

UCLA

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Title

The Shifting Landscape of Hell

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6pg7f1jz>

Journal

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 11(1)

ISSN

0069-6412

Author

Creasy, William C.

Publication Date

1980-10-01

Peer reviewed

THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF HELL

William C. Creasy

. . . when all is done, the hell of hels, the torment of torments is the everlasting absence of God, and the everlasting impossibility of returning to his presence. . . . It is a fearefull thing, to fall into the hands of the living God; but to fall out of the hands of the living God, is a horror beyond our expression, beyond our imagination.¹

These words, spoken in a sermon by John Donne, then Dean of St. Pauls, to the "Earle of Carlile and his Company at Sion (c. 1622)," state the prevailing attitude of the seventeenth century toward the concept of hell. The image so solidly established during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance of Dante's burning fires and eternal, unbearable physical torment had slowly shifted to focus on a hell of isolation and despair. The fires still burned in the Pit, but in the seventeenth century it was primarily spiritual suffering—the *poena damni*—on which eternal damnation rested.

This shift in emphasis is clearly seen if one contrasts early fourteenth-century literary and pictorial works dealing with man's damnation. Juxtapose, for example, the *Inferno* with the works of the Cambridge Platonists, or chapel frescoes and manuscript illuminations with the works of Hieronymous Bosch and Jean Mandyn. In the *Inferno* Dante takes us on a journey to a land of unprecedented horror. As we descend with him and his guide Virgil through the nine circles of hell, we see torture after torture, each gruesomely designed to fit a particular category of sin. The physical punishment in Dante's hell becomes more and more extreme until it culminates in the ice-encased ninth circle in the gnawing jaws of Satan:

He [Satan] wept with six eyes, and the tears beneath
Over three chins with bloody slaver dropt.

At each mouth he was tearing with his teeth

¹ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 5: 266.

A sinner, as is flax by heckle frayed;
Each of the three of them so suffereth. (XXXIV, 53-57.)²

The emphasis here is clearly on a hell of physical torment, although it must be presupposed that the absence of God is the first condition of the damned souls peopling Dante's hell. But very little is mentioned of this condition in hell proper. In fact, Dante treats the absence of God—the spiritual isolation—as a mitigation of his hell. When he and Virgil first pass through the Dark Wood and enter the territory of hell Dante hears:

. . . no sound that the ear could catch of rue,
Save only of sighs, that still as they complain
Make the eternal air tremble anew.

And this rose from the sorrow, unracked by pain,
That was in the great multitude below
Of children and of women and of men.

The good Master to me: "Wouldst thou not know
What spirits are these thou seest and hearest grieve?
I'd have thee learn before thou farther go,

These sinned not: but the merit that they achieve
Helps not, since baptism was not theirs, the gate
Of that faith, which was given thee to believe.

And if ere Christ they came, untimely in date,
They worshipped not with right experience;
And I myself am numbered in their state.

For such defect and for no other offence
We are lost, and only in so far amerced
That without hope we languish in suspense." (IV, 25-42.)³

² Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, trans. Laurence Binyon in *The Portable Dante*, ed. Paolo Milano (New York: The Viking Press, 1947). As this and all *Commedia* quotations are from Binyon's verse translation, hereafter they will be referred to in my text by canto and line numbers only. The Italian is from *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols., in *Le Opere di Dante Alighieri: edizione nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana* (Milano: Mondadori, 1966), vol 2:

Con sei occhi piangëa, e per tre menti
gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.

Da ogni bocca dirompea co' denti
un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,
sì che tre ne faceva così dolenti. (XXXIV, 53-57.)

Standing in limbo, in the land of the unbaptised infants and virtuous pagans, there is no punishment save the exclusion from the positive bliss of God's presence. There is no physical torment as in the lower circles of hell. In limbo the only torment is the knowledge "that without hope we languish in suspense." Aside from the exclusion of God's presence, limbo, in Dante's hell, is a comparatively pleasant place to spend eternity:

Through seven gates entering with those sages, lo!
A meadow of fresh verdure there I found.

On it were people with grave eyes and slow,
And great authority was in their mien.
They spoke seldom, with mild voices and low.

Thus we retired on our side that demesne
Into an open, luminous, high place,
So that they stood where they could all be seen.

There on the green enamel, face to face,
Were shown me the great spirits, so that I
Exalt myself to have enjoyed such grace. (IV, 110-120.)⁴

3 . . . secondo che per ascoltare,
non avea pianto mai che di sospiri
che l'aura eterna facevan tremare;
ciò avvenia di duol senza martiri,
ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,
d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.

Lo buon maestro a me: "Tu non dimandi
che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?

Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,
non basta, perché non ebber battesmo,
ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;

e s' e' furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,
non adorar debitamente a Dio:
e di questi cotai son io medesmo.

Per tai defetti, non per altro rio,
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
che senza speme vivemo in disio." (IV, 25-42.)

4 per sette porte intrai con questi savi:
giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura.

Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
di grande autorità ne' lor sembianti:
parlavan rado, con voci soavi.

It is not until Dante and Virgil leave limbo and descend to the second circle, past Minos, "to the home of pain," that the eternal physical torment of the damned really comes into its own. From this point on the landscape of hell is that of a medieval chamber of horrors.

This aspect of eternal punishment—the *poena sensus*—achieved its greatest expression in Dante and was reinforced by the visual arts during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Such visual reinforcement popularized the concept of hell as a place of physical punishment in a much more direct and powerful manner than any literary or theological writing possibly could, for Dante's brutal world was elaborately pictured in hundreds of stained glass windows, frescoes, and illuminated manuscripts throughout Europe.

Of the many existing examples of such art, perhaps the best is the well-known fresco by Nardo di Cione in the Strozzi Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence. This fourteenth-century work shows in detail each circle of Dante's hell in all its horrifying intensity. In the same tradition are two other fourteenth-century artists, Giovanni Pisano ("The Damned," Pisa, Cathedral, Pulpit) and Francesco Traini ("Hell," Pisa, Camposanto). As Millard Meiss points out, "these masters can sound in stone or in paint a shrill, anguished cry."⁵ In all three works the emphasis is clearly on a hell of brutal physical torture, a nightmare of deformed devils, burning fires, and the wracked and twisted bodies of the damned. Any sense of despair or isolation from God is powerfully overshadowed by the explicit violence. In the Strozzi Chapel fresco Nardo di Cione does portray limbo as a place void of physical punishment, as Dante describes it in the *Inferno*; however, a close examination of the scene gives no indication that the figures portrayed are in any way suffering. Unlike the figures in the lower circles of hell, those in limbo are clothed, adding a sense of dignity to their presence, and are sitting in a rather pleasant garden engaged in conversation. It is implicit that they are among the damned since they are within the gates of hell; but

Traemmoci così da l'un de' canti,
in loco aperto, luminoso e alto,
sì che veder si potien tutti quanti.

Colà diritto, sopra 'l verde smalto,
mi fuor mostrati li spiriti magni,
che del vedere in me stesso m'essalto. (IV, 110-120.)

⁵ Millard Meiss, "The Smiling Pages," in *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, by Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles S. Singleton, 2 vols., Bollingen Series, 81 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 1: 43. All three works, as well as many others supporting my position, are reproduced by Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton. (See figures 17, 18, and 46 for the three works cited in the text.)

the fact that they are damned in such pleasant circumstances, and that their only punishment is "that without hope we languish in suspense," relegates the spiritual isolation—the *poena damni*—to a form of mitigated punishment.

Portraying limbo and, hence, the *poena damni*, in such a way became commonplace in the fourteenth century. This is particularly evident in illuminated manuscripts of the *Commedia*, of which approximately six hundred still exist.⁶ In a Florentine manuscript (c. 1390-1400) the influence of Nardo di Cione is strikingly evident. The illumination for Canto IV is almost a reproduction of limbo in the Strozzi Chapel fresco.⁷ Given the similarities in detail, one may assume that the illuminator was very familiar with the fresco, and perhaps even had sketches of the work.⁸ This similarity holds true in other illuminated manuscripts and frescoes as well, although the degree of similarity with the Strozzi Chapel fresco may not be as striking.

This presentation of limbo as a realm of punishment limited to the *poena damni* becomes especially important if compared to hell's lower circles. In the same Florentine manuscript the illumination for Canto XII of the *Inferno* (the punishment of tyrants) reflects Dante's verse in all its intensity.⁹ The garden of limbo and the pleasant conversation is replaced in this illumination by a pool of crimson blood in which tyrants are immersed at various levels, their depth indicating their degree of guilt. When any figure attempts to raise himself from the pool, centaurs armed with bows and arrows shoot him, returning him to his proper level.

The contrast in punishment is vividly apparent. The damned souls in hell proper are separated from God and feel His absence, but the essence of their punishment is physical torture. They remain not in a state of spiritual despair, but of sheer terror. By juxtaposing the portrayals of limbo with those of the lower circles of hell, the nature of fourteenth-century damnation is evident. The *poena damni* is the mildest form of punishment, reserved for unbaptised infants and virtuous pagans—it is a mitigation of eternal damnation. In hell proper the landscape is one of burning fires and boiling lead, with the tortured screams of the tormented damned echoing through a sulphurous air.

⁶ Peter Brieger, "Pictorial Commentaries to the *Commedia*," in *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 1: 83.

⁷ The manuscript is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS lat. 4776. See *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 2: 73 for a reproduction.

⁸ An interesting discussion of this possibility is presented by both Peter Brieger and Millard Meiss in *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 1: 49-50, 102, 328.

⁹ See *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 2: 158 for a reproduction.

Presenting the landscape of hell and the nature of eternal damnation in the manner of Dante and the various fourteenth-century visual artists was a convention in Europe and, artistically, such presentation reached its peak in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. More than likely, the reason for stressing hell's physical violence was found in biblical writings. Any clergyman who had a mind to could find ample evidence for a Dantesque inferno in Luke 16:22-24:¹⁰

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Or Mark 9:43:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.

This description was further reinforced by the writings of such saints as Augustine:

But they who make no doubt that in that future punishment both body and soul shall suffer, affirm that the body shall be burned with fire, while the soul shall be, as it were, gnawed by the worm of anguish. Though this view is more reasonable—for it is absurd to suppose that either body or soul will escape pain in the future punishment—yet, for my own part, I find it easier to understand both as referring to the body than to suppose that neither does.¹¹

¹⁰ All biblical quotations are from the 1611 King James Version.

¹¹ Saint Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *De civitate dei*, trans. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872; rpt. New York: Random House, 1950), p. 779. The Latin text is in *De civitate dei*, ed. B. Dombart, 2 vols. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1877-1905), 2: 445:

Qui vero poenas et animi corporis in illo supplicio futuras esse non dubitant, igne uri corpus, animum autem rodi quodam modo verne moeroris adfirmant. Quod etsi credibilius dicitur, quia utique absurdum est, ibi dolorem aut corporis aut animi defuturum: ego tamen facilius est ut ad corpus dicam utrumque pertinere, quam neutrum. (XXI, ix, 14-19.)

Artistically applied, such evidence influenced early visionary poetry and apocryphal writings, such as the Apocalypse of Peter, the Vision of Saint Paul, the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, and the Vision of Tundale. Of course, there were those who disagreed that the nature of damnation was physical torment. Both Origen and Scotus Erigena considered the fires of eternal damnation to be metaphorical, to represent a state of spiritual suffering. But their views on hell were outside the theological mainstream.

It was not until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that the landscape of hell and the nature of damnation began to shift to a realm of primarily spiritual isolation, to the *poena damni*. Certainly, Origen and Scotus Erigena had their effect, but they did not cause any serious change in the physical emphasis on hell. The fires went on burning after they were consigned to eternity, and, indeed, grew to a blazing intensity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the additional fuel of Dante and the various masters of cathedral and chapel decoration. The Dantesque landscape of hell was at its peak during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was not to entirely subside for several hundred years.¹² But a shift in emphasis did begin to occur around the end of the fifteenth century. The most striking evidence of this shift is seen in the works of Hieronymus Bosch. Bosch's works veer so dramatically from the standard iconography of hell that they have puzzled critics for four hundred years.¹³ In the "Garden of Earthly Delights" the landscape of hell we previously saw is suddenly

¹² Although a shift in emphasis from the *poena sensus* to the *poena damni* did occur between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the landscape of the Dantesque inferno remained in many instances as a convention in both literary and visual art. Both Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* and Milton in *Paradise Lost* fuse the *poena sensus* and *poena damni* in their visions of hell by having Mephistophilis and Satan lament over their internal suffering while, at the same time, presenting scenes of an inferno. I suspect that the Dantesque hell survived as a convention largely due to its dramatic effect. Even in the twentieth century it occasionally appears, as in the masquerade party in Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, and the most obvious example of its post-Renaissance appearance is in Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, 1741.

¹³ Several attempts have been made at unraveling Bosch's iconography. Among the best works I've seen have been Wilhelm Franger's *The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch: Outlines of a New Interpretation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951); Elena Calas' "D for Deus and Diabolus. The Iconography of Hieronymus Bosch," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 27 (1969): 445-454; and Anna Szychalska-Buczowska's "Material for the Iconography of Hieronymus Bosch's Triptych the Garden of Delights," *Studia Muzealne* 5 (1966): 49-95. Although all approach Bosch's iconography with considerable insight, the "Garden of Earthly Delights," the "Temptation of Saint Anthony," and the "Hay-wain," depart so radically from other artists of the same period that they still remain an enigma.

transformed into a psychological nightmare. The occupants of hell go through a metamorphosis. Traditional demons become strange animals—a pig in nun's habit, rabbits, birds, and butterflies. The explicit physical tortures remain, but are inflicted by the use of musical instruments and highly symbolic machinery. The infernal ferryman, Charon, becomes a creature with a broken eggshell body, rotted tree trunk legs, a mournful human face, and a head-piece composed of a disk and bagpipe (Plate 1). Even Satan himself is transformed. The triple-headed, ice-encased Lucifer of Dante becomes a bird devouring and eliminating the damned (Plate 2). The sudden change in landscape is astonishing. Though critics have not agreed upon an interpretation of the work, it is certain that the highly symbolic and elusive iconography of the "Garden of Earthly Delights" has gone one step beyond a physical chamber of horrors and entered the chamber of the mind.

This interpretation is supported by a comparison of Bosch to his like-minded contemporaries. In Jean Mandyn's "Temptation of Saint Anthony" (Plate 3) a main element of the work is a hell mouth, but unlike the traditional hell mouth (the mouth of a beast), Mandyn's representation takes the form of a human head, the top erupting, and a knife slashing the left ear. The knife slashing the ears is the same motif used as a central element in the hell panel of Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights," but in Bosch it is an instrument of torture, a great engine rumbling across the floor of hell, slashing and crushing the damned souls. In Bosch, the motif may be elusive; however, Mandyn's adaptation of the motif to a human head, the top erupting, obviously infers the psychological nature of hell.

But this shift in emphasis seen in Bosch and Mandyn cannot really be viewed as the beginning of any well-defined movement toward a psychological hell. These works appear as if from nowhere and just as suddenly disappear. Bosch and Mandyn had little effect on the men or ideas of their time. They were largely regarded as amusing or bizarre.¹⁴

The most important evidence of a shift in the concept of hell occurs with the publication of John Calvin's *Christianae religionis institutio*. Unlike the brief appearance of Hieronymus Bosch and Jean Mandyn, the works of John Calvin, particularly the *Institutes*, had a profound effect on the changing landscape of hell. In Book III of the *Institutes* Calvin states:

¹⁴ Ernst H. Gombrich, "The Earliest Description of Bosch's Garden of Delights," *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 405. The description to which Gombrich refers is in the travel diary of Antonio de Beatis who accompanied Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona on a journey through Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Italy in 1517-1518.

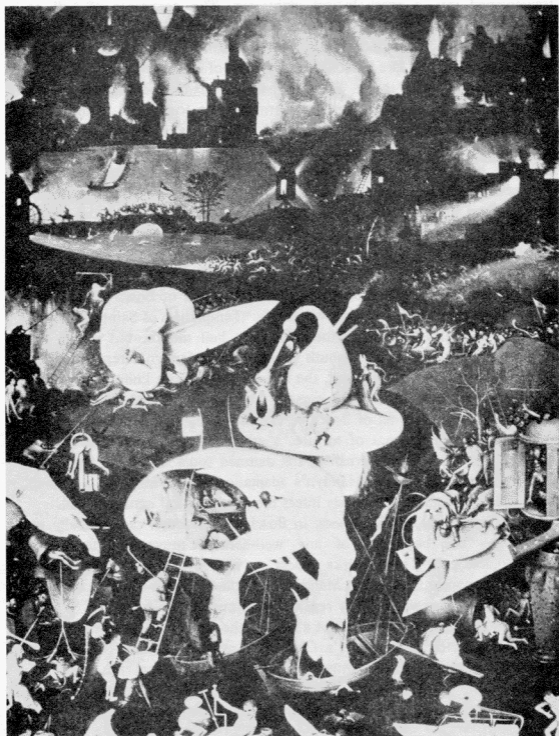


Plate 1: *The Garden of Delights*, Hieronymus Bosch (detail of right panel of triptych). Prado Museum. Madrid.

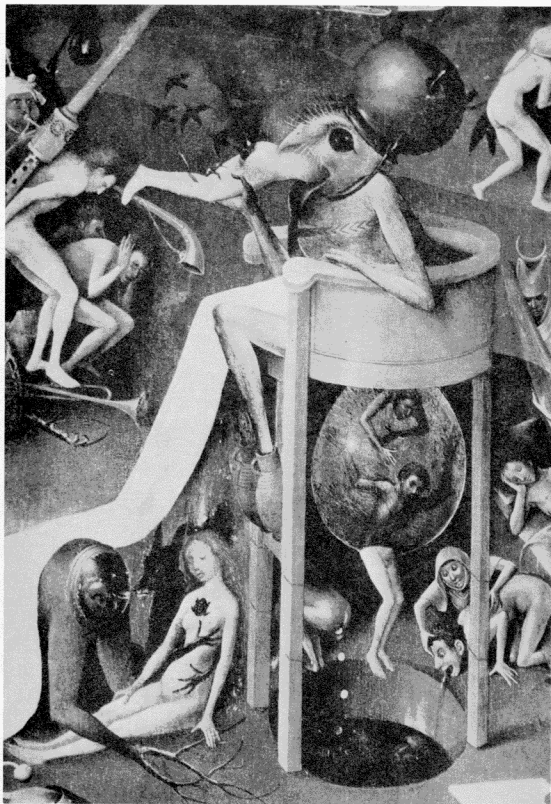


Plate 2: *The Garden of Delights*, Hieronymus Bosch (detail of right panel of triptych). Prado Museum. Madrid.

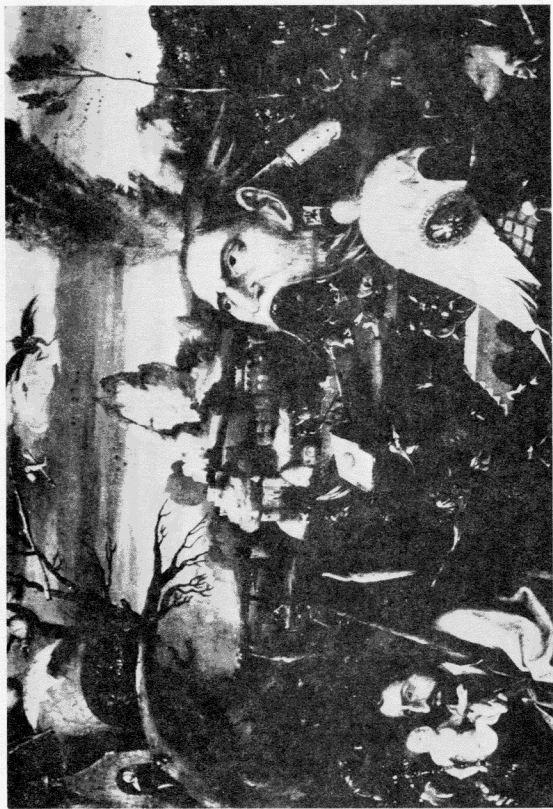


Plate 3: *Temptation of St. Anthony*, Jean Mandyn. Collection University of Liège.

Now, because no description can deal adequately with the gravity of God's vengence against the wicked, their torments and tortures are figuratively expressed to us by physical things, that is, by darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth [Matt. 8:12; 22:13], unquenchable fire [Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43; Isa. 66:24], an undying worm gnawing at the heart [Isa. 66:24]. By such expressions the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread: as when he speaks of "a deep Gehenna prepared from eternity, fed with fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it" [Isa. 30:33]. As by such details we should be enabled in some degree to conceive the lot of the wicked, so we ought especially to fix our thoughts upon this: How wretched it is to be cut off from all fellowship with God. And not that only but so to feel his sovereign power against you that you cannot escape being pressed by it. For first, his displeasure is like a raging fire, devouring and engulfing everything it touches. (III, xxv, 12.)¹⁵

¹⁵ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 21 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2: 1007. The 1536 edition of *Christianae religionis institutio* has little to say about the nature of hell. The 1539-1559 editions, however, fully state Calvin's position. A critical edition of the 1536 edition, the 1539-1554 editions, and the 1559 edition is included as volumes 1 and 2 of *Ioannis Calvini: opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss, *Corpus Reformatorum* (Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetschke and Son, 1863; rpt., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1964). I quote below from volume 2, the 1559 edition:

Porro quia divinae in reprobos ultionis gravitatem nulla descriptio aequare potest, per res corporeas eorum tormenta et cruciatus nobis figurantur: nempe per tenebras, fletum et stridorem dentium, ignem inextinguibilem, vermem sine fine cor arrodentem (Matth. 8, 12 et 22, 13; ibid. 3, 12; Marc. 9, 43; Is. 66, 24 et 30, 33). Talibus enim loquendi modis certum est spiritum sanctum voluisse sensus omnes horrore conturbare; ut quum dicitur praeparatam esse ab aeterno gehennam profundam, nutrimenta eius esse ignem et ligna multa, flatum Domini, ceu torrentem sulphuris, eam succendere. Quibus ut nos adiuvari oportet ad concipiendam utcunque impiorum miseram sortem, ita nos in eo potissimum defigere cogitationem oportet, quam sit calamitosum alienari ab omni Dei societate. Neque id modo: sed maiestatem Dei ita sentire tibi adversam, ut effugere nequeas quin ab ipsa urgearis. Nam primum eius indignatio instar ignis est violentissimi, cuius tactu omnia devorentur et absorbeantur. (III, xxv, 12.)

It was not the first time the torments of hell were expressed in simile ("the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone"), nor the first time a theologian specifically stated that the "torments and tortures are figuratively expressed to us by physical things." Both Origen and Scotus Erigena said basically the same. But it was the first time such ideas were incorporated into a major ecclesiastical and political movement.¹⁶

That Calvin's ideas were not lightly dismissed, but had a major influence on the concept of hell, is evident in the literature that followed him. The example which immediately comes to mind is Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe does present the physical landscape of hell in Act V:

Now, Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare
 Into that vast perpetual torture-house.
 There are the furies, tossing damnèd souls
 On burning forks; their bodies boil in lead:
 There are live quarters broiling on the coals,
 That ne'er can die: this ever-burning chair
 Is for o'er-tortured souls to rest them in:
 These that are fed with sops of flaming fire,
 Were gluttons and loved only delicates
 And laughed to see the poor starve at their gates.
 But yet all these are nothing; thou shalt see
 Ten thousand tortures that more horrid be. (V, ii, 114-
 125.)¹⁷

But this presentation, in the context of the play, is largely for dramatic effect. The primary hell of *Doctor Faustus* is succinctly defined at the play's beginning when Faustus, curious as to how Mephistophilis has suddenly appeared in his study, asks, "How comes it then that thou art out of hell?" And Mephistophilis replies in an anguished moment of revealing honesty:

Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.
 Thinkst thou that I, who saw the face of God
 And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells

¹⁶ Michael Walzer in *The Revolution of the Saints: a Study of the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965; rpt., New York: Atheneum, 1972) presents an excellent discussion on Calvin and the Puritan movement. His thesis is that the movement was primarily political, which accounts for its practical success as well as the enormous influence of Calvin's writings.

¹⁷ Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950; rpt. Leicester: J. West Watts Newton and Co, 1963), p.10.

In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
 O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
 Which strike a terror to my fainting soul. (I, iii, 75-81.)

These lines reflect precisely what Calvin was stating in the *Institutes*: hell is the absence of God, the *poena damni*. Neither Calvin nor Marlowe deny the existence of a physical hell. Calvin, though seeing hell as spiritual isolation, deals with a physical hell several times in the *Institutes*, particularly in I, xiv, 19, when he proves the existence of devils, not as metaphor, but as actualities, and Marlowe uses a physical hell with great dramatic effect in *Doctor Faustus*. In the sixteenth century we are not witnessing a change in concept, but a change in emphasis within the concept.

To clarify this point, consider again Dante's use of the *poena damni* as a mitigation of hell which applies to the souls of unbaptised infants and virtuous pagans in limbo. Their rather pleasant existence is contrasted sharply with the souls in hell proper who are subjected to excruciating physical torture. In Marlowe, however, Mephistophilis himself appears in Faustus's study and later travels about the world partaking of all the sensual delights which Faustus enjoys; yet, Mephistophilis is "tormented with ten thousand hells in being deprived of everlasting bliss." Dante's Satan is encased in ice and curses God; Marlowe's wanders the earth and suffers remorse. Between Dante and Marlowe hell has radically changed.

And this change is not seen only in the literary and visual arts. The psychological hell also became emphasized in theology, much to the chagrin of many theologians of the latter half of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth. Largely due to the influence of Calvin, theologians began emphasizing the *poena damni* in their sermons:

About HELL, consider,

I. The *Paine of losse*. Privation of GODs glorious presence, and eternall separation from those everlasting joyes, felicities and blisse above, is the more horrible part of hell, as Divines affirme. There are two parts (say they) of hellish torments; I. *Paine of losse*; and 2. *Paine of sense*: but a sensible and serious contemplation of that inestimable and unrecoverable losse, doth incomparably more afflict an understanding soule indeed, than all those punishments, tortures, and extremest sufferings of sense. It is the constant and concurrent judgement of the antient Fathers, that the torments and miseries of many hels, come farre short, are nothing, to the kingdome of heaven, and unhappy

banishment from the beatificall vision of the most soveraigne, only, & chiefest Good, the thrice-glorious *Iehovah*. . . . The farre greatest, and (indeed) most unconceivable grieffe would be, to be severed for ever from the highest and supreme Good.¹⁸

This exposition on the nature of hell was presented by Robert Bolton, who was considered Oxford's "brightest ornament" in 1639, and was, more or less, a summary statement of the Protestant point of view.¹⁹ And it was not only the Protestants who began emphasizing the *poena damni*, but the Catholics as well. Numerous parallel accounts were given by such theologians as Cardinal Bellarmine, Jean Pierre Camus, and Robert Southwell.²⁰

That the traditional view of hell, the view that emphasized the *poena sensus*, was being challenged, created a situation at the turn of the sixteenth century in which theological debate flourished. There were dozens of sermons stressing Calvin's position that the punishments of hell were primarily metaphorical, and there were as many sermons supporting the Dantesque concept. Both sides of the debate drew strong evidence from biblical quotation (e.g.; II Thes. 1:9, the damned "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," or Matt. 3:12, ". . . the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire"). And proponents on both sides of the debate presented their own conclusive statements with a marvelous, understated eloquence, as did Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester: "They that go thither shall find it no metaphore."²¹

We may do well at this point to remind ourselves that if we look hard enough we will find men in all ages who support every conceivable theological position, and that simply identifying those positions does not necessarily indicate any important element in the thought of an age. We found this to be true with Hieronymus Bosch and Jean Mandyn whose contemporaries saw them as merely amusing and not even important

¹⁸ Robert Bolton, *Of the Foure Last Things*, 4th ed. (London, 1639), pp. 95-96, 97, 99, 103.

¹⁹ C. A. Patrides, "Renaissance and Modern Views of Hell," *Harvard Theological Review* 57 (1964): 220. In this article Patrides quotes Bolton at length, as well as several other theologians of the period, and presents detailed documentation on primary material relating to the Renaissance view of hell.

²⁰ Patrides, p. 221 n. 12. Catholic views on the *poena damni* are specifically presented in Cardinal Bellarmine's *De geminiv colymbae, sive de bono lactymarum, libri tres* (Antwerp, 1617); Jean Pierre Camus' *A Drought of Eternity*, trans. Miles Carr (Douai, 1632); and Robert Southwell's *A Foure-fould Meditation of the Foure Last Things* (London, 1601).

²¹ *The Effect of Certain Sermons* (London, 1599), p. 52.

enough to condemn. But the evidence for an inordinate concern to define the nature of hell, and a change in that definition from the medieval position, is rather overwhelming. The nature of hell was not a peripheral issue, but a major theological, and via the pulpit, popular concern, particularly in the seventeenth century.

The supporters of the old, Dantesque concept of hell such as Bishop Bilson based their defense of the *poena sensus* primarily on the strong evidence of scripture; the references are explicit in their sermons. Implicit in their sermons, however, is a far more significant argument, seldom voiced, but strongly felt. As early as Origen, who in *De principiis* proposed a scheme of eventual universal salvation (and was condemned as heretical for his efforts), is a fear that if such a scheme became popular it would lead to moral anarchy. It is for this reason that, when discussing hell in his earlier *Contra celsum*, he does not go beyond the simple statement that hell is a place of punishment, for,

to ascend beyond this is not expedient, for the sake of those who are with difficulty restrained, even by fear of eternal punishment, from plunging into any degree of wickedness, and into the flood of evils which result from sin.²²

“To ascend beyond this is not expedient,” is the implicit key to one major argument against the *poena damni*. The seventeenth-century theologians saw, as did Dante, that the *poena damni* could be interpreted as a mitigation of eternal torment. It was one thing to agree among themselves that the absence of God may well be the worst possible form of damnation, but to give the masses such a doctrine would be morally and socially disastrous. And they were correct. What the seventeenth century feared, the eighteenth century experienced, as William Dodwell points out in a sermon preached before the University of Oxford on Sunday, May 21, 1741:

It is but too visible, that since men have learnt to wear off the Apprehension of Eternal Punishment, the Progress of

²² *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie, 2 vols., Ante-Nicene Christian Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895), 2: 364. The Greek text is from *Origenes Werke*, ed. Paul Keatschou, 11 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinricks'sche Buchhandlung, 1899), 2: 96:

εἰς γὰρ τὰ ὑπέρεκεινα αὐτῆς οὐ χρήσιμον ἀναβαίνω διὰ τοὺς μόνις φόβῳ τῆς αἰωνίου κολασέως κἄν συστέλλοντας ἐπὶ ποσὸν τῆς κακίας καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ αὐτῆς ἀμαρτομένων χύσιω.

Impiety and Immorality among us has been very considerable. . . . Unusual crimes have appeared; Uncommon heights of Wickedness have been attained . . .²³

It was to the advantage of the social order that the *poena sensus* remain the primary nature of hell. Though a private, esoteric doctrine of damnation could circulate among a few intellectuals within the confines of Oxford, to release such a doctrine to the public was irresponsible and dangerous.

In addition to this implicit, pragmatic concern, the *poena damni* faced serious theological difficulties. A literal reading of scripture suggests that retributive and eternal punishment is *inflicted* by God on the damned. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:25-26 makes this clear:

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

But can God *inflict* the *poena damni*? In the sense that He is responsible for not giving irresistible grace to the damned, the answer is yes; but in the sense of performing any positive retributive act, no. As D. P. Walker notes, this is a real distinction.²⁴ It points not only to the nature of damnation, but to the nature of God. If God's part in the punishment of the damned is purely negative, that is, if He performs no acts of retribution, He is a far more merciful and loving God than the medieval God of Dante's *Inferno*. Too, it indicates that God doesn't damn anyone, any more than a professor fails a recalcitrant student. The damned soul damns himself, as the failed student fails himself by not fulfilling the requirements of the course. God no more *inflicts* the *poena damni* than a professor inflicts the sense of remorse a student feels when he receives his "F" in the mail. But at this point another problem enters the argument. If we suppose the *poena damni* is the nature of eternal punishment, we must presuppose that the damned will, in fact, feel a sense of loss, that they will feel "unconceivable grieffe" at their "unhappy banishment from the beatificall vision." The failing student may well feel relief at his eventual expulsion from school. But even if we grant that the damned will feel remorse, will feel the gnawing worm

²³ *The Eternity of future Punishment asserted and vindicated. In answer to Mr. Whiston's late Treatise on that Subject. In Two Sermons . . .* (Oxford, 1743), p. 85.

²⁴ *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 63.

of anguish, we find ourselves in an even more difficult position, for if the damned feel remorse, it means they are at least attrite and therefore on the way to repentance and eventual salvation. The separation from God's presence, if it is to produce pain, leads to the self-contradictory conclusion that the damned are in a state of grace, since they would not suffer from God's absence unless they loved Him. The only way out of this self-contradiction is either to admit that our thoughts on the *poena damni* and the nature of hell are wrong, or to concede that the damned are in a state of grace, and that eventually they will receive salvation. This latter conclusion was reached by Origen in the third century, and by the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth century.

Using Plato, and Christianizing him through Origen, the Cambridge Platonists²⁵ addressed the question of damnation and concluded by incorporating both the *poena damni* and universal salvation as major elements in their theology. Accepting as axiomatic the Johannine affirmation that "God is Love" (I John 4:8) and the Platonic theory of Forms interpreted through Origen to be thoughts in the Divine Mind, the Cambridge Platonists constructed a theology which inverted the orthodox Protestantism of Calvin, Luther, and their various followers in the seventeenth century. Discarding the principle of Divine Justice so central to Protestantism, the Cambridge Platonists stressed Divine Love as the sole attribute and very essence of God. Peter Sterry makes this explicit in an observation which begins by alluding to Phaedrus' speech in praise of Love in the *Symposium* of Plato:

The *Divinity* and *Poetry* of the *Heathen* from their most ancient, most sacred mysteries, teach us, that *Love* is the *Eldest* and *Youngest* of all the *gods*. Our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, is the God of *Love* in the truest, the sweetest and the best sense. He alone is Love it self, in an abstracted eternal Divine *Essence* and *Substance*, pure

²⁵ C. A. Patrides in *The Cambridge Platonists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) includes only Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth among the Cambridge Platonists. He admits, however, that others were closely associated with the group but cannot be included because of fundamental differences concerning free will and the relationship between reason and faith. I have included Peter Sterry in the group, however, since his emphasis on the all-encompassing God of Love is consistent with the other Cambridge Platonists. This concept of God seems to me the most fundamental belief of Cambridge Platonism, and on this point Sterry and the group proper are in complete agreement. Vivian de Sola Pinto concurs with my decision in his study, *Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934; rpt. Greenwood Press, 1968).

Love altogether unmixed, having nothing in it self different, or divers from it self; thus is an *infinite Love*, a sweet and clear *Sea*, which swalloweth up all bounds, all shore and bottoms, into it self. This *Love*, as it is every way the same, is the *ancient of Dayes*, the *eldest of all the Gods*. Thus is this most high and holy *Love*, the *God of Gods*, the *First* and the *Last*, containing all things within its own blissful bosome, as the bound of all, but being it self every way beyond all bounds, without all bounds, *infinite*.²⁶

This God of overwhelming, infinite Love created the world not "to let the World see how *Magnificent* he was,"

No, it is his own *Internal Glory* that he most loves, and the Communication thereof which he seeks: as Plato sometimes speaks of the Divine love, it arises not out of *Indigency*, as created love does, but out of *Fulness* and Redundancy; it is an overflowing fountain, and that love which descends upon created Being is a free Efflux from the Almighty Source of love: and it is well pleasing to him that those Creatures which he hath made should partake of it.²⁷

This relationship between an all-loving God and man is fundamental to Cambridge Platonism, as it was to "the ancient and wisest philosophers . . . the Greek especially"²⁸ and to Origen.²⁹ The love of God, by its very nature, envelops man and draws him to it. The fact that the fall occurred does not negate this love, it only makes it more difficult for man to understand: he sees it as through a glass, darkly, and not face to face.

This theology of the Cambridge Platonists affected nearly every aspect of traditional Protestant belief. C. A. Patrides observes that "theology was altered so dramatically that we might even claim that in Cambridge Platonism we have 'the highest expression of Christian theology in England.' 'Enthusiasm' was curbed. Protestant scholasticism was discarded.

²⁶ *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (London, 1675), p. 41. The Cambridge Platonists still await the hands of a competent editor. The scarce texts are most readily available in C. A. Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists* and as excerpts in biographies of the major Cambridge Platonists. The above quotation is from Vivian de Sola Pinto's *Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan*, p. 147.

²⁷ John Smith, "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion," from *Select Discourses*, ed. John Worthington (Cambridge, 1673), [Discourse IX, pp. 377-451]; reprinted in C. A. Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 169.

²⁸ Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 6.

²⁹ See Origen's *De principiis* (III, vi, 5).

The progress of Calvinism was arrested."³⁰ And Basil Willey goes on to assert that the Cambridge Platonists "illustrate . . . the tendency of advanced Protestant thought, after passing through its dogmatic post-Reformation phase, to reveal once again its original rationalizing temper, and to fall thus into line with the general movement of the century."³¹ The influence of Cambridge Platonism can be seen in the works of "Barrow and Boyle, Tillotson and Locke, Ray and Shaftesbury, Leibniz and Newton, Berkeley and even Kant."³² In addition, it had an immediate impact on the Commonwealth government, since Cromwell's chaplains were associated with the movement.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Cambridge Platonism in seventeenth-century England. It took a God of Justice and replaced Him with a God of absolute Love; and it asserted that it "is not the best & truest knowledge of God which is wrought out by the labour and sweat of the Brain, but that which is kindled within us by an heavenly warmth in our Hearts."³³ It took Protestant scholasticism and replaced it with something very close to mysticism.³⁴

This system of thought centered in the Cambridge Platonists which brought Protestantism "into line with the general movement of the century" produced considerable difficulties when applied to the place and state of the damned. How could an all-loving God sentence even one of His creatures to an eternity of punishment? The question poses problems, the answers to which were extremely difficult for those outside Cambridge Platonism to accept. To begin with, *inflicted* eternal punishment by God was a logical contradiction: it would be against the very nature of an all-loving God to sentence one of His creatures to eternal torture, without reprieve. Second, such a sentence would serve no purpose in a universe begun, operated, and cared for by Divine Love, unless we are brought to the absurd position of saying that the happiness of the blessed consists in

³⁰ Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 40.

³¹ *The Seventeenth-Century Background* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935; rpt. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. 141.

³² Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 39 n. 3.

³³ John Smith, "The True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge," from *Select Discourses*, ed. John Worthington (Cambridge, 1673), [Discourse I, pp. 1-21]; reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 129.

³⁴ It would be misleading to imply that the mysticism of the Cambridge Platonists was like that of such mystics as St. Theresa or St. John of the Cross. The Cambridge Platonists were always carefully controlled by what Benjamin Whichcote called "the Reason of Things" ("Reason" in the old sense of both *intellectus* and *ratio*). Their mysticism was more akin to that of the *Theologia Germanica*.

contemplating the torments of the damned.³⁵ And third, if God's sole desire is to communicate His overflowing Love to all His creatures, He would be less than all-powerful if He was unable to reach the damned. A universe governed by such a God would be horror:

What shall we then make the God of the whole World? Nothing but a cruell and dreadfull *Erynnis*, with *curled fiery Snakes* about his head, and *Firebrands* in his hands, thus governing the World? Surely this will make us either secretly to think, that there is no God at all in the World, if he must needs be such, or else to wish heartily, there was none.³⁶

No. The Johannine God of Love, the God of the Cambridge Platonists, must, by His very nature, provide a means of salvation for all His creatures. As Cudworth states:

Gods *Power* displaid in the World, is nothing but his Goodnesse strongly reaching all things, from heighth to depth, from the highest Heaven, to the lowest Hell. . . . Is God powerfull to kill and to destroy, to damne and to torment, and is he not powerfull to save? Nay, it is the sweetest Flower in all the Garland of His Attributes, it is the richest Diamond in his Crown of Glory, that he is *Mighty to save*: and this is farre more magnificent for him, then to be stiled *Mighty to destroy*.³⁷

By accepting a God of absolute, all-encompassing Love, the Cambridge Platonists were brought to the position of universal salvation, the position originally enunciated by Origen in *De principiis*, and condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, and by St. Augustine in *De civitate dei*.³⁸

³⁵ A position which was reached by St. Augustine (*De civitate dei*, XXI) and St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q. 94, art. i). There is also scriptural evidence for it: "he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10); and since the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 could see Lazarus, it is reasonable to suppose that Lazarus could see the rich man.

³⁶ Ralph Cudworth, "A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, at Westminster, March 31, 1647" (Cambridge, 1647); reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 107.

³⁷ Cudworth, "A Sermon . . .," reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, pp. 106-107.

³⁸ Bk. XXI.

But universal salvation did not mean immediate salvation. In the scheme of Cambridge Platonism there is a place for hell, but the suffering there is regarded as curative, not penal; and the nature of that suffering is the *poena damni*. Benjamin Whichcote, in his "Moral and Religious Aphorisms," makes this very clear:

Both *Heaven* and *Hell* have their Foundations within Us. *Heaven* primarily lies in a refined Temper; in an internal Reconciliation to the Nature of God, and to the Rule of Righteousness. The Guilt of Conscience, and Enmity to Righteousness, is the *inward* state of *Hell*. The Guilt of Conscience is the *Fewel of Hell*.³⁹

This lack of a "Reconciliation to the Nature of God," or separation from God, is the natural consequence of sin, not the consequence of the nature of man, "for *Evil* is unnatural, and *Good* is connatural, to Man."⁴⁰ Thus, since the good is natural to man, he will be drawn toward it, for "there is a natural Propension in every thing, to *return* to its true state; if by violence it has been disturbed."⁴¹ In the view of the Cambridge Platonists, the entire course of cosmic history is a long process of the gradual elimination of evil from the world, not by destruction, but by an irresistible infusion of Divine Love, to a state where God is, as St. Paul said, "all in all."⁴² The damned then, those souls who have separated themselves from God, will gradually be drawn into Him. The process will necessarily be painful, since the damned will realize their condition of sin more and more fully as they are infused by Grace. The position is entirely consistent with Origen who believed that in the end God's patient love will succeed in making all his creatures weary of their unfaithfulness. The most stubborn will eventually give in and consent to love him. It is the *poena damni* in its purest form.

The Cambridge Platonists thus eliminated the internal contradictions of the *poena damni* pointed out earlier which were so evident in both Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism. But they did so at what the traditionalists considered a high price: they redefined the very nature of God, and they granted Grace and salvation to the damned. In addition, what was the most unpalatable inference of all, they granted salvation to Satan. If God's power "is nothing but his Goodness strongly reaching all

³⁹ As revised by Samuel Salter (1753) from the edition by John Jeffery (1703) and reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 327.

⁴⁰ Whichcote, "Religious and Moral Aphorisms," reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 326.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² I Corinthians 15:28.

things, from heighth to depth, from the highest Heaven, to the lowest Hell,"⁴³ if God is to become "all in all," Satan must be included. Origen realized this in the *De principiis*, and it was the primary reason he was condemned:

The last enemy moreover, who is called death, is said on this account to be destroyed, that there may not be anything left of a mournful kind when death does not exist, nor anything that is adverse when there is no enemy. The destruction of the last enemy, indeed, is to be understood, not as if its substance, which was formed by God, is to perish, but because its mind and hostile will, which came not from God, but from itself, are to be destroyed. Its destruction, therefore, will not be its non-existence, but its ceasing to be an enemy, and [to be] death.⁴⁴

In the early Church the reaction was as strong as in the seventeenth

⁴³ Cudworth, "A Sermon . . .," reprinted in Patrides' *The Cambridge Platonists*, pp. 106-107.

⁴⁴ *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie, 2 vols., Ante-Nicene Christian Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895), 1: 268. Dr. Paul Keatschou's reconstructed Latin text of *De principiis* supersedes all previous texts and remains the standard critical edition. I quote from *Origenes Werke*, ed. Paul Keatschou, 11 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinricks'sche Bauchhandlung, 1899), 5: 286:

Propterea namque etiam novissimus inimicus, qui mors appellatur, destrui dicitur, ut neque ultra triste sit aliquid, ubi mors non est, neque diversum sit, ubi non est inimicus. Destruui sane novissimus inimicus ita intellegendus est, non ut substantia eius quae a deo facta est pereat, sed ut propositum et voluntas inimica, quae non a deo sed ab ipso processit, intereat. Destruetur ergo, non ut non sit, sed ut inimicus et mors non sit. (III, vi, 5.)

In *Liber de adulteratione librorum Origenis* (see Migne, *P.G.*, 17: 615), a small pamphlet Rufinus attached to his translation of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, Rufinus claims to translate a letter from Origen which deals solely with Satan's salvation. In the letter, Origen claims he never suggested such a thing; only a madman would have done so. The idea, according to Rufinus' translation, is part of a forged work published under Origen's name which contains numerous heretical statements. We might question the letter's authenticity, however, as well as Rufinus' motives. Jerome also had a copy of the letter and points out that Rufinus translates only the second part; Jerome translates part one (see *Apol.* II. chs. 18, 19), which shows Rufinus has not fairly presented the letter. In any case, Origen was clearly forced by the logic of his thought to propose the theoretical possibility of Satan's salvation: when God is "all in all," there is no place for Satan as such. When we read *De principiis* we should bear in mind that we are reading speculative, not dogmatic, theology.

century. C. A. Patrides points out that the Emperor Justinian I was shocked by such a notion, and that he convened the Second Council of Constantinople to condemn it; St. Jerome, though appreciative of Origen's greatness as a thinker, was "highly irritated" when it came to the matter of Satan's redemption; and St. Augustine did not handle Origen gently for his statement.⁴⁵

It was not the structure of the argument itself that the early church fathers objected to, or the evidence used to support it—the biblical antecedents were numerous;⁴⁶ rather, it was an emotional reaction against the very idea that Satan could once again become "Lucifer, son of the morning."⁴⁷ What they refused to acknowledge was that the issue was not whether Satan should, or could, be saved, but whether Divine Love could in any way be limited. If one accepts *a priori* a God of all-encompassing Love, universal salvation, including Satan's, must necessarily follow. But the emotional issue was simply too difficult. Anathemas twelve through fifteen of the Second Council of Constantinople roundly condemned Origen and any others who held that the heavenly powers, all men, the devil, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness are unchangeably united to the Word of God. In the seventeenth century the attitude was the same. Sir John Hayward makes the categorical statement that "the Angels that did sinne, shall never be blessed,"⁴⁸ and Richard Montagu elaborates:

Before the creating of man upon the earth, millions of Angels, created in glory, and subsisting with God in place of blisse, abandoned that first and originall state, which they did then enjoy, and might with their Maker have enjoyed for ever. This act of Apostasie, and aversion from God, instantly ensued their first creation, it was *irrecoverable*, and their sin *impardonable*; *God sware unto them in his wrath, they should never more returne unto his rest.* For that one act of

⁴⁵ "The Salvation of Satan," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (1967): 467-478. Patrides' discussion tracing the idea of Satan's redemption from St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) to Nikos Kazantzakis (in *Saint Francis*, 1962) is excellent, and provides the basis for my discussion. Though he deals specifically with the redemption of Satan, his thoughts on the subject apply as well to the idea of universal salvation espoused by the Cambridge Platonists.

⁴⁶ Among the biblical supports for the salvation of Satan, or as it is technically termed "apocatastasis," are Acts 3:21 ("the times of restitution of all things"), the previously mentioned I Corinthians 15:28 ("And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."), and I John 4:8 ("God is Love").

⁴⁷ Isaiah 14:12.

⁴⁸ *David Teares* (London, 1623), p. 94.

rebellion and disobedience, God threw them everlastingly out of heaven: They are . . . irremediably detained in chaines of outward darkness, unto the judgment of that great day.⁴⁹

Even John Donne maintains that "when the Angels were made, and when they fell, we dispute; but when they shall return, falls not into question."⁵⁰ The very fact that seventeenth-century theologians found it necessary to strongly denounce universal salvation indicates the extent to which the concept had spread. Patrides notes that exponents of universal salvation were so numerous "that the doctrine was seen as a grave threat to orthodox Protestantism."⁵¹

It is obvious that the landscape of hell had changed dramatically from that illustrated in Dante's *Inferno*, and it is equally obvious that what precisely was the landscape of hell was a point for considerable debate. One would have difficulty finding a seventeenth-century theologian, Protestant or Catholic, who would support a thirteenth-century inferno as the sole nature of eternal damnation; but one would have greater difficulty finding a consensus on what the nature of damnation was. On the one hand were the Cambridge Platonists who, seeing a God of absolute, all-encompassing Love, defined damnation as a state which was remedial in nature, and would lead to a final resolution of universal salvation in which God is "all in all." This final resolution, however, must include Satan and his crew of rebellious angels. On the other hand were the orthodox Protestants who, seeing a God of Justice, defined damnation through a rather legalistic theory of the Atonement. Their God was a loving God, but loving only *after* full payment for man's transgressions had been rigorously exacted. Damnation was thus punitive and eternal, and consisted of both physical and spiritual torment. Of course, there were any number of positions between these two extremes which were regularly voiced in theological tracts and from the pulpit. What we should keep in mind, however, is that the debate over the nature of hell was not a scholastic disagreement over

⁴⁹ *The Acts and Monuments of the Church* (London, 1642), p. 7.

⁵⁰ *Sermons*, 5: 86. The above quotations by Hayward, Montagu, and Donne are also given by Patrides in "The Salvation of Satan." In addition (p. 473 n. 25), he provides an extensive list of both Catholic and Protestant works expressing the same opinion.

⁵¹ "The Salvation of Satan," p. 474.

an esoteric subject, for the answer defined not only the nature of damnation, but by implication, the nature of God.

William C. Creasy received his B.A. degree *summa cum laude* and his M.A. from Arizona State University. He is presently completing a Ph.D. in English and M.B.A. in marketing and computer information systems at UCLA, while teaching as a Visiting Lecturer at the UCLA Writing Programs. His dissertation is a study of Thomas à Kempis and the *Imitatio Christi*.