

*“Tactile Ecstasy and Torment in the Christian Hereafter”*

Who among us imagined there existed so many texts about the existence and conditions of heaven and hell?

Why is God imagined as a king?

Who was Ignatius? Where and when did he live and die? What do his seven letters concern? Please read the excerpt in the middle of page 256: what do we learn about Ignatius here? When will his salvation come?

In Eusebius, we read about Polycarp: who was he? Where and when did he live and die? What marks his martyrdom? What is so wonderful about torment followed by death?

According to Polycarp, what happens to sinners upon their deaths?

How does Marcus Aurelius regard these martyrs?

What conditions in the Roman Empire led Christians to long for torture and death as martyrs? What was the Crisis of the Third Century? (Note that this crisis just precedes the Council of Nicaea in 325.)

Could one be a Christian and yet miss heaven? What happens to the proud Christians who praise themselves for good deeds? Why?

What do we learn about the genre itself and the beliefs written in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*?

Describe the angels tormenting the damned in the latter. Why a third heaven?

What torment awaits bad theologians?

How do salamanders, peacocks, and mountains prove for Augustine that everlasting torment of the body is real?

What do you make of the logic of Augustine’s statement about eternal punishment: Is a robbery or a murder punished only for the length of time that it took to commit it? Eternal punishment comes for sins against an eternal God” (p. 267).

*“Who Will Inherit the Blessings? Purgatory, Reincarnation, and Salvation for All”*

What kinds of problems arise with the delay of the parousia?

How do those who died before Jesus’s crucifixion pay for their sins? Can they win any rewards for goodness?

When did purgatory become official? Why? How does the notion of purgatory influence our ideas about intercessory prayer? In what three ways might a Christian help another through purgatory?

Who were Thecla, Tryphaena, and Falconilla? What does their story tell us about the afterlife?

What do Perpetua’s two dreams persuade her about the afterlife for her brother and herself?

What is the “hard scrub,” and for whom is that reserved? To what end?

How does purgatory operate? How does it allow the righteous to pay for every last sin? How does it allow for grades of reward and punishment?

Will everyone be saved? If we accept universal salvation, where does that leave free will? Is our only purpose, from our creation, the proper contemplation of God?

Why did Christ harrow hell? When and how did the notion of suffering change from “punishment” to “purification”?

What is *apocatastasis*? Do we trust that Origen is right about it?

In the Western tradition, where do we find the principle of reincarnation? What is the main purpose of reincarnation in our tradition? What is the Great Chain of Being? How does it figure into both reincarnation and *apocatastasis*?

*“Afterword”*

What does Ehrman think about the existence of heaven and hell? About reward and torment after death? What does Ehrman think death is like?

*“Notes”*

Reading Ehrman’s chapter notes allows us to see the variety of sources he used in this book, including several of his own works. Please read note 2 for chapter 9—notice he distinguishes his own “academic” book from more popular works.

