

## *Resurrection to Punishment?*

The Fate of the Unrighteous in Early Christianity and in "New Testament Theology"

According to many early Jewish and Christian texts, the awaited resurrection of the dead is not just a happy event. On the contrary, for many (most?) people it will mean shame and punishment, perhaps even eternal torment. The paper deals with this topic from two perspectives. First, it discusses various views on the fate of the unbelievers or the unrighteous (annihilation, temporal torment, eternal torment, reincarnation, universal salvation), observing the increasing significance ascribed to the notion of hell in the Jesus movement and casting a quick glance on the tremendous influence of this notion in later church history. Secondly, a survey of the treatment of the topic in modern "New Testament Theologies" shows that it is largely avoided or explained away in these works. I take this to reflect a problematic (apologetic) feature of the genre "New Testament Theology" as opposed to a synthesis of early Christian thought from a history-of-religions point of view (such as Howard Teeple's *How Did Christianity Really Begin?* [Religion and Ethics Institute, 1992] or my own *The Rise of Christian Beliefs* [Fortress, 2009]). Taking this particular example as its starting point, the paper provides a short comparison of the two approaches.

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