated.**’, Wilson, ‘STOKES, George Gabriel’, Bebbington & Noll (eds.), ‘Biographical dictionary of evangelicals’, p. 633 (2003).

¹⁷ Thayer, ‘The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment’ (1855); he was appealed to by subsequent conditionalists due to his reputation as an authoritative lexicographer.

¹⁸ ‘Louis Gaussen, whom Froom mentions on p. 252 with respect to premillennialism, and on p. 602 in connection with Petavel-Olliff, **may be remembered almost as an apostle of the biblical doctrine concerning the state of the dead.**’, Vauchez, ‘The History of Conditionalism’, Andrews University Seminary Studies, volumes 4-5, pp. 199-200 (1966).

¹⁹ Thomas, ‘Tour in the United States and Canada.— Letter from Dr. Thomas’, *The Christadelphian* (2.7.105), 1865.

²⁰ **Death is, for the time, the annihilation of man, his hopes, his thoughts, his life, himself —**’, Constable, ‘The Intermediate State of Man’, p. 88 (1873).

²¹ **‘The unconsciousness of the dead was also set forth by the Swiss pastor Louis Burnier** (1795-1873).’,

- 1878: Conditionalist Association²²
- 1888: Cameron Mann²³
- 1895: Miles Grant²⁴
- 1897: George Stokes²⁵

Vauchez, ‘The History of Conditionalism’, Andrews University Seminary Studies, volumes 4-5, p. 199 (1966).

²² **‘In 1878, some English Baptists formed the Conditionalist Association.** George A. Brown, an English Baptist pastor, host’, Pool, ‘Against returning to Egypt: Exposing and Resisting Credalism in the Southern Baptist Convention’, p. 134 (1998).

²³ **‘The theory of the final destruction of the wicked, or, as it is more briefly and correctly named, the theory of “conditional immortality”** is this: That men are not created with inherent immortality, with a soul, or body, or both, such as cannot be destroyed, but that immortality is a superadded gift which man’s nature is capable of receiving and which God bestows in such cases as He wills, and that He does not so will in the case of impenitent sinners; **hence, it of course follows, that at some time all such offenders will cease to exist.**’, Mann, ‘Five Discourses On Future Punishment’, p. (1888).

²⁴ Grant, ‘Positive Theology’ (1895).

²⁵ **‘The doctrine of conditional immortality** was his principal religious concern.’, Wilson, ‘STOKES, George Gabriel’, Bebbington & Noll (eds.), ‘Biographical dictionary of evangelicals’, p. 633 (2003).

The standard Hebrew lexicon and grammar of John Parkhurst (reprinted many times throughout the nineteenth century), noted that the traditional translation ‘soul’ of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, had no lexical support.¹²

Such studies became influential in nineteenth century arguments for conditional immortality.^{13 14}

¹¹ **‘The word hell is not in the Greek;** the Greek Word for which they put the English word hell, is gehenna; ge in Greek is the earth, or ground, and henna is borrowed from the Hebrew, from the valley of Hinnom.’, *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹² ‘As a noun, *nephesh* **hath been supposed to signify the spiritual part of man**, or what we commonly call his soul; I must for myself confess that **I can find no passage where it hath undoubtedly this meaning.**’, Parkhurst, ‘A Hebrew and English lexicon without points: in which the Hebrew and Chaldee words of the Old Testament are explained in their leading and derived senses, To this work are prefixed, a Hebrew and a Chaldee grammar, without points’, p. 460 (1799).

¹³ ‘Dr. J. H. M’Culloh says: **“There is no word in the Hebrew language that signifies either soul or spirit**, in the technical sense in which we use the term as implying something distinct from the body.” § 55. R. B. Girdlestone, in his *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, says: **“The soul is, properly speaking, the animating principle of the body;** and is the common property of man and beast.” “In other words, it is the life, whether of man or beast.” When every passage in the Bible that speaks of the soul of man has been carefully examined, it will be found that **these statements of these eminent Hebrew scholars and lexicographers, and many others, are strictly correct**, and therefore should be fully believed by all who love the truth.’, Grant, ‘Positive Theology’, chapter 4 (1895).

¹⁴ **‘There are four words in the original language of the Scriptures, all translated hell** (though not invariably), **each of which, it has long been supposed**, denotes this place of woe. **Of late, however, that opinion has been**

The state of the dead: 20th century views

In the 1970s soul death entered mainstream evangelical Christianity^{7 8} as a result of major

theologians making their views public,⁹ a trend which continued.^{10 11 12 13}

dead. The idea of the inherent indestructibility of the human soul (or consciousness) **owes its origin to Greek not to Bible sources**.'. Eyre, 'The Protestors 2 – The Source Of The Ideal', *The Christadelphian* (110.1304.63), 1973.

⁵ **'No place for hell is found in the revised prayer book psalter** which a commission under the Archbishop of York, Dr. Coggan, has produced for consideration by the Convocations of Canterbury and York and which is published today. Instead of the wicked being turned into hell, the commission would substitute: **"the wicked shall be given over unto the grave"**.'. The Times, April 5, 1963, quoted by Sargent, "'Hell" In the Church Psalter', *The Christadelphian* (100.1187.230), 1963.

⁶ 'The doctrinal report *The Mystery of Salvation* by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England is no exception in this respect: after the brief observation that in the churches in the Western world there is **"a growing sense that the picture of a God who consigns millions to eternal torment is far removed from the revelation of God's love in Christ,"** it goes on to affirm the doctrine of **annihilationism** instead.'. van Holten, 'Can the traditional view of hell be defended? An evaluation of some arguments for eternal punishment', *Anglican Theological Review* (2003).

⁷ **'But the year 1974 serves as a benchmark in the debate over annihilationism in evangelical history.** That year evangelical publisher InterVarsity Press published **John Wenham's** *The Goodness of God* (later titled *The Enigma of Evil*), in which Wenham **questioned the historic view of endless punishment and proposed annihilationism**.'. Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', pp. 198-199 (2004).

⁸ 'Annihilationist ideas have been canvassed among evangelicals for more than a century, **2 but they never became part of the mainstream of evangelical faith**, 3 nor have they been widely discussed in the evangelical camp **until recently**.'. Packer, 'Evangelical Annihilationism In Review', *Reformation and Revival* (6.2.37-38), 1997.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Rejection of the doctrine of hell became significant in the twentieth century,¹ and 'soul death'² was widely accepted.³

An Anglican Church report rejected the immortal soul;⁴ later statements rejected hell.^{5 6}

¹ **'For the past century there has been a battle** for the traditional doctrine of Hell.'. Spencer, 'The Destruction of Hell: Annihilationism Examined', *Christian Apologetics Journal* (1.1.1), 1992.

² The belief that people do not exist at all after death, commonly referred to somewhat misleadingly as 'annihilationism'.

³ 'In the twentieth century, Church Missionary Society missionary Harold Guillebaud defended annihilationism in ***The Righteous Judge* in 1941**, which was privately printed in 1961. Basil F.C. Atkinson, a prominent evangelical apologist and leader in Cambridge University's Inter-Collegiate Christian Union and InterVarsity Fellowship, **taught annihilationism to his students and later had his book *Life and Immortality* privately printed (1962)**. His leadership influenced several up-and-coming evangelical annihilationists (e.g., John Wenham, Robert Brow, and possibly others)'. Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', pp. 197-198 (2004).

⁴ 'The Report (1945) of the Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York "Towards the Conversion of England" stated: "The central theme of the New Testament is eternal life, not for anybody and everybody, **but for believers in Christ as risen from the**

⁹ 'Also in 1974, InterVarsity Press published **Stephen Travis's** *The Jesus Hope*, in which he questioned **whether annihilationism might be the better alternative**. Two years later *Christianity Today* included an article by **Edward Fudge defending annihilationism** called "Putting Hell in Its Place." Fudge's thorough book on the subject came out in 1982, and was an alternative selection of the Evangelical Book Club. In 1987, *Christianity Today* allowed **Clark Pinnock** to declare **his belief in annihilationism** in a short article entitled "Fire, Then Nothing.", *ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

¹⁰ 'The overall concept of annihilation **has recently received renewed interest, exposition, and defense** from somewhat surprising sources. **In the past decade a number of rather prominent evangelical theologians and leaders have affirmed they are annihilationists.** Among these are Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Clark Pinnock, John R. W. Stott, Stephen Travis, and John Wenham.'. Erickson, 'Is Hell Forever?', *Bibliotheca Sacra* (152.606.260), 1996.

¹¹ 'The plethora of literature **produced in the last two decades** on the basic nature of hell indicates a growing debate in evangelicalism **that has not been experienced since the latter half of the nineteenth century**.'. Mayhue, 'Hell: Never, Forever, Or Just For Awhile?', *Master's Seminary Journal* (9.2.128), 1998.

¹² 'Then in 1988, the issue received heightened awareness as **John Stott acknowledged his openness to and tentative acceptance of annihilationism**.'. Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', p. 199 (2004).

¹³ **'Other distinguished evangelicals continued this trend.** In 1989 **Philip Hughes** resigned from Westminster Theological Seminary and espoused similar views in *The True Image*. In 1990 **Michael Green** adamantly opposed the historic view of hell in his *Evangelism through the Local Church*. **Robert Brow** followed suit in 1994, **Nigel Wright** in 1996, and **Earle Ellis** in 1997.'. *ibid.*, p. 199.

CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

The number of scholars supporting soul death continues to rise.^{14 15 16 17 18 19}

¹⁴ 'Responding to criticisms of the doctrine of hell made during the modern period, **a number of evangelical scholars have developed the doctrine of "conditional immortality."**', McGrath, 'Christian Theology: an introduction', p. 478 (2006).

¹⁵ 'Most notable is **the blooming of conditionalism among some leading British Christians.**', Shogren, 'Review: William Crockett, ed. Four Views on Hell.', Ashland Theological Journal (30.143), 1998.

¹⁶ 'In its place, **a growing number of scholars, evangelical and non-evangelical alike**, have embraced a view of the destiny of the unbeliever **called annihilationism or conditional immortality.**', Spencer, 'The Destruction of Hell: Annihilationism Examined', Christian Apologetics Journal (1.1.1), 1992.

¹⁷ 'Of the books that espouse annihilationism, **the four best have been written during this century.** Anglican missionary-translator Harold E. Guillebaud completed ***The Righteous Judge: A Study of the Biblical Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment*** shortly before his death in 1941. In the late 1960s Basil Atkinson, under-librarian in the Cambridge University library, penned ***Life and Immortality: An Examination of the Nature and Meaning of Life and Death as They Are Revealed in the Scriptures.*** Seventh-Day Adventist historical theologian LeRoy Edwin Froom's massive two-volume work, ***The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers***, was published in 1965–66. Edward Fudge, an attorney and Churches of Christ layman, produced ***The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment*** in 1982.', Peterson, 'A Traditionalist Response To John Stott's Arguments For Annihilationism', Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (37.4.551), 1994.

¹⁸ 'Recently two works have stood out in offering a rationale for conditionalism. The first is David Powys's massive monograph ***Hell: A Hard Look at a Hard Question.*** Tony Gray commended it as **"the strongest and most articulate defense of the conditionalist position written thus far."** Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', pp. 199–200 (2004).

A major evangelical study²⁰ upheld the doctrine of hell, but expressed it in cautious terms;²¹ this was described as 'an attempt at **damage control**'.²²

¹⁹ 'Powys's goal is to focus on the biblical teaching because he recognizes that "the great majority of modern positions on the fate of the unrighteous may be classified and largely explicated in terms of presuppositionally-determined reactions against 'traditional orthodoxy.'" **Powys's primary contribution lies in his breadth of coverage and attempt at serious biblical exegesis.**', *ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁰ 'Surpassing Powys's considerable book in precision and clarity is ***The Nature of Hell***, published in 2000. This work is a report resulting from **a two-year study on hell by a working group of ACUTE**, the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals.', *ibid.*, p. 200.

²¹ '6. **Hell is more than mere annihilation at the point of death.** Rather, death will lead on to resurrection and final judgment to either heaven or hell (1 Cor. 15:1-58; John 5:25-9; Rev. 20:11-14). 7. As well as separation from God, hell involves severe punishment. Scripture depicts this punishment in various ways, using both psychological and physical terminology. **Although this terminology is often metaphorical and although we should be wary of inferring more detail about hell than Scripture itself affords, hell is a conscious experience of rejection and torment** (Matt. 8:12, 13:42, 24:51; Luke. 13:28, 16:23). 8. There are degrees of punishment and suffering in hell related to the severity of sins committed on earth. **We should, however, be wary of speculating on how exactly the correlation between sins committed and penalties imposed will operate** (Luke. 10:12, 12:47f.).', Hillborn (ed.), 'The Nature of Hell. A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE).', 2000.

²² 'Robert Peterson **aptly summarized** the work as "an attempt at **damage control**."', Morgan & Peterson, 'Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment', p. 200 (2004).

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Despite traditionalist efforts,²³ the doctrine of hell is dying out.²⁴

²³ '**Semipopular books reaffirming the reality and endlessness of hell began to flow:** Ajith Fernando, *Crucial Questions About Hell* (1991); 13 Eryl Davies, *An Angry God?* (1991); 14 Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News* (1992); 15 William Crockett, John Walvoord, Zachary Hayes and Clark Pinnock, *Four Views on Hell* (1992); 16 David Pawson, *The Road to Hell* (1992); 17 John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (1993); 18 David George Moore, *The Battle for Hell: A Survey and Evaluation of Evangelicals' Growing Attraction to the Doctrine of Annihilationism* (1995); 19 Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (1995). 20 All these books argue more or less elaborately against annihilationism. **The debate continues.**', Packer, 'Evangelical Annihilationism In Review', *Reformation and Revival* (6.2.39), 1997.

²⁴ 'Though the doctrine of hell is one of the tenets of traditional Christian belief, **at present it does not seem to enjoy much popularity among believers.** One rarely hears the doctrine explicitly addressed in a Christian church these days, and if hell is spoken about at all, it is commonly referred to in rather vague and tentative ways. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to claim that **the average Christian believer finds it difficult to explain what function (if any) the doctrine of hell plays in his or her own faith.** Even academic theologians find it **difficult to account for hell** in their talk about God and their exposition of the Christian faith.', van Holten, 'Can the traditional view of hell be defended? An evaluation of some arguments for eternal punishment', *Anglican Theological Review* (2003).

The state of the dead: Modern scholarship

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

The majority of standard scholarly sources today describe the state of the dead in terms identical or very close to the mortalist view.¹

In particular, it is typically held by modern scholarly commentary that the traditional doctrine of the 'immortal soul' has no place in the Hebrew Bible,² and little to no suggestion of any support in the New Testament.

BIBLE COMMENTARIES

- Harper's Bible Dictionary (1985)³

¹ Mortalism is the belief that human beings are not naturally immortal, and that at death they are unconscious rather than continuing to exist consciously as an 'immortal soul'.

² **Twentieth century biblical scholarship largely agrees that the ancient Jews had little explicit notion of a personal afterlife until very late in the Old Testament period.** Immortality of the soul was a **typically Greek philosophical notion quite foreign to the thought of ancient Semitic peoples.** Only the latest stratum of the Old Testament asserts even the resurrection of the body, a view more congenial to Semites.', Donelley, 'Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's doctrine of man and grace', p. 99 (1976); note that this was written over 30 years ago, and the academic consensus has only strengthened on the issue.

³ **For a Hebrew, 'soul' indicated the unity of a human person; Hebrews were living bodies, they did not have bodies.** This Hebrew field of meaning is **breached in the Wisdom of Solomon by explicit introduction of Greek ideas of soul.** A dualism of soul and body is present: 'a

- Eerdmans Bible Dictionary (1987)⁴
- New Bible Dictionary (3rd ed. 1996)⁵

perishable body weighs down the soul' (9:15). This perishable body is opposed by an immortal soul (3:1-3). Such dualism might imply that soul is superior to body. **In the nt, 'soul' retains its basic Hebrew field of meaning.** Soul refers to **one's life:** Herod sought Jesus' soul (Matt. 2:20); one might save a soul or take it (Mark 3:4). Death occurs when God 'requires your soul' (Luke 12:20). 'Soul' may refer to the whole person, the self: 'three thousand souls' were converted in Acts 2:41 (see Acts 3:23). **Although the Greek idea of an immortal soul different in kind from the mortal body is not evident,** 'soul' denotes the existence of a person after death (see Luke 9:25; 12:4; 21:19); yet Greek influence may be found in 1 Peter's remark about 'the salvation of souls' (1:9). A moderate dualism exists in the contrast of spirit with body and even soul, where 'soul' means life that is not yet caught up in grace. See also *Flesh and Spirit; Human Being.*, Neyrey, 'Soul', in Achtemeier, Harper, & Row (eds.), 'Harper's Bible Dictionary', pp. 982-983 (1st ed. 1985).

⁴ 'Indeed, the salvation of the "immortal soul" has sometimes been a commonplace in preaching, **but it is fundamentally unbiblical.** Biblical anthropology is not dualistic but monistic: human being consists in the integrated wholeness of body and soul, and **the Bible never contemplates the disembodied existence of the soul in bliss.**', Myers (ed.), 'The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary', p. 518 (1987).

⁵ 'A particular instance of the Heb. avoidance of dualism is the biblical doctrine of man. Greek thought, and in consequence many Hellenizing Jewish and Christian sages, regarded the body as a prison-house of the soul: *sōma sēma* 'the body is a tomb'. The aim of the sage was to achieve deliverance from all that is bodily and thus liberate the soul. **But to the Bible man is not a soul in a body but a body/soul unity;** so true is this that even in the resurrection, although flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, we shall still have bodies (1 Cor. 15:35ff.).', Cressey, 'Dualism', in Cressey, Wood, & Marshall (eds.), 'New Bible Dictionary', p. 284 (3rd ed. 1996).

- Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling (2nd ed. 1999)⁶
- Encyclopedia of Judaism (2000)⁷
- New Dictionary of Theology (2000)⁸

⁶ 'Modern scholarship has underscored the fact that **Hebrew and Greek concepts of soul were not synonymous.** While the Hebrew thought world distinguished soul from body (as material basis of life), **there was no question of two separate, independent entities.** A person did not have a body **but was an animated body,** a unit of life manifesting itself in fleshly form—a psychophysical organism (Buttrick, 1962). Although Greek concepts of the soul varied widely according to the particular era and philosophical school, Greek thought often presented a view of the soul as a separate entity from body. Until recent decades Christian theology of the soul **has been more reflective of Greek (compartmentalized) than Hebrew (unitive) ideas.**', Moon, 'Soul', in Benner & Hill (eds.), 'Baker encyclopedia of psychology & counseling, p. 1148 (2nd ed. 1999).

⁷ 'Even as we are conscious of the broad and very common biblical usage of the term "soul," **we must be clear that Scripture does not present even a rudimentarily developed theology of the soul.** The creation narrative is clear that all life originates with God. Yet the Hebrew Scripture offers no specific understanding of the origin of individual souls, of when and how they become attached to specific bodies, or of their potential existence, apart from the body, after death. The reason for this is that, as we noted at the beginning, the Hebrew Bible does not present a theory of the soul developed much beyond the simple concept of **a force associated with respiration, hence, a life-force.**', Avery-Peck, 'Soul', in Neusner, et al. (eds.), 'The Encyclopedia of Judaism', p. 1343 (2000).

⁸ 'Gn. 2:7 refers to God forming Adam 'from the dust of the ground' and breathing 'into his nostrils the breath of life', so that man becomes a 'living being'. The word 'being' translates the Hebrew word *nepeš* which, though often translated by the Eng. word 'soul', **ought**

- Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (2000)⁹
- Tyndale Bible Dictionary (2001)¹⁰
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (rev. ed. 2002)^{11 12}

- Encyclopedia of Christianity (2003)¹³
- Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (2005)¹⁴

- Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible (rev. ed. 2009)^{15 16}

not to be interpreted in the sense suggested by Hellenistic thought (see Platonism; Soul, Origin of). It should rather be understood **in its own context within the OT as indicative of men and women as living beings or persons** in relationship to God and other people. The lxx translates this Heb. word *nepeš* with the Gk. word *psychē*, which explains the habit of interpreting this OT concept in the light of Gk. use of *psychē*. **Yet it is surely more appropriate to understand the use of *psychē* (in both the lxx and the NT) in the light of the OT's use of *nepeš*.** According to Gn. 2, any conception of the soul as a separate (and separable) part or division of our being **would seem to be invalid.** Similarly, the popular debate concerning whether human nature is a bipartite or tripartite being **has the appearance of a rather ill-founded and unhelpful irrelevancy.** The human person is a 'soul' by virtue of being a 'body' made alive by the 'breath' (or 'Spirit') of God., Ferguson & Packer (eds.), 'New Dictionary of Theology', pp. 28-29 (electronic ed. 2000).

⁹ 'Far from referring simply to one aspect of a person, "soul" refers to the whole person. Thus, a corpse is referred to as a "dead soul," even though the word is usually translated "dead body" (Lev. 21:11; Num. 6:6). "Soul" can also refer to a person's very life itself 1 Kgs. 19:4; Ezek. 32:10). "Soul" often refers by extension to the whole person.', Carrigan, 'Soul', Freedman, Myers, & Beck (eds.) 'Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible', p. 1245 (2000).

¹⁰ 'There is no suggestion in the OT of the transmigration of the soul as an immaterial, immortal entity. **Man is a unity of body and soul—terms that describe not so much two separate entities in a person as much as one person from different standpoints. Hence, in the description of man's creation in Genesis 2:7, the phrase "a living soul" (kjv) is better translated as "a living being."**', Elwell & Comfort (eds.), 'Tyndale Bible dictionary, p. 1216 (2001).

¹¹ 'It has been noted already that the soul, like the body, derives from God. This implies that man is composed of soul and body, and the Bible makes it plain that this is so. The soul and the body belong together, so that without either the one or the other **there is no true man. Disembodied existence in Sheol is unreal.** Paul does not seek a life outside the body, but wants to be clothed with a new and spiritual body (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5).', Bromiley, 'Psychology', in Bromiley, 'The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia', volume 3, p. 1045 (rev. ed. 2002).

¹² 'Nor is any place left for dualism. **Soul and body are not separate entities** which are able to work in concert by virtue of a preestablished harmony (Leibniz).', *ibid.*, p. 1045.

¹³ 'All Christians believe in immortality, understood as a final resurrection to everlasting life. The majority have held that immortality also includes continuing existence of the soul or person between death and resurrection. **Almost every detail of this general confession and its biblical basis, however, has been disputed.** The debate has been fueled by the development of beliefs about the afterlife within the Bible itself and the variety of language in which they are expressed. The Hebrew Bible **does not present the human soul (*nepes̄*) or spirit (*rūah*) as an immortal substance,** and for the most part it envisions the dead as ghosts in Sheol, the dark, sleepy underworld. Nevertheless it expresses hope beyond death (see Pss. 23 and 49:15) **and eventually asserts physical resurrection** (see Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).', Cooper, 'Immortality', in Fahlbusch & Bromiley (eds.), 'The Encyclopedia of Christianity', volume 2, p. (2003).

¹⁴ 'soul. The idea of a distinction between the soul, the immaterial principle of life and intelligence, and the body is of great antiquity, though only gradually expressed with any precision. **Hebrew thought made little of this distinction, and there is practically no specific teaching on the subject in the Bible beyond an underlying assumption of some form of afterlife** (see immortality).', Cross & Livingstone, (eds.), 'The Oxford

dictionary of the Christian Church', p. 1531 (3rd rev. ed. 2005).

¹⁵ 'The English translation of *nepes̄* by the term "soul" **has too often been misunderstood as teaching a bipartite (soul and body—dichotomy) or tripartite (body, soul, and spirit—trichotomy) anthropology. Equally misleading is the interpretation that too radically separates soul from body as in the Greek view of human nature.** See body; spirit. N. Porteous (in IDB, 4:428) states it well when he says, "**The Hebrew could not conceive of a disembodied *nepes̄*,** though he could use *nepes̄* with or without the adjective 'dead,' for corpse (e.g., Lev. 19:28; Num. 6:6)." Or as R. B. Laurin has suggested, "To the Hebrew, man was not a 'body' and a 'soul,' but rather a 'body-soul,' a unit of vital power" (BDT, 492). In this connection, the most significant text is Gen. 2:7, "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [*nišmat hayyîm*], and the man became a living being [*nepes̄ hayyîd*]" (the KJV rendering "living soul" is misleading).', Lake, 'Soul', in Silva & Tenney (eds.), 'The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible', volume 5, p. 586 (rev. ed. 2009).

¹⁶ 'What is essential to understanding the Hebrew mind is **the recognition that the human being is a unit: body-soul! The soul is not, therefore, unaffected by the experience of death.** OT eschatology does indeed contain seminal elements of hope implying the more positive teaching of the NT, as can be seen in the OT phrase, "rested with his fathers" (1 Ki. 2:10 et al.), in David's confident attitude toward the death of his child (2 Sam. 12:12–23), and in **Job's hope for a resurrection** (Job 19:20–29). **It is this essential soul-body oneness that provides the uniqueness of the biblical concept of the resurrection of the body as distinguished from the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul.**', *ibid.*, p. 587.