

# Editor's Introduction

It has been my experience that Christians are frequently shocked to discover that many notable and respected evangelical scholars are conditionalists and have rejected the traditional view of hell as eternal conscious torment. Contributing to this phenomenon is the fact that few such scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have written book-length defenses of conditionalism. Edward Fudge is one of a handful of exceptions; most have instead articulated or defended conditionalism in smaller portions of books written about other topics, or covering a variety of topics, many of which are difficult to obtain. It is therefore not always easy to direct curious traditionalists (not to mention hostile ones) to these authors' published support for conditionalism.

*Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism* is meant to serve as a resource to help solve that problem by compiling some of what these various conditionalist scholars have written into one convenient publication, saving inquisitive traditionalists and universalists, and the conditionalists who love them, hundreds of dollars—and precious real estate on the bookshelf. However, the works featured in this volume were written and published across decades and centuries, in multiple countries, differ in style, and overlap at times in content. For these reasons and others, creating a wide-ranging collection but with the feel of a single book required some effort.

In no case has an author's originally intended meaning been changed or muzzled, even where one or more of the editors disagrees with it, or otherwise does not endorse it. A number of minor, mostly stylistic changes have been required, however, in order to unify the original works collected in this volume. For example, works have been edited to conform to American spelling and standards of punctuation. "Saviour," for example, has become "Savior;" quotes are enclosed in quotation marks (double-quotes) rather than in apostrophes (single-quotes), and commas

and periods precede closing quotation marks. Likely to go unnoticed by all but the most meticulous comparisons of these reproductions to their originals are replacements of “for ever” with “forever,” “per cent” with “percent,” and so on.

Abbreviated citations of biblical and other ancient texts have been made to conform to a unified standard. Endnotes have been converted to footnotes. Works originally cited in long-form footnote citation are instead cited in short-form, with their expanded details included in a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book. The style of all headings have been modified to conform to a unified style. Divine pronouns (he, him, his, etc.) originally capitalized have been made lower-case.

In most cases, original citations of different editions of the same book have been updated to cite a single shared edition, the one exception being Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes*. Where an author cites or quotes *The Fire That Consumes*, the edition cited is indicated by the year in which the cited edition was published (1982 or 2011). Most citations of early church fathers have been modified to quote and cite Roberts and Donaldson's *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* or Schaff and Wace's *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, to make it easier for readers to look up the cited text.

Part One consists of two introductory chapters of original content from members of the Rethinking Hell team. Part Two reproduces the works of those authors consistently identified, even by traditionalists, as being most responsible for reigniting the modern debate over conditionalism. In an effort to avoid duplication of themes and ideas as much as possible in the remaining authors, original works or excerpts thereof have been chosen that complement one another, and have been organized into groups with others that focus on similar topics: Scripture in Part Three, philosophy in Part Four, history in Part Five, and evangelicalism in Part Six. The book is thus laid out in such a way as to be read from beginning to end, while at the same time enabling readers to more easily locate works in categories in which they're specifically interested.

Each editor was responsible for one or more parts of the book, which entailed writing short introductions to their sections and biographical sketches introducing their chapters' authors, as well as proofreading reproduced works by comparing them to their originals. Greg was responsible for Part Two, and wrote the preface as the book was his original idea. Joshua was responsible for Parts Four and Six, and I oversaw Parts One, Three, and Five. I also compiled the bibliography, converted the original

works into manuscript form through a combination of optical character recognition and manual transcription, and prepared the final manuscript for submission to our publisher.

We hope and pray with confidence that *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism* will personally edify you, the reader. If you are already convinced of conditionalism, you will find encouragement in the caliber of scholarship supporting your view, and may find yourself better prepared to articulate and defend it. If, on the other hand, you currently believe in the traditional view of hell, or that eventually everyone will be saved, even if you remain convinced of it after reading this book, you'll better understand why so many of us have felt forced to reject it in favor of conditionalism. Hopefully, like the authors in Part Six, you'll begin to see us as your brothers and sisters in Christ, if you don't already.

Or, quite possibly, you'll find yourself rethinking hell, too.

Chris Date

SAMPLE