FOR THOSE DOWNLOADING FROM THE INTERNET

This was written for a Facebook friend who asked me what I thought about an advert for a book. I looked at it, and I was horrified to find that the author is a con man. I began to write him back, and then I decided I'd better give the whole kit and caboodle so he could see exactly why John Lilley is a con man.

Like other files I have put and will put in this Dropbox folder, I will eventually make a decent, edited booklet out of this. Until then, you are welcome to download this and even make copies of it. It's written by Paul Pavao.

Hades & Gehenna

This is written in response to an advertisement for a book by John Lilley claiming that the early Christians did not believe in hell (advert found at http://johnlilley.org/articles/2015/6/11/the-early-christians-did-not-believe-in-hell). I am going to show you that Mr. Lilley is a con artist, taking a couple things that are true and turning them into a doctrine that is not true. Those who are aware of the poor use of the word "hell" by translators of the New Testament, especially in the King James version, can't be taken in by Mr. Lilley. Those unaware may be taken captive by him because he takes a truth known to anyone well-studied in Scripture and transforms it into a secret and mystery, much like political conspiracy theorists do.

The average Christian is poorly informed about what the Scriptures say about "hell." He won't become more informed by listening to Mr. Lilley.

There are three words translated hell in the New Testament, one of them only used once.

1. Hades: The Greek word Hades is used 11 times in the New Testament. In the KJV it is translated "hell" ten times and "grave" one time.
2. Gehenna: The Greek word "Gehenna" comes from the valley of Hinnom, that was used as a garbage dump by the citizens of Jerusalem. It is used 12 times in the New Testament, and the KJV always translates it as hell.
3. Tartarus: The Greek word "Tataroo" is used only once in the New Testament, and the KJV translates it as hell. It is a part of the Greek idea of Hades. It is the place of the wicked dead in Greek mythology. In 2 Peter it is the place where the wicked angels from the time of Noah's flood are kept.

Hades does not really fit our definition of hell. All the dead are said to go there. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol. You may or may not know this, but the Old Testament writings don't reveal eternal life. We read that men like Enoch and Elijah were caught up to heaven, but there are no promises under the Old Covenant that humans will live forever. Obedience in the Old Covenant is rewarded with earthly blessings.
It is the Gospels that reveal eternal life and the fact that Jesus came to give it to those who believe in him. As far as the Scriptures go, he is the first to reveal everlasting life or punishment after death.

**Hades**

Hades, then is nothing but the equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol. It can be translated "grave" because it is the undefined abode of the dead. In Acts 2, Peter tells us that Jesus went to Hades and was not left there. In Matthew 16 we are told that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the church.

The best picture we get of Hades is in the story of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar in Luke 16. The rich man is in Hades, and he looks up at Lazarus while he is in torment in flames. He can see Lazarus across a great gulf, but Lazarus is not suffering. He is in Abraham's bosom.

In the Revelation 20, we read that all the dead are removed from Hades to be judged. Hades itself is thrown into the Lake of Fire, and then those who are not in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire as well. We are not told what happens to the people in the Lake of Fire. It is a long tradition of every branch of Christianity that those thrown into the Lake of Fire are tormented forever.

I find that difficult, even horrific, to believe. The idea that souls are automatically immortal was a Greek concept, and I do not believe that it is repeated in the New Testament. Romans 2:7 talks about pursuing immortality be patiently continuing to do good. Galatians 6:9 says that those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life if they do not grow weary in doing good. How can we be already immortal if the New Testament is promising immortality or eternal life to those who have done good?

Jesus says that those who have done good will rise to a resurrection of life and those who have done evil will rise to a resurrection of death. Based on these Scriptures and many others, I argue that those thrown into the Lake of Fire at the last judgment perish forever.

Speaking of perishing, you will notice that Jesus contrasts "perish" with eternal life in John 3:16. The opposite of eternal life there is not eternal tormented life, it is perishing. I think you will find this throughout the New Testament.

So Hades, in the New Testament, is the holding place of the dead. It will be emptied at the last judgment, according to Revelation 20. If Jesus is being literal in his story about the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, then Hades has a place of torment and across a great gulf another place where the righteous or those who suffered in this life are comforted by such great patriarchs as Abraham.

**Gehenna**
Now Gehenna is very much what we think of as hell. The word comes from the valley of Hinnom, where the residents of Jerusalem dumped their garbage and dead animals. It was always burning, and I'm sure it had a terrible stench. Jesus applied the picture of that valley to the punishment of those who do not obey God. Here are his words from Matthew 18:8-9 with the pertinent "Gehenna" left in the Greek language:

If your hand or foot offend you, cut them off and cast them away from you. It is better for you to enter into life halt or lame than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into everlasting fire. And if your eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it away from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be cast into Gehenna fire.

So Jesus gives us a clear definition of Gehenna. It is a place of everlasting fire. He uses Gehenna and everlasting interchangeably in these two verses. It is a place we do not want to go, and it is contrasted with entrance into life.

It is time to touch on the word "everlasting" or "eternal" here, which Mr. Lilley also mentions.

**Everlasting or Age-lasting?**

It is true that the word "everlasting," if translated exactly into English, would be "age-lasting." When the New Testament says "forever and ever," the Greek literally says "into the ages of the ages."

Playing with Greek words when you don't understand them properly is dangerous. Just because a Greek word is literally age-lasting does not mean that it is not used to convey the idea of "forever," especially when the Greek way to express forever is "into the ages of the ages."

Can you imagine having to say "into-the-ages-of-the-ages-lasting" when you wanted to say everlasting?

You can go to [http://studybible.info/strongs/G166](http://studybible.info/strongs/G166) and see that every Greek lexicon translates *aionias* as everlasting rather than age-lasting.

There are only two ages taught by Jesus anyway. There is this age, in which we do the works that will eventually be judged by him, and there is the next age, where our deeds are repaid with eternal life or with destruction in the everlasting fire. Here are a couple examples:

Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, not in this age, nor in the one about to come. (Matthew 12:32)
Jesus said, "There is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, or children or lands for my sake or the Gospel's who will not receive a hundredfold in this time [Gr. kairos] houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and lands, with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

There is this age, and there is the next one. The next one will begin with the triumphal return of King Jesus in glory to rule the world. His voice shall raise the dead, and they will come out of Hades and be judged. The righteous will be given eternal life, and the evil will be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and the angels.

In the context of Jesus' teachings, "age-lasting" or "everlasting" makes no difference. "Everlasting" is the correct translation, but if we were to leave it as "age-lasting," it would make no difference. The next age is the last one, and we will either live with Jesus in that age or we will perish in the Lake of Fire.

**The Emptying of Hades**

Here we come to an interesting difference of opinion not with Mr. Lilley but between what I find in the writings of those who lived shortly after the time of the apostles and what we teach today.

In scholarly circles, in most every Protestant tradition, it is known that the dead, prior to Jesus' death, went to Hades, either to the fiery torment side with the rich man or to the paradise-like side with Abraham and Lazarus the beggar. When Jesus died, the Scriptures teach, he preached to the dead (1 Pet. 4:6). This is generally understood to mean that he preached to those in Paradise on the good side of Hades.

This idea also explains Jesus statement to the repentant thief on the cross that the thief would be with him in Paradise that very day. Both of them descended to the realm of the dead, Hades, but to the pleasant part where the righteous or comforted and await the resurrection.

Here, the early Christians and modern Christians part. Protestant traditions teach that when Jesus rose, the righteous dead ascended into heaven with him. There is fair amount of scriptural defense for this. Ephesians 4:8 says that when he ascended from the depths of the earth, he "took captivity captive." In Matthew 27:52-53 we read that when Jesus died that many "saints" arose from the dead and walked in Jerusalem.

The early Christians didn't see things that way. In their eyes, Hades would not be emptied until the final judgment. Only the martyrs were in heaven now. This they based on Revelation 20. The martyrs are part of the first resurrection, and then the rest of the dead are brought out of Hades at the final judgment.

As a side note, this made martyrdom very appealing. If you were martyred, you did not have to face the judgment!
I'm not going to solve that ancient-modern disagreement for you. I will content myself with living righteously before God, trusting in his mercy, and giving everything to appear before him blameless and without spot, which is only possible if I am among those who walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7) and who receive the glorious honor of having God not impute sin to me (Rom. 4).

**Comments on the Scriptures Concerning Hell and Eternal Life**

One of the things that con men like Mr. Lilley try to do is to change our idea about a God who judges between the righteous and the unrighteous. He and others want us to believe that God is so merciful and desires the salvation of all men so badly that he ensures that in the end all will be saved.

I have heard this argument taught by good men as well as by deceivers like Mr. Lilley. Origen is mentioned by Mr. Lilley, and he is one of my favorite early Christian writers. He lived in the early third century, and he was a scholar in many fields, not just in theology. He was highly respected in his time.

Origen believed that in the end, God would bring everyone to salvation, even Satan. That idea was new in his day, and it was not adopted by the church despite his reputation. Having read his writings and knowing the slight change he made to the early Christian understanding of the Trinity, which was adopted by the church, I can tell you that at the heart of his theology was the belief that if God willed something, then it always happens. Therefore, Origen concluded, if God wills all to be saved, then they will all be saved.

Another favorite author of mine who taught universal salvation was George MacDonald. He was another great and Spirit-filled man of God, but even Spirit-filled men of God can be in error if they depart from what the apostles taught the church.

Origen and George MacDonald are careful not to mess with our belief in the judgment of God. I have read only the advertisement for Mr. Lilley's book, written by Mr. Lilley himself, and not his book, so perhaps he does not take away from God's judgment either. Many who teach universal salvation are trying to water down the judgment of God. Let us not lose Jesus' idea of judgment, which the apostles taught as well.

We have seen that Jesus told us that it is better to cut off body parts than to be cast into Gehenna. We know Jesus taught judgment in fire. Another great example is the judgment he describes in Matthew 25:31-46. There the sheep enter into Jesus' everlasting kingdom, and the goats enter the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The apostles were every bit as clear.

Paul tells us three times that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5). In 2 Thessalonians 1, he warns of a terrifying judgement, saying:
The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

Yikes! No wonder Peter tells all of us who call God Father to conduct ourselves in fear throughout the time of our sojourning here on earth because God will judge impartially (1 Pet. 1:17).

I suspect it is knowing the kind of vengeance from Jesus described in Thessalonians that prompted Paul to say that "the terror of the Lord" motivated him to preach the Gospel (2 Cor. 5:11).

It's true that it's not all judgment and condemnation. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin. It is a glorious way to live this life, and leads to "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Just before the passage of vengeance and wrath that I quoted from 2 Thessalonians is a promise from Paul that Jesus' return is to give us, who have been persecuted in this world, rest and comfort in his presence, not the judgment and wrath he will repay to the persecutions. The reason I am emphasizing wrath and judgment is because that is the topic of this article.

So, staying on the topic, let's make it clear that God is not mourning about his judgment on those who reject the Gospel. In Romans 2, Paul tells us that God will repay "indignation and wrath" to those who obey unrighteousness. John tells us that God considers it a personal affront when we reject Jesus. In 1 John 5:10, he writes, "He that does not believe God makes him a liar because he does not believe the testimony God gave of his Son."

If the Gospel comes to you, it would be good to give it heed. There are great blessings associated with believing the Gospel, the greatest of all being eternal life in the kingdom of his beloved Son. There is also indignation, wrath, and fiery vengeance for those who do not obey the Gospel, who reject the truth, and who obey unrighteousness.

Christians After the Apostles

Anyone who has spent any time in the writings of the early fathers or even in history books about them knows that Origen taught universal salvation. Eventually, after a time of punishment in fire, everyone would be purified and have eternal life.

Mr. Lilley claims this is because "the doctrines of eternal punishment and hell did not become common 'Christian' beliefs until the middle ages."

Pretty much no one else agrees with him. We all think that Origen was prone to speculation on all sorts of matters. He suggested that some men used to be angels but
they fell from their positions because of evildoing. He continued that some demons used to be men, but sinned and dropped to a lower estate. Doing good could reverse the process. That teaching is only strange, not captivating nor emotionally satisfying, so no one talks about it. Universal salvation, on the other hand, is a very appetizing doctrine.

But, it's new with Origen. Before him, the doctrine of everlasting fire has plenty of support.

One of the earliest known writers outside the New Testament is Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch. He wrote in either AD 107 or 116, just over a century before Origen wrote. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, he wrote:

Do not err, my brothers. Those that corrupt families shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If, then, those who do this in regard to the flesh have suffered death, how much more shall this be the case with any one who corrupts by wicked doctrine the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such a one becomes defiled and shall go away into everlasting fire. So shall every one that listens to him.

We don't know the date of the anonymous letter to Diognetus, but is no later than the first half of the second century, still seventy or eighty years before Origen:

Then you shall despise that which is considered to be death here, when thou shalt fear what is truly death: the one reserved for those who shall be condemned to the eternal fire, which shall afflict to the end those that are committed to it.

Justin Martyr wrote this around AD 150. He doesn't even agree with me, much less Mr. Lilley. He says clearly that he believes that men will be thrown into the fire with "eternal sensibility."

He shall come from heaven with glory, accompanied by His angelic host, when also He shall raise the bodies of all men who have lived, and shall clothe those of the worthy with immortality, and shall send those of the wicked, endued with eternal sensibility, into everlasting fire with the wicked devils.

That is from Justin's Dialogue with Trypho. I argue that the soul is not inherently immortal and only lives forever if Jesus grants a person eternal life. Justin says something similar here, but despite saying that Jesus will "clothe those of the worthy with immortality," he says that the wicked will have eternal sensibility. How is that possible if they are not immortal, too?

While I am arguing against a lot of Christian history, I am not arguing against earliest Christian history when I say the wicked are not immortal. Justin is the only second century writer who says that the wicked have "eternal sensibility." Justin, though, was a philosopher of the school of Plato before he was a Christian, and the immortal soul of
man was a teaching of Greek philosophy. I'm going to stand against Justin, claiming the Scriptures and other early Christian writers on my side.

Other early Christian writers say the fire is eternal, but they do not say that the suffering of the soul is eternal like Justin does.

Theophilus of Antioch, around AD 170, wrote the following in a letter to someone named Autolycus:

But you, if you please, give reverent attention to the prophetic Scriptures, and they will make your way plainer for escaping the eternal punishments and obtaining the eternal prizes of God.

Let's quote one more passage, this one from a man every bit as respected in his time as Origen was in his. He lived just a generation before Origen and on the other side of the empire, in Frankish Gaul. His name was Irenaeus, and he had been taught by Polycarp, a bishop who had been appointed by apostles. Irenaeus writes:

[We believe] that [Jesus] will execute just judgment towards all, that he may send spiritual wickednesses and the angers who transgressed and become apostates, together with the ungodly, unrighteous, wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire, but may, in the exercise of his grace, confer immortality on the righteous and holy and those who have kept his commandments and have persevered in his love.

I could produce more quotes, but you can see clearly already that far from being something unheard of before the middle ages, everlasting fire as a punishment for the wicked was taught by Jesus to the apostles and by the apostles to the churches. We find it universally taught among the early Christians.

Finally, let's lean on the words of Origen himself, whom Mr. Lilley is using to turn tiny facts into huge deceptions. We have covered his abuse of the literal "age-lasting" in Greek and shown that just because it is literal does not mean it is a correct translation. We have shown that even if it were a correct translation, it wouldn't matter because everlasting life is given in the last age.

We have also covered his abuse of the poor handling translators have given to Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus. He tried to turn that problem into a doctrine that the Bible does not mention Hell. We have seen, however, that Gehenna is exactly what Christians picture as Hell, and it is Jesus who told us that we must avoid Gehenna.

Now we will see that Mr. Lilley has abused Origen to justify his abuses of Scripture, but what he said about Origen is not true. Origen does believe in universal salvation, but he was well aware of the Scriptures and the Christian teaching concerning everlasting fire. In his book De Principiis, in the second book and the tenth chapter, he discusses the
resurrection and eternal fire. First he discusses the state of the resurrected body, and then he discusses how eternal fire would affect it:

The body which rises again of those who are to be destined to everlasting fire or to severe punishments is by the very change of the resurrection so incorruptible that it cannot be corrupted and dissolved even by severe punishments. If, then, such be the qualities of that body which will arise from the dead, let us now see what is the meaning of the threatening of eternal fire.

Origen does not deny that the Scriptures or his Christian predecessors taught eternal fire. He did, however, reinterpret it. In the same chapter, he explains eternal fire figuratively in this way:

When the soul has gathered together a multitude of evil works and an abundance of sins against itself, at a suitable time all that assembly of evils boils up to punishment and is set on fire to chastisements. When the mind itself, or conscience, receives by divine power into the memory all those things of which it had stamped on itself ... will see a kind of history ... of all the foul, shameful, and unholy deeds which it has done before its eyes. Then is the conscience harassed and pierced by its own goads, and it becomes an accuser and a witness against itself. This, I think, was the opinion of the Apostle Paul himself when he said, "Their thoughts mutually accusing or excusing them in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel" [Rom. 2:15-16]. From which it is understood that around the substance of the soul certain tortures are produced by the hurtful affections of the sins themselves.

In other words, Origen is arguing that the real fire is the fire of guilt and shame when God supernaturally reveals the sins of the wicked before their eyes.

All of the things Mr. Lilley was saying about Origen were not true. He must certainly knew about Gehenna and everlasting punishment because Origen was one of the most prodigious Bible readers of history. He wrote a "parallel Bible" with six columns called the Hexapla. It had translations of the Bible in Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek. He not only read the Bible multiple times, he wrote it out multiple times in multiple languages!

In his writing he acknowledges eternal fire. He does not deny it, nor say that Gehenna or Hades are not real. He reinterprets it, suggesting that the real fire is of our own making. He quotes Isaiah 50:11 for this, which says, in part, "Walk in the light of your own fire and in the sparks which you have kindled." He explains this by saying:

By these words it seems to be indicated that every sinner kindles for himself the flame of his own fire and is not plunged into some fire which has been already kindled by another or was in existence before himself. Of this fire the fuel and food are our sins, which are called by the Apostle Paul "wood, hay, and stubble."

Origen is wrong here. Jesus said that he was going to send the goats into everlasting fire
that was prepared for the devil and his angels. This is the fire that the wicked must fear, though it would do them much more good to fear the fire of their own conscience and repent. That action would spare them the fire prepared by God for the devil and his angels.

Even a great man like Origen can be wrong. By his day, the immortality of the soul was well established, and he confirms that the doctrine had reached him. He tells us in the first quote I gave above that the body of the resurrected wicked is so incorruptibly that even eternal punishments could not destroy it. That is immortality, and it is not a Bible teaching that the wicked have immortality.

In response to the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which winds up accusing God of eternally torturing the wicked for temporary sins, Origen makes the eternal fire to be figurative. He's the first early Christian teacher to do so, and it is probably because he is the first Christian teacher to consider deeply the idea that God would torture human beings eternally.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the wicked will be punished with eternal destruction (2 Thes. 1:9). Origen may have been taught that the resurrected wicked cannot die, but Paul believed they could be destroyed. Jesus said that the wicked would be raised to a resurrection of condemnation, which he contrasted to a resurrection of life (Jn. 5:29).

Concluding Thoughts

We have shown that John Lilley is either a dishonest man or an uneducated man boasting of thing far beyond his knowledge. Either way, that makes him a charlatan, one of the characters the apostle Paul told us would be exposed if we lived as the church, speaking the truth to one another in love and exhorting one another day by day (Eph. 4:13-15; Heb. 3:13).

I think Paul's description of such men is well worth quoting:

> We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight-of-hand of men, by their craftiness in scheming to deceive.

Beware of such men. As said, Ephesians 4 says that the way we overcome men like that is by our unity and speaking to one another. First John 2:26-27 tells us the same thing about men who try to seduce us. We must follow the anointing together. It's important to know that every "you" in the passage in 1 John is plural. Individuals are not promised to be led into the truth by the anointing, but the church is promised this. That is why the church is called the pillar and support of the truth in 1 Timothy 3:15.