Annihilation vs. Eternal Torment



Dr. Andy Woods
Senior Pastor – Sugar Land Bible Church
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ANNIHILATION VS. ETERNAL CONSCIOUS TORMENT

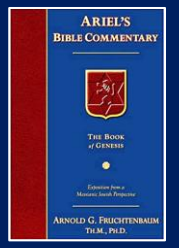
I. **Introduction to the Controversy**
II. Biblical Arguments Against Annihilation
III. Theological Arguments Against Annihilation
IV. Answering Annihilationist Biblical Arguments
V. Answering Annihilationist Theological Arguments
VI. Examining Church History
VII. Conclusion





Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

Footsteps of the Messiah, 707-8



"**Conditional immortality** means the soul is not inherently immortal; immortality is not part of the make-up of the soul. Rather, immortality is a gift for the saved only. So at death, the unbeliever simply becomes non-existent, and only the believer continues to exist…What **annihilationism** says is this: the unsaved soul is annihilated after a temporary period of punishment. These people do believe that the unsaved soul goes to Hell, but not for eternity, only temporarily. Eventually the unsaved soul is annihilated after suffering a duration of punishment."

PROTESTIA

Kirk Cameron Denies ‘Eternal Conscious Torment,’ Is Now An Annihilationist?

Staff Writer December 6, 2025





Eric Metaxas @ericmetaxas · 5d

Anybody who thinks my friend @KirkCameron is a heretic is a heretic.

> **Kirk Cameron** @KirkCameron · 5d
>
> **AM I A HERETIC? Well, that's what some people are saying - all because I asked uncomfortable questions about hell. So, along with four thoughtful and brilliant scholars, we slowed down, opened a Bible, and dove into all angles of this important discussion.**
>
> **Come see what Show more**



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II. Anti-Annihilationist Texts

A. Dan. 12:2

B. Matt. 25:46

C. Mark 9:47-48

D. Matt. 8:12

E. Luke 16:19-31



F. 2 Thess. 1:9

G. Heb. 6:2

H. Rev. 14:11

I. Rev. 20:10

J. Rev. 19:20

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III. Theological Arguments Against Annihilation

A. Underestimates sin's severity

B. Contradicts humanity's nature

C. Denies degrees of punishment

D. Seeks to escape sin's consequences



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IV. Answering Annihilationist Biblical Arguments

A. 2nd death (Rev. 20:14)

B. Destroy (Rev. 11:18)

C. Destruction (2 Thess. 1:9)

D. Burning up (Matt. 3:12)

E. Eternal results (Rev. 14:11)



IV. Answering Annihilationist Biblical Arguments

F. Perdition (2 Pet. 3:7)

G. Better to have never been born (Mark 14:21)

H. Wicked perishing (2 Pet. 3:9)

I. Blotted out of existence (Hebrews 9:25–26)

J. Life activity suspended in death (Eccles. 9:10)



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V. Answering Annihilationist Theological Arguments

A. Immortality: a gift only for the believer (1 Tim. 6:16)
B. Temporal nature of the soul (Gen. 3:22)
C. Finite nature of Christ's death (John 19:30)
D. God's justice (Ps. 90:2)
E. God's mercy (1 John 4:8)
F. All things reconciled to God (Col. 1:20)
G. Universal nature of God's victory (Philip. 2:10)
H. Burden of heaven's citizens (Rev. 21:4)



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VI. Examining Church History

A. General overview

B. Early fathers

C. Medieval fathers

D. Reformation leaders

E. Post reformation teachers



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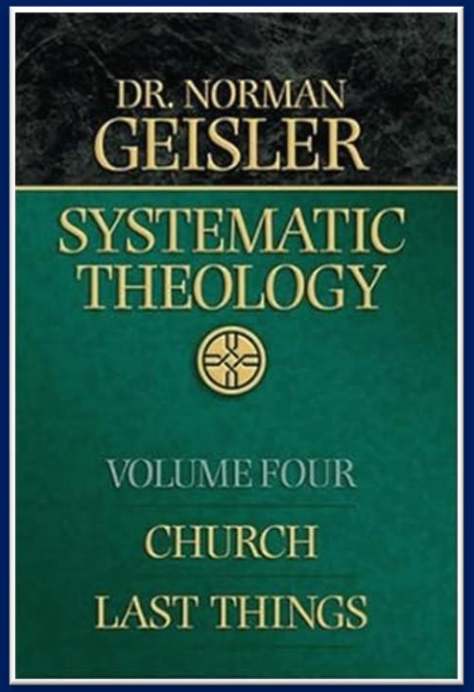
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Dr. Norman Geisler

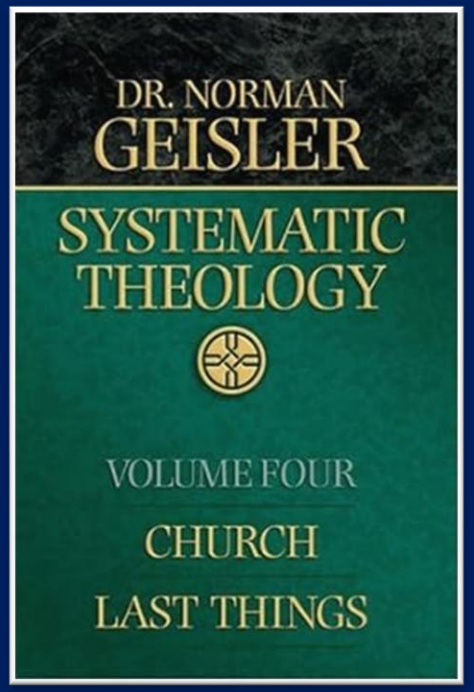
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"After already having been earlier condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the denial of hell was condemned by the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513 (see Cross, *ODCC*, 328). The last of the nine anathemas (543) of Emperor Justinian (c. 483–565) against Origen (c. 185–c. 254) reads: 'If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary and will one day have an end … let him be anathema' (in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, Vol. 14)."

Dr. Norman Geisler

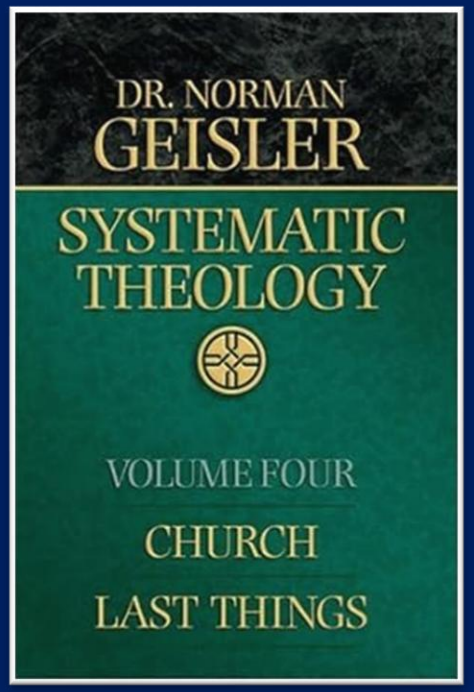
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"As stated previously, annihilationism was condemned as heretical by a Constantinople synod in 543, by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, and by the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513 (see Wenham, *GG*, 28, and Cross, *ODCC*, 328). The traditional orthodox doctrine of hell as the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked has been upheld by most of the church's great fathers and theologians, including Tertullian (c. 155–c. 225),...

Dr. Norman Geisler

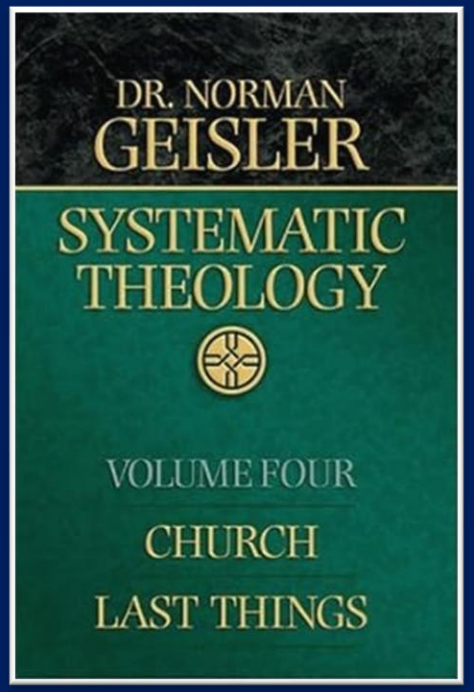
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"…Augustine (354–430), Anselm (1033–1109), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509–1564), Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), William G. T. Shedd (1820–1894), and B. B. Warfield (1851–1921). One of the orthodox position's best recent defenses is *Hell on Trial* by Robert A. Peterson (b. 1948), and there is no more magnificent literary expression of the doctrine than *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis (1898–1963)."

Dr. Norman Geisler

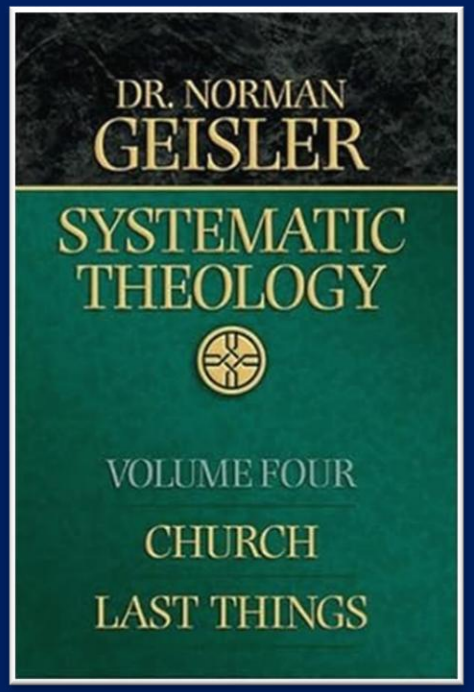
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"The historical evidence against annihilationism is the same as the historical argument for eternal conscious punishment—that is, the historical evidence against annihilationism is identical to the evidence for hell, already summarized; annihilationism is opposed by most orthodox teachers in church history, from the beginning to the present. We saw earlier that annihilationism was roundly condemned by the early church."

Dr. Norman Geisler

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"In one example, the last of the nine anathemas of Emperor Justinian (c. 483–565) against Origen (c. 185–c. 254) reads: 'If anyone says … that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary and will one day have an end … let him be anathema' (in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, Vol. 14). Before the Reformation, the Fifth Lateran Council (1513) also condemned the denial of hell (see Cross, *ODCC*, 328)."

VI. Examining Church History

A. General overview

B. **Early fathers**

C. Medieval fathers

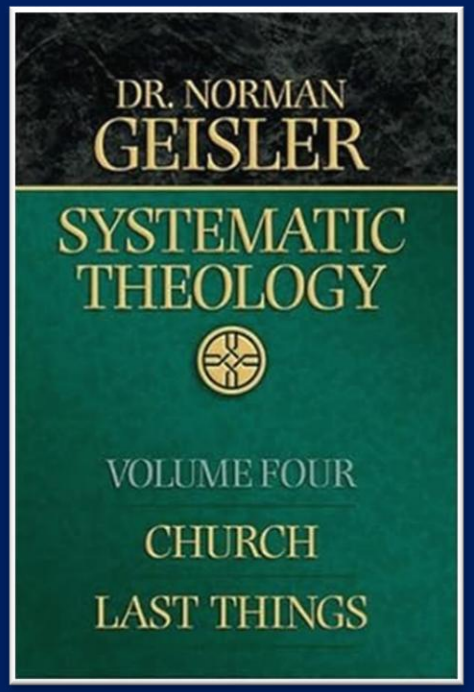
D. Reformation leaders

E. Post reformation teachers



Polycarp (2nd Century)

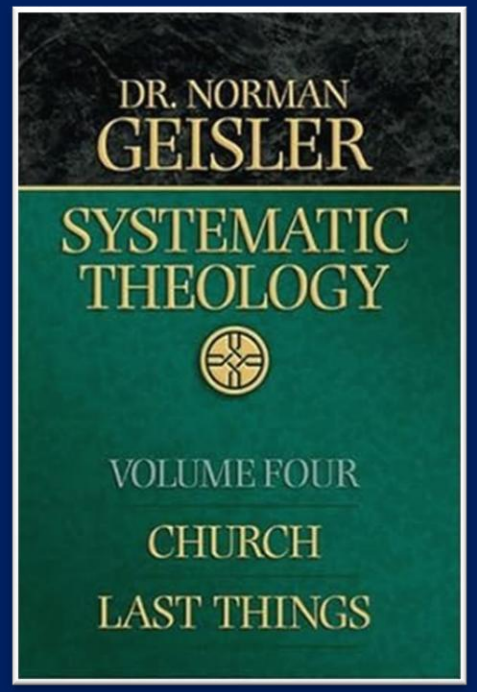
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"Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of **eternal punishment**, reserved for the ungodly. (*EECS*, 11)."

Theophilus (A.D. 130–190)

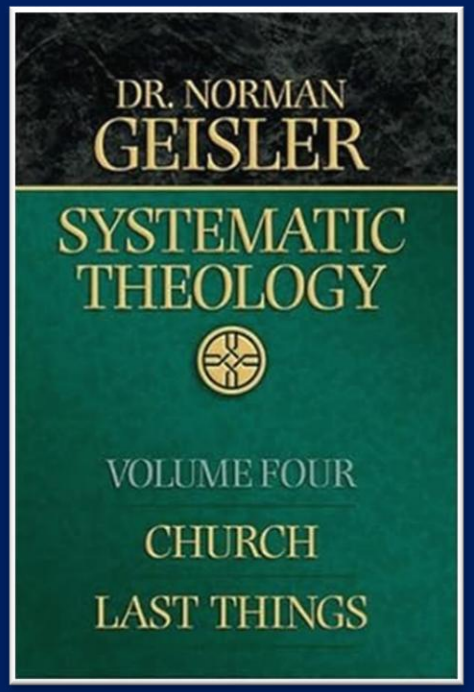
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"Admitting, therefore, the proof which events happening as predicted afford, I do not disbelieve, but I believe, obedient to God, whom, if you please, do you also submit to, believing Him, lest if now you continue unbelieving, you be convinced hereafter, when you are **tormented with eternal punishments**; which punishments, when they had been foretold by the prophets, the later-born poets and philosophers stole from the holy Scriptures, to make their doctrines worthy of credit. (*TA*, 1.14)."

Tertullian (A.D. 155–225)

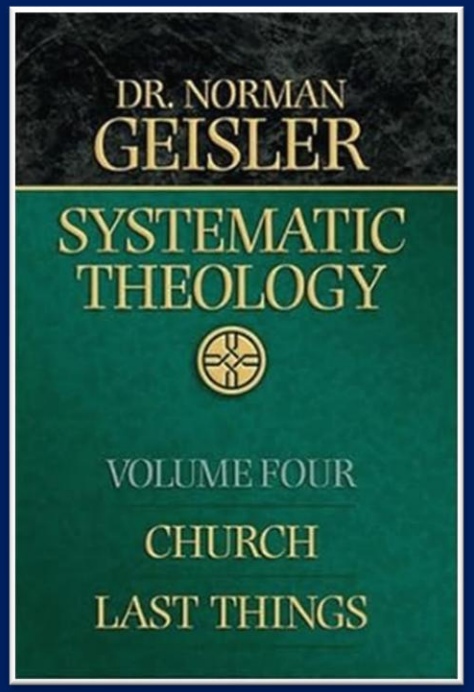
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"O ye heathen; who have and deserve our pity, behold, we set before you the promise which our sacred system offers. It guarantees eternal life to such as follow and observe it; on the other hand, it threatens with the **eternal punishment of an unending fire** those who are profane and hostile; while to both classes alike is preached a resurrection from the dead. (*AN*, 1.1.7)."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100–165)

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"…since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free-will, they will justly suffer in **eternal fire** the punishment of whatever sins they have committed."

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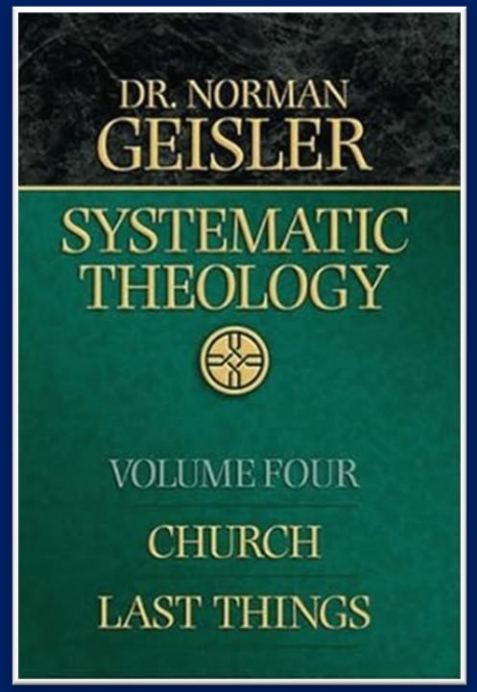
D. Reformation leaders

E. Post reformation teachers



Augustine (A.D. 354–430)

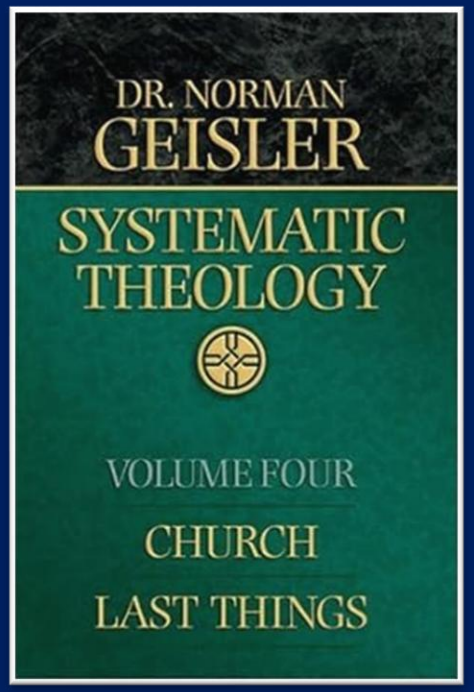
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"If the soul live in eternal punishments, by which also those unclean spirits shall be tormented, that is rather eternal death than eternal life. For there is no greater or worse death than when **death never dies**. But because **the soul from its very nature, being created immortal**, cannot be without some kind of life, its utmost death is alienation from the life of God in an **eternity of punishment**. (CG 6.12)."

Anselm (A.D. 1033–1109)

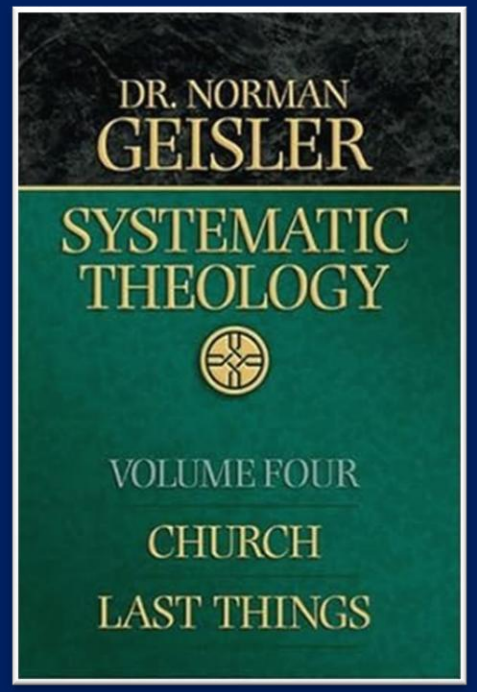
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"So then, nothing can be seen to follow more consistently, and nothing ought to be believed more assuredly, than that **man's soul was created in such a way that if it despises loving the Supreme Being it will suffer eternal wretchedness**. Consequently, just as the loving soul will rejoice in an eternal reward, so the despising soul will grieve in **eternal punishment**. And as the former will experience immutable sufficiency, so the latter will experience inconsolable need. (*M*, 71)."

Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225–1274)

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"The suffering of **eternal punishment** is in no way opposed to divine justice. Even in the laws men make, punishment need not correspond to the offense in point of time. [For example, one may commit murder in a minute but deserve a lifetime in jail]. (*CT*, 183)."

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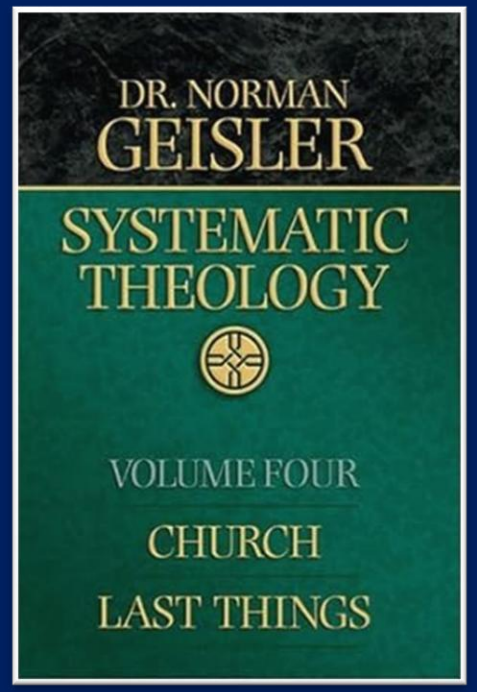
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Martin Luther (A.D. 1483–1546)

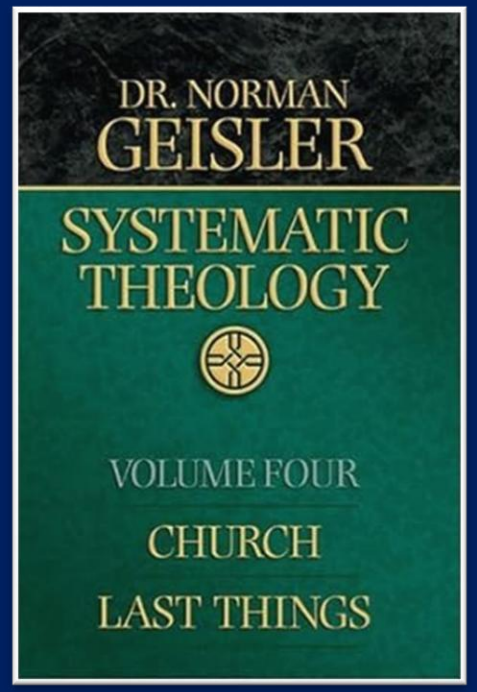
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"The fiery oven is ignited merely by the unbearable appearance of God and **endures eternally. For the Day of Judgment will not last for a moment only but will stand throughout eternity and will thereafter never come to an end**. Constantly the damned will be judged, **constantly** they will suffer pain, and **constantly** they will be a fiery oven, that is, they will be tortured within by supreme distress and tribulation. (*WLS*, 2:627)."

John Calvin (A.D. 1509–1564)

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"On the other hand, he [God] proclaims not only that iniquity is hateful in his sight, but that it will not escape with impunity, because he will be the avenger of his insulted majesty. That he may encourage us in every way, he promises present blessings, as well as eternal felicity, to the obedience of those who shall have kept his commands, while he threatens transgressors with present suffering, as well as the punishment of **eternal** death. (*ICR*, 2.8.4)"

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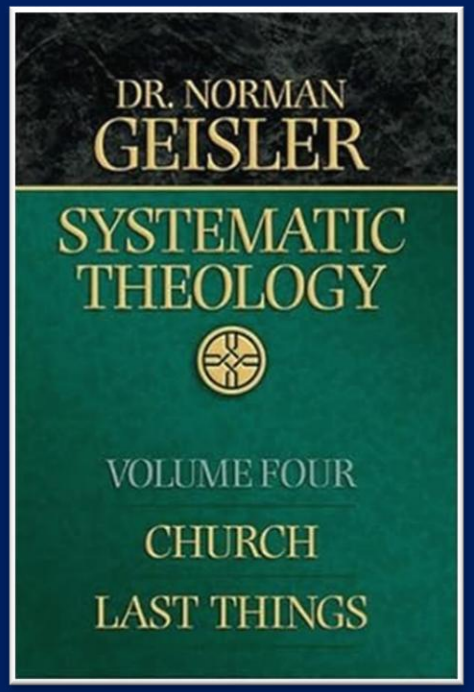
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John Wesley (A.D. 1703–1791)

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"Consider a few of the circumstances which will follow the general judgment. And the first is the execution of the sentence pronounced on the evil and on the good: "These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." It should be observed, it is the very same word which is used, both in the former and the latter clause: **It follows, that either the punishment lasts for ever, or the reward too will come to an end**: No, never, unless God could come to an end, or his mercy and truth could fail. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall drink of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore. (*WJW*, 5.15.3.1)"

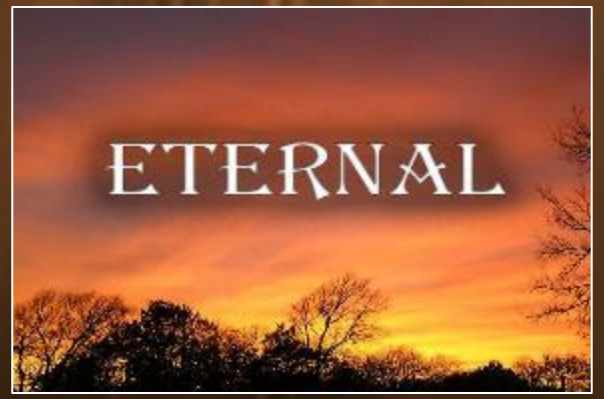
Matthew 25:46

"These will go away into **eternal (*aiōnios*) punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal (*aiōnios*) life**."



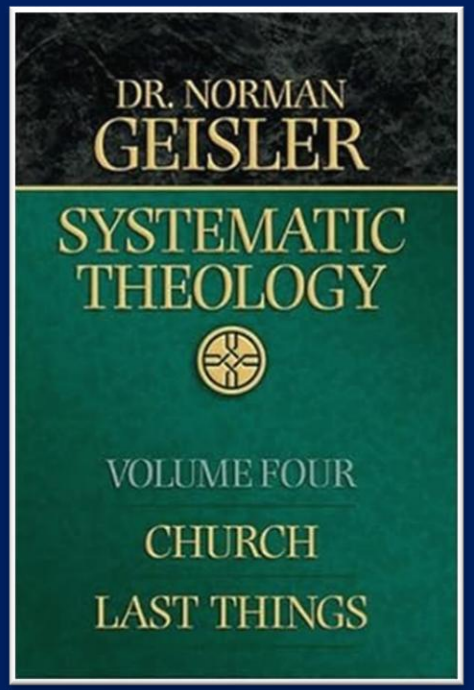
Romans 16:26

"but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the **eternal (*aiōnios*) God**, has been made known to all the nations, *leading* to obedience of faith."



Charles Spurgeon (A.D. 1834–1892)

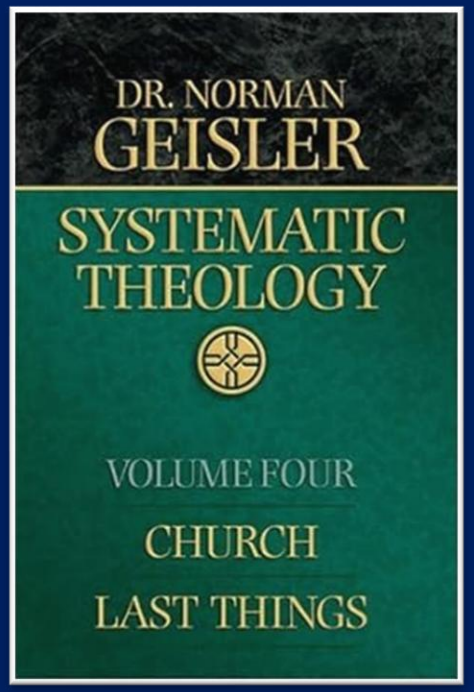
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"It hopeth not; it knoweth no escape; it guesseth not of deliverance; it pants for death, but death is too much its foe to be there; it longs that non-existence would swallow it up, but **this eternal death is worse than annihilation**. It pants for extermination as the laborer for his Sabbath; it longs that it might be swallowed up in nothingness just as would the galley slave long for freedom, but it cometh not—it is eternally dead." (*SSC*, 1.52)

C.S. Lewis (A.D. 1898–1963)

Geisler, N. L. (2005). *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things* (p. 358-59). Bethany House Publishers.



"In a sense, it is better for the creature itself, even if it never becomes good, that it should know itself a failure, a mistake. Even mercy can hardly wish to such a man his **eternal**, contented continuance in such ghastly illusion. Thomas Aquinas said of suffering, as Aristotle had said of shame, that it was a thing not good in itself, but a thing which might have a certain goodness in particular circumstances…I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that **the doors of hell are locked on the inside**." (PP 110, 115-16)

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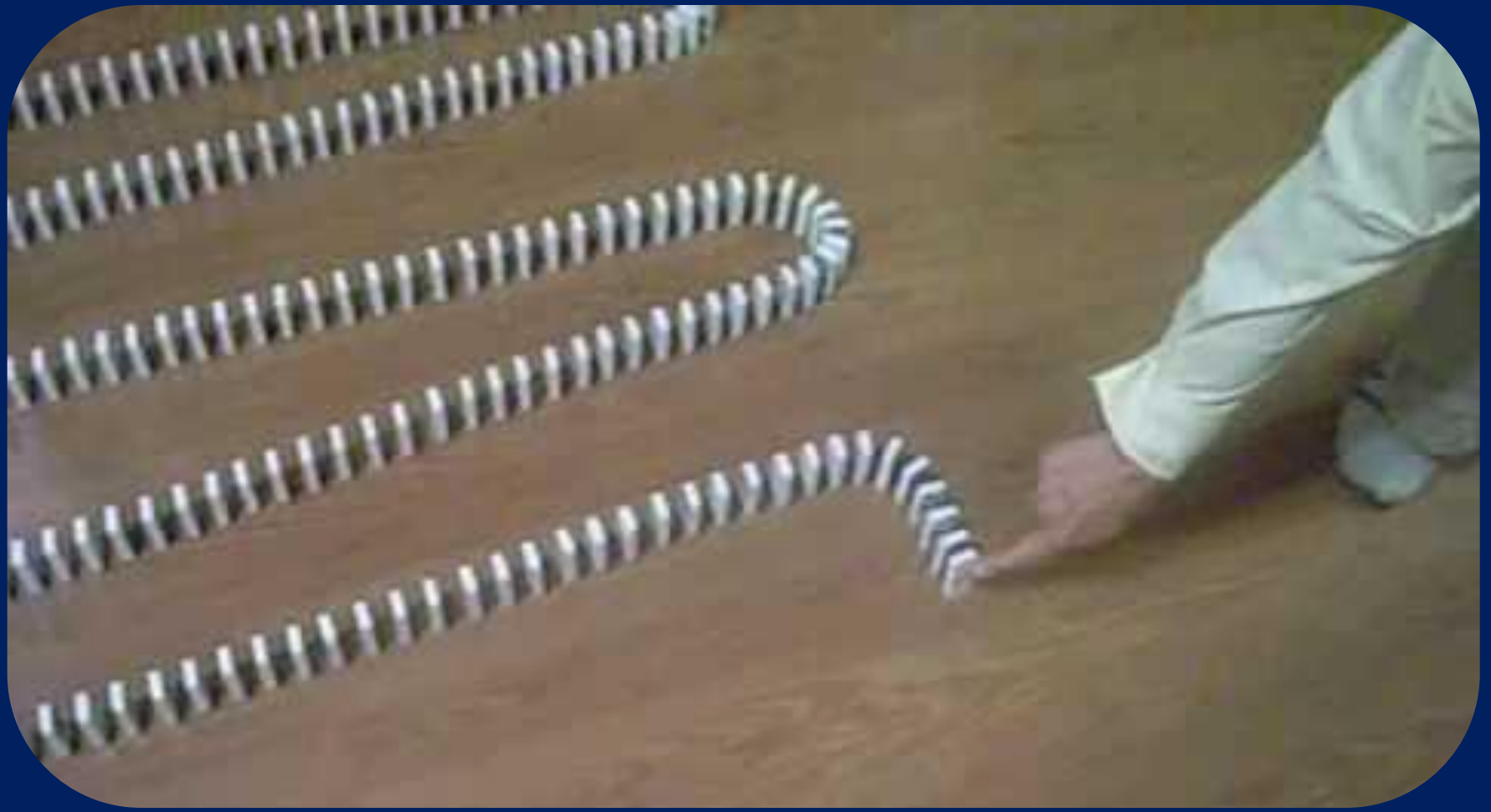


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Dominoes in a Row



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