Hades, Hell and Purgatory in Ante-Nicene Christianity

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1. Introduction

The records of Christianity which survive from its first three centuries can be the foundations for any of three predictions about the fate of evildoers after death. The first is that the soul or spirit or consciousness will be totally destroyed. The second is that their non-material part will be punished eternally. The third is that its scourging will not continue forever but only until it is purified from its earthly sins. The second and third concepts agree that their fate will be very unpleasant, but differ about the length of time the punishment will last, the purpose of such punishment, and whether all sinners will be treated equally. The evidence indicates that the third view is the one which was most widely held in the early Church.

There can be little argument that ante-Nicene Christian teaching held that unrepentant wrongdoers will be penalized after death, with the punishment usually including fire. John the Baptist prophesied that the Messiah would burn the wicked 'with unquenchable fire'.[1] In Matthew 5:22 Christ threatens hell-fire on those who humiliate others. I Peter 3:7 predicts that the ungodly will be destroyed by fire, as do Jude 7 and Revelation 14:10. Additional references are given below.

2. Annihilation: A Minority View

This approach regards the flames in the afterlife, as mentioned at various points in the Scripture, as a *destroying fire*.

Isaiah 66:15 warns that an angry God will descend on earth with flames of fire and the sword, but does not mention *post-mortem* punishment. According to this passage, the worst fate is death *simpliciter*, with no ongoing pain.

In describing the state of the lapsed after death, Jesus in Matthew 10:28 said only that the soul and body will be destroyed in hell; he did not state that they will be tortured there. Second Thessalonians 1:9 foretells only 'the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord', not eternal anguish. Hebrews 10:27 refers to a fire 'which will consume the adversaries' of Christianity, not torture them forever. First Corinthians 15:55 assures that Christ destroyed both death and its sting, which can mean either that malefactors go free or that their fate will not be as wretched as otherwise.

The *Odes of Solomon*, a Christian document of the mid-second century AD, similarly teaches that death has been destroyed and Hades has been abolished.[2]

Arnobius of Sicca lived near what is now the border of Algeria and Tunisia and was a strong opponent of Christianity. Suddenly converted by a dream, he applied for admission into the church. To prove his sincerity and knowledge of the faith, the local bishop required him to compose and submit a treatise or *apologia* for Christianity. The result was *Adversus Nationes*, also called *Adversus Gentes*. The consensus among scholars is that Arnobius wrote it sometime between AD 304 and 311.

According to Arnobius, the fate of the wicked after death is to be burned to annihilation.[3] The fires of the afterworld destroy; they do not purge sins nor torment eternally. While he recognized that hell-fire itself is unquenchable and perpetual, he stated that the pain they inflict is not. The body-soul combination is burned to nothing. Annihilation is the real punishment and the true death of the wrongdoer.

3. Unending punishment

This interpretation regards the flames in the afterlife, referred to at various points in Scripture, as a *punishing fire*.

Although it was the most widely-accepted view from Mediaeval times until the middle of the twentieth century, there is surprisingly little support for it in ante-Nicene Christianity. While it is true that Matthew 13:42, 13:50 and 25:41 hold forth the prospect of sinners weeping, wailing and gnashing their teeth in eternal fire, these verses do not state how long this torment will last or whether it will be identical in severity for all evildoers. As for duration, in warning of the fate of the selfish and uncharitable at Matthew 25:46, Christ contrasted 'eternal punishment' with 'eternal life': consciousness does not persist in final punishment.

Mark 9:44, 46 and 48 warn that in hell the gnawing worms will not die nor the painful fire be quenched, but it is doubtful whether these verses are more than a figure of speech. The plainly-worded commands in the accompanying verses cannot possibly be taken literally: they instruct disciples to amputate their hands, feet and eyes to avoid being sentenced to the worms and flames. That Jesus was talking metaphorically is demonstrated not only by the certainty of infection and blood loss and probability of death; if early Christians had applied Mark 9:43 to 47 literally, we should expect to find some ancient comment on such a conspicuous and remarkable practice. On the contrary, one of the reasons why the bishop of Alexandria defrocked Origen and banished him from Egypt in the AD 230s was that he had castrated himself. If the counsel to amputate cannot be taken literally, neither can the description of hell. This conclusion is fortified by observing that Matthew 5:29 repeats the injunction but deletes the references to eternal torment.

Luke 16:23 to 26 gives a glimpse of the afterlife. The righteous Lazarus

lives in comfort in Abraham's bosom. Within earshot and sight of him, the cruelly selfish Dives is tormented in flames on the other side of an unbridgeable chasm so wide that Lazarus cannot give him water. This situation may resemble heaven and hell as popularly conceived—except that there is no allegation that these conditions will last forever. Nor can Luke 16 be a complete description, for it mentions only one person in hell and only two in heaven.

The infernal horrors are graphically depicted in the Revelation of John: fire, brimstone and torture night and day.[4] Revelation 20:10 adds 'forever and ever'. According to Chapter 19, this hell is not as well-populated as is commonly conceived: despite the mention of human idolators in 19:20, the only persons imprisoned there are the Beast of Revelation and the false prophet.[5] On the other hand, verse 15 prophesies that anyone whose name 'was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire' but this is only after 'death and hell delivered up the dead'—an indication that Hades is not a place of final abode nor a state from which an inmate cannot be liberated. However, Revelation 21:8 predicts that Hades will contain an immense population, perhaps the whole human race, for it includes 'the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted . . . murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars'. Although this verse indicates that the number of inhabitants is enormous, it begs the question whether they forever lose consciousness (die) upon entry or how long they will be tormented.

Belief in never-ending punishment is evidenced in five Christian works written soon after the New Testament. *The Book of Thomas the Contender* was composed in the first half of the third century and discovered as part of the Nag Hammadi expeditions. It warns that one penalty for the wicked is to be thrown into the abyss and tortured, and discloses that the imprisonment and torment will be forever.[6]

Although Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* threatens 'an eternity of endless fire',[7] such a prospect is out of keeping with his later writings on the afterlife.[8] *Ad Nationes* can be reconciled with the others when we consider that they were directed to a Christian readership while *Ad Nationes* was addressed to pagans in order to convert them. Tertullian therefore summarized and abridged Christian beliefs instead of writing so fully and precisely that the book would have become unduly long and so profuse in detail that readers would not have read it through. In an introductory book on Christianity, it was enough to inform heathens that there would be punishment after death; fullness of teaching was necessary only after conversion.

De laude martyrii[9] was written during the persecution and mass apostasy of AD 249 to 251. Chapter 8 specifically mentions eternal chastisement, although Chapter 20 seems to infer that this penalty is only for apostasy.[10] The Christian additions to the *Sibylline Oracles* do predict fire for the lawless for endless ages and burning through all eternity but

their patchwork nature makes it difficult to ascertain the precise date of a passage before the seventh century.

Lactantius was an oratory student of Arnobius of Sicca, mentioned above in connexion with annihilation. He became a teacher and moved to Nicodemia[11] in Bithynia, near Nicaea. He became a Christian and wrote at about the same dates as his former teacher but there is no evidence that the events in the religious life of one affected that of the other.

Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones* occasionally touches on the state of the dead.[12] Both righteous and wicked Christians will initially be confined to a common place. A Christian's bad deeds will be weighed against his good ones. The righteous will soon be released. For those whose sins exceed their merits, there will be an eternity of *post-mortem* suffering in flames which never abate and never consume. Nonchristians will share the fate of backslidden Christians.

4. Graded and limited chastening

This approach regards the flames in the afterlife, as mentioned at various points in the Scriptures, as a *purifying fire*, like that for metals, not a destroying fire or one burning for the sole sake of punishment. The concept that chastisement of malefactors after death is in proportion to the extent of their sinfulness was the genesis of the later doctrine of purgatory in the Roman Catholic Church.

The distinctive principle of a temporary, graduated punishment after death is that the purpose of such chastisement is to purge sin from a soul and thus purify it for eventual entry into heaven. This principle of divine operation is hinted at in Ezekiel 22:18 and stated more clearly in Malachi 3:3: 'He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver'. In addition to this principle is the concept that evildoers must make reparation or satisfaction for their earthly sins. In early Christian times a commonly-used proof-text for this was Matthew 5:25f.:

> lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

It may seem strange to late twentieth-century Protestants to link this passage with the afterlife, but Hades is the theme of all the earliest known exegeses of Matthew 5:25f.

As distinct from the other two views on life after death, a major premise of belief in purgatory is that God is not vindictive or vengeful or inclined to bear grudges forever. As a loving father, he inflicts punishment only in order to correct and redirect his children; therefore, chastisement after death is no more severe and no longer in duration than is necessary to reform the individual sinner. Hence we read at Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* 7:16:

> For there are partial corrections, which are called chastisements. . . . But as children are chastised by their teacher, or their father, so are we by Providence. But God does not punish, for punishment is retaliation for evil. He chastises, however, for good to those who are chastised, collectively and individually.

and at *Stromata* 6:6:

> since God's punishments are saving and disciplinary, leading to conversion, and choosing rather the repentance than the death of the sinner; and especially since souls, although darkened by passions, when released from their bodies, are able to perceive more clearly, because of their being no longer obstructed by the paltry flesh.[13]

This Clement was a Greek whose spiritual quest took him round the eastern Mediterranean before he settled in Egypt and became a Christian. In the AD 190s he was president of the world's foremost Christian seminary and most outstanding of Christian scholars. All his writings date from this period.

In *Excerpta ex Theodoto*[14] Clement maintained that after death the souls of evildoers will be 'purged by fire', that is to say, made better, not destroyed or tormented for the sake of retribution or torment *simpliciter*.

Tertullian was a lawyer from Carthage in what is now Tunisia. His endeavours as a Christian author began toward the end of Clement's period of activity and continued for two decades after it. In his *Treatise on the Soul* Tertullian described Hades, which to him was the afterworld of everyone except Christian martyrs. To him, Hades was a temporary holding facility for administering compensatory discipline for earthly sins before the final judgment. He interpreted 'the last penny' of Matthew 5:26 to mean that even the smallest offence must be expiated in purgatory. He believed that the comparatively righteous would receive much less unpleasant treatment there than the wicked.

Tertullian interpreted the Parable of Dives and Lazarus[16] in *Five Books against Marcion*,[17] by describing Abraham's bosom as 'not in heaven, yet higher than hell, and appointed to afford an interval of rest to the souls of the righteous until the consummation of all things shall complete the resurrection'; in other words, the less unpleasant part of Hades is also a place of chastisement, although much milder in severity, which will last until the Second Advent. He further maintained that God had constructed a kind of purgatory in ascending steps for the various degrees of unpleasantness.

Written in Syria in the first or second century, the *Acts of Thomas*[18] contains features which are contrary to the teachings of other ancient Christian authors on other aspects of the faith. This difference makes it an even more valuable witness because it helps disclose what beliefs were held in common by rival denominations in ancient Christianity. *Acts* 6:55 and 57 depict a descent to the underworld. Souls undergoing various

penances are said to be tortured and punished for only 'a certain number of days', after which other souls replace them. At *Acts* 6:57:

> This is the prison of the souls which thou seest for when they shall complete their punishment for those things which each one has done, afterwards again other succeed them . . .

In other words, for an individual sinner Hades lasts only as long as necessary.

Early in the second century an unknown Christian reworked previous material to produce a book of short sayings for guidance in Christian ethics. Called *The Sentences of Sextus*,[19] it became widely popular and was even quoted by Origen. Of relevance to our topic is Saying 39: 'After he is released from his body, the evil person will be called to account by an evil demon until the last penny is paid up.'—an obvious allusion to Matthew 5:25f.

For many years in the early decades of the third century, Hippolytus was bishop or pastor of Portus at the mouth of the Tiber. In this position he led the opposition against the misdeeds of some of the bishops of Rome. He was martyred in AD 235 or 236. Because Hippolytus was a thorough-going traditionalist, always insisting on the preservation of the older faith and practices, the Christianity he describes is more ancient than his historical period would suggest. According to his *Against Plato on the Cause of the Universe*, until the Last Judgment all the dead go to Hades, both the very wicked and those guilty of only a few minor sins, but the facilities are comparatively pleasanter for the righteous while the more sinful are chastised more severely, but even they only temporarily and only in proportion to their sins on earth.

Origen[20] was a native Egyptian who in AD 202 replaced Clement as head of the seminary in Alexandria. Origen later conducted his own theological school at Caesarea in Palestine. From this centre he preached numerous series of sermons in nearby congregations. He preached on most of the books of the Bible, going from the first verse to the last in a process that took dozens of sermons for a single book. Between AD 233 and 249 he preached thus on Leviticus, Numbers, Jeremiah and Luke, making occasional references to Christian beliefs about punishment after death.

The homilies on Leviticus, Numbers and Jeremiah teach that the intensity and duration of the pain in the afterlife will be proportional to the degree and nature of the sins committed.[21] In his sermons on Luke he explained that Hades is not a place of punishment for the sake of retribution but a place for correction, with only enough pain administered to correct the person's evil.[22] At the beginning of his homilies on Jeremiah,[23] Origen taught that *post-mortem* chastisement is essentially medicinal and curative, designed to rehabilitate even the worst offenders so that everyone may eventually, although belatedly, enter heaven. Indeed, Origen believed that, because nobody is perfect, even saints and apostles will spend a short time in purgatory.[24] On the other hand, Christians who had sinned after

baptism will receive twice the penalty as pagans for the same type of misdeed.[25] However, in *Homilies on Jeremiah*[26] Origen doubted the eventual salvation of the most hardened sinners and he worried that they would be condemned to permanent punishment.

Among the passages Origen considered in *Homilies 35:10f.* and *14 on Luke* to be warrants for belief in purgatory were Matthew 5:26f., Matthew 18:24f. and Luke 12:58f. The first mentioned is the passage which warns: 'You will never get out till you have paid the last penny.'

Strangely, Origen's exegesis of Luke 16:19 to 31 is not in his sermons on Luke but in those on Leviticus.[27] There he used it as an illustration of the principle that whoever suffers sufficient affliction in this life for his sins will not be chastened in the hereafter. Conversely, whoever has not suffered on earth for his (post-baptismal?) sin will certainly be chastened in the afterlife, as witness the use of Luke 16:25 as a proof-text:

> But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.'

This treatment of Luke 16:25 may sound strange to twentieth-century Christians, who are accustomed to find the main point of the passage in the following verse, but the main lesson of the Parable is recompense for sin rather than the geography of Hades.

Origen taught in *Contra Celsum*[28] that somewhere in the universe God maintains a 'training school of virtue' for purifying apostate Christians 'like gold in the fire' after their deaths so that they can recover their spiritual status and eventually enter paradise.

A few years after Origen, Dionysius the Great, bishop of Alexandria, alluded to common Christian beliefs in his brief *Letter to Conan*.[29] Dionysius referred to some Christians who when nearing death sought ecclesiastical absolution because they believed that by being released from their sins in this world they 'will gain relief and lightening' of them in the next. Such a course of action is consistent only with the view that the future chastisement will not be equal for all wayward believers.

In addition to his earlier and more famous *Ecclesiastical History*, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine wrote an *apologia* for Christianity titled *The Preparation for the Gospel* sometime between AD 317 and 325. In it, he compared and demonstrated the superiority of Christian teaching to Greek mythology and philosophy. In drawing parallels between Plato's *Dialogue on the Soul* and Judeo-Christian beliefs on the state of the dead, he appears to have regarded Plato's fourfold division of Hades as also taught in the Hebrew Scriptures.[30] As in the majority of other ante-Nicene Christian writers, all the departed go to a common holding facility. Eusebius opined that the first category consists of the very holy, who are released immediately and ascend to a place where they will never again suffer pain. The second category embraces the moderately

righteous, who will dwell in the painful fires of the underworld until their sufferings purify them from their sins. Their chastisements will be proportionate to their sinfulness. Next are the more reprehensible wrongdoers, being repentant sinners whose faults are very grave but yet capable of correction. These evildoers are kept in the fires of the underworld until freed through the supplications and intercessions of their victims. Fourth and last are the incorrigible who committed the most serious sins. For them, the flames are forever. Citing Plato, Eusebius represents two basic concepts: an everlasting punishing fire for a few and purifying chastisement of most malefactors in proportion to the extent of their sinfulness and unwillingness to repent.

5. *The Revelation of Peter*

Originating in Egypt around AD 135, the *Revelation of Peter* is full and explicit on the duration and kinds of *post-mortem* punishment for the wicked. In vivid detail, hell is divided into several compartments, one for each genus of sin, and the various types of torments are explicitly described. Sinners are punished according to category of offence.[31] Unlike other ante-Nicene Christian works which affirmed that afflictions will be proportionate to wrongdoing, this apocalypse warns that the agony will last forever, without remission.[32] In this regard, the *Revelation of Peter* stands apart as a mixture of two views.

6. Analyses

Adherents of the three schools cannot be distinguished geographically as if division among annihilation, eternal retribution and limited-term correction were merely local traditions. Syrian Christian writings contain all three beliefs: *Odes of Solomon* versus *Thomas the Contender* versus *Acts of Thomas*. In the Aegean basin, the letters of Paul tend toward a destroying fire while Lactantius and, less clearly, the Revelation of John, teach that the fires will punish forever. In the west, Arnobius believed in annihilation, the author of *De laude martyrii* in unlimited punishment, and Hippolytus in purgatory. Tertullian contradicted himself, with his dominant position probably being limited-term correction.[33]

There is a problem in separating Egyptian from Palestinian sources in that Origen was active in both regions. His formative and earlier mature years were in Alexandria but our knowledge of his position on the afterlife comes from sermons preached in the land of Israel. The sermons are more determinative of the issue, and classify him more correctly as Palestinian. Unlike written material, homilies are necessarily public and thus open to reaction from the local clergy and other members of his congregations. Series of homilies are susceptible to correction and modification in response to criticism by the local audience. By contrast, books can go unread and thus not attract the reaction of others, especially in Origen's time, when books could be reproduced only in single copies and were extremely expensive.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, was an admirer of Origen and inclined toward the belief that sinning Christians would be in Hades only until they were purged. If we consider these two churchmen as representative of Christianity in the Holy Land, they stand against the gospels of Matthew and Mark, which lent limited support to two schools.

An Alexandrian in his Christian nurture, Clement also believed in a corrective purgatory. If Origen and Eusebius also be considered indicative of Egyptian instead of Palestinian Christian thought, Egypt could be considered as unanimous in espousing proportionate short-term chastisement but such concurrency founders, as far as duration is concerned, on the early and significant exception of the *Revelation of Peter.*

The difference as to duration between this apocalypse and Clement of Alexandria is puzzling, if not inexplicable. Clement must have been familiar with its contents, for he quoted Chapter 5 at §§41 and 48f. of his *Eclogae propheticae*, even introducing the first excerpt with 'The Scripture says'.

Nor can one concept of the afterlife be said to predate the others or to have been introduced later into Christian thought. In the first century and earlier, annihilation is represented in Isaiah, Matthew 10, 1 Corinthians, 2 Thessalonians and the letter to the Hebrews. The *Odes of Solomon* in the second century and Arnobius in the third also subscribed to this view. Equal, unending punishment is deducible from Matthew 13 and 25, Mark, Luke and the Revelation of John in the first century. The closest equivalents of this view in the second century are the *Revelation of Peter*, which depicted unequal tortures allotted according to sins, and Tertullian, who reversed himself a few years later. Third-century adherents were the authors of *De laude martyrii*, *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, and *The Sibylline Oracles*. Lactantius endorsed this school in the fourth century prior to the Council of Nicaea. Graded, limited-term chastisement is found in Ezekiel, Malachi and Matthew 5. It was subscribed to in the second century by Clement of Alexandria, *The Sentences of Sextus*, and *Acts of Thomas*. It was taught in the third century by Tertullian, Hippolytus and Origen. A fourth-century advocate before Nicaea was Eusebius of Caesarea.

7. Conclusion

As discussed in section 3 above entitled 'Unending punishment', all ante-Nicene references to an eternal, equal hell are ambiguous except for *Thomas the Contender*, Lactantius, and *De laude martyrii*. Even the last mentioned may prescribe endless suffering only for the sin of apostasy. Against these stand Matthew 5, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, *The Acts of Thomas*, *The Sentences of Sextus*, Origen, Dionysius the Great and Eusebius. The least painful fate (annihilation) is endorsed by Matthew, Paul, the *Odes of Solomon* and Arnobius. The last mentioned was a neophyte who cannot be expected to have been as conversant with Christian teaching as the others. The division is thus eight for a kind of purgatory

and three each for the two views on either flank. *The Revelation of Peter* lends support to the majority and one minority school.

If one genre of religious literature represents more accurately contemporaneous Christian thought than other forms of expression, series of homilies preached to the same or neighbouring congregations rank highest due to their openness to reaction and consequent rectification. Works enjoying widespread and long circulation, such as those in the New Testament, are to be preferred to books of more limited access. Apocalyptic and poetic literature is least reliable because of its symbolism and other obscurity of expression. A purely Christian consideration is that the extant writings of bishops are to be given more weight than those by laypeople because the church regarded the clergy as the bearers of the apostolic tradition and the teachers of orthodoxy. In this last regard, the bishops Hippolytus in Italy, Dionysius in Egypt and Eusebius in the Holy Land, along with the presbyters Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage and Origen in Palestine place purgatory in a more tenable position than the other two above mentioned schools. The aforesaid literary indicators reinforce this conclusion.

From the preponderance of the evidence it appears that most early Christians regarded Hades as a temporary penitentiary in which the dead are chastened in order to purge sins that they had committed on earth. They apparently affirmed that chastisement varies in length of time and intensity to the misdeeds and attitude of the particular individual. Conversion and baptism on earth wipe the slate clean and the erring Christian will be chastised only for his post-baptismal sins.

In contrast to an eternal hell where all evildoers suffer equally and forever, such an afterlife counterbalances my dismal conclusion in the 1991 volume of *Churchman* that the original gospel provided no forgiveness in this life for sins committed after baptism, at least not for the most serious misdeeds.[34] It also accounts for why early Christians punished themselves for their post-baptismal sins and why church-supervised repentance was accompanied by arduous and humiliating disciplines,[35] such as afflicting the body with sackcloth and ashes. In accordance with their doctrine of the afterlife, they hoped that their suffering here would shorten the time and severity of purgation. The lack or incompleteness of earthly remission of post-baptismal sin is thus not as final or as cruel as if there were no opportunity for redemption after death or as if the pain of hell were equal regardless of degrees of fault.

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NOTES

1 At Matt. 3:12; parallel with Luke 3:17. All Scripture quotations in this article are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946, 1952 and 1971 by the

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2 At 15:9.
3 At 2:14.
4 At 14:11, 19:20, 20:10 and 20:14f.
5 At 19:13.
6 Codex 2 tractate 7 p. 143.
7 Written *circa* AD 197. Translated by Dr. Holmes at vol. 3 pp. [109]–147 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* American reprint, ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885 to 1896; continuously reprinted: Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark). This collection is hereinafter cited as '*ANF*'.
8 *Cf.* the summaries of Tertullian's relevant works under '4. Graded and limited chastening' on page 72 below.
9 = *On the Glory of Martyrdom.*
10 *Cf.* Heb. 6:4 to 6.
11 Modern Izmit in northwestern Turkey.
12 At Bk. 1 *cap.* 1; Bk. 2 *cap.* 13; Bk. 7 *capp.* 19 to 21 and Bk. 7 *cap.* 26.
13 Translated by W. Wilson, *ANF* vol. 2 pp. 299–567.
14 *Cap.* 14. Translated by Robert Pierce Casey (London: Christophers, 1934) Series: Studies and Documents, vol. 1.
15 *Cap.* 58.
16 Luke 16:19 to 31.
17 Bk. 4 *cap.* 34. Translated by Dr. Holmes, *ANF* vol. 3 pp. [271]–474.
18 Translated by Alexander Walker, *ANF*, vol. 8 pp. 535–52.
19 Translated by Richard A. Edwards and Robert A. Wild (Chico, Calif.: Scholar's Press, 1981) Series: Texts and Translations 22; Early Christian Literature Series 5.
20 Born *circa* AD 185; died *circa* 253.
21 See especially *Homilies on Numbers 8.*
22 *Cap.* 35.
23 *Homilies on Jeremiah* 1.5.
24 *Homilies on Leviticus* 7.2.8.
25 *Homilies on Jeremiah* 16.7.
26 At 19.15.
27 At 14.4.4.
28 Bk. 6 *cap.* 44. Written *circa* AD 249. Translated by Frederick Crombie, *ANF* vol. 4 pp. 395–669.
29 Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe at p. 60 of *Saint Dionysius of Alexandria: Letters and Treatises* (London: S.P.C.K.; New York: Macmillan, 1918) Series: Translations of Christian Literature. Series I—Greek texts.
30 At Bk. 11 *cap.* 38.
31 *Capp.* 6, 7 and 13.
32 *Capp.* 3, 6 and 11.
33 Bk. 1 Nos. 3 *capp.* 5 to 7 of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Rome, first half of 2nd century AD) is often considered to portray purgatory or to be evidence that Christians of the period believed in graded limited-term corrective chastisements for Christians in the afterlife. It is not discussed in this article because its scenes and teaching could apply equally to the living as to the dead. Throughout this article I designedly employ only unambiguous statements from ante-Nicene sources.
34 'The Forgiveness of Post-Baptismal Sin in Ancient Christianity', *Churchman* Vol. 105, 1991, pp. 332–49.
35 *E.g. I Clement* 48 (Rome, *circa* AD 95), Tertullian *De Poenitentia* 9 and 11, Gaius (= Hippolytus?) *Against Artemon* (Rome, between AD 198 and 217), and Origen *Homilies on Leviticus* 2.4.