

Q. Please explain [Mark 9:43-44](#). "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

A. The English word *hell*, (in Com. English version of N.T.,) is used to translate *three* entirely different Greek words: One of these, "tartarus," occurs but once—[2 Pet. 2:4](#), and signifies, according to best Greek scholars, *our atmosphere*. (Satan—"the prince of the power of the air.") Another Greek word translated by the word *hell*, is "*hades*." This is used eleven times in the N.T., and is ten times improperly translated *hell*. The word signifies *the grave*, or *a state of death*, or *the dominion of death*. The Author of the Emph. Diag., says: "To translate *hades* by the word *hell*, as it is done ten times out of eleven in the N.T., is very improper, unless it has the Saxon meaning of "*helan*"—to cover—attached to it. The primitive signification of *hell* only denoting what was secret or concealed. This perfectly corresponds with the Greek word, *hades*, and the Hebrew equivalent, *sheol*; but the theological definition given to it at the present day, by no means expresses it. It is said that in some parts of England to-day, it is not uncommon to hear the old Saxon use of this word, as when a man speaks of *helling* potatoes, (covering them,) and *helling* his house (shingling or covering it).

The third and only other Greek word translated by our word *hell*, is "*gehenna*." It occurs twelve times. The same author quoted above, says of *gehenna*: "It is the Grecian mode of spelling the Hebrew words which are translated "The valley of Hinnom." This valley was also called "*tophet*," a detestation, an abomination. Into this place were cast all kinds of filth with the carcasses of beasts and the unburied bodies of criminals who had been executed. To consume these, fires were kept continually burning. *Gehenna* then, [R112 : page 8] as occurring in the N.T., symbolizes *death* and *utter destruction*, but in no place signifies a place of **eternal torment**.

Kimchi, on [Psa. 27:13](#) says: "It was a place in the land (valley) near to Jerusalem, and was a place contemptible where they did cast things defiled and carcasses, and there was there a continual fire to burn polluted things and bones, (Brimstone was thrown in to continue it) and therefore, the condemnation of the wicked in a *parabolic* way, is called *Gihinnom*."

One thing is sure, nothing was ever cast into this "Valley of Hinnom" to be kept in **torment**. Only *dead* bodies were cast into it as a mark of special ignominy, and what the fire did not come in contact with, the worms destroyed, so that in any case the result was *destruction*. See [Isa. 66:24](#). (The Jews were not allowed to *torture* even dumb animals.) Jesus apparently made

a lesson from surroundings, as was his custom. So now, he says: If any of your members—eye, hand, etc., so ensnare you as to endanger your being cast out from men as a criminal, and cast into this Valley of Hinnom, it is too expensive a member to keep, even though it be dear unto you as your eye or right hand. It would be far better to cast off the troublesome member and save your life.

So, too, we can see that every christian is called upon to—"Mortify" (put to death) therefore, your members which are upon the earth—uncleanness, covetousness, &c. ([Col. 3:5](#)). These evil members must be lopped off, else they will choke the life of Christ commenced, and prevent your entrance into that everlasting life, and render you a *vesselfitted to destruction*, symbolized by *Gehenna*—"Valley of Hinnom."

But it may not be uninteresting to some to know that the following parts of the text of [Mark 9](#) are interpolations, and are not found in the best MSS. Sinaitic and Vatican—viz: **vs. 44 and 46** are both entirely omitted; also, in **vs. 45**, the words "*into the fire that never shall be quenched*," and in **vs. 47**, the word "*fire*" is omitted. See "Emp. Diag." and "Tischendorf."