

the utmost extent of all persecution from the enemies of his name—shall never be able to suppress his doctrine and extinguish his religion. Furthermore, when it is declared in the book of Revelations, in the prophecy concerning the end of the world, that “death and *hell* delivered up the dead which were in them;” and that after the judgment, “death and *hell* were cast into the lake of fire”—it is evident that the word *hell* here cannot signify the state of future punishment. The “lake of fire” is itself that state of punishment commonly expressed by the term *hell*: to confound the words, therefore, and to say that *hell* (employing the words in the same sense) was cast into *hell*, would involve an absurdity.* The term as there used plainly denotes the state of the dead or of departed souls in general.

From the sense of the word *hell* in the passages above cited, we therefore infer, that the meaning of the passage, *Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell*, is this, “Thou wilt not suffer me to continue in the state of the dead; but wilt certainly raise me up again, at thy appointed time:”† we are, by no means, to conclude that our Lord, by “descending into *hell*,” as our Creed expresses it, even entered into the place appointed for the final punishment of the wicked. Conformable with this opinion is the language which he himself made use of to the thief on the Cross, *to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*—a word of similar import with the *Abraham’s bosom* in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The latter, as is evident from the tenor of that parable, was the receptacle of the good after death, and the abode of happy spirits—and between this and the place of torment, although both are designated by the general term Hades often translated *Hell*, it is represented that *there was a great gulph fixed*—an impassable barrier, sufficient at least to shew that there was a great distinction between them.‡

When, therefore, it is said that our Saviour *descended into hell* it is perfectly consistent to believe that he entered into a state of happiness, because the word *hell* is evidently employed to denote that as well as a state of misery; and indeed the expression of our Saviour to the thief on the Cross renders it incumbent upon us to regard the term, as used in our Creed, in the former sense. There

* Vid. Matt. xi. 23. xvi. 18. and Rev. xx. 13, 14.

† Vid. Dr. S. Clark on Christ’s Descent into Hell.

‡ The heathen seem to have entertained similar ideas regarding what they termed the “infernal regions.” In that receptacle of the dead or rather of departed souls they seem to have allotted distinct regions for the good and bad respectively, whilst the entrance to both, as appears from Virgil’s *Æneid*, was a common one. After their descent into the general abodes of the Manes this was the Sibyl’s direction.

“Hæc iter *Elysium* nobis: at læva malorum
Exeriet pœnas, et ad impia *Tartara* mittit.”—Tom. vi. 541.