

From the February 4, 2010 Issue

## What The Church Fathers Said About Hell

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA** (~200): "All men are Christ's, some by knowing Him, the rest not yet. He is the Savior, not of some and the rest not. For how is He Savior and Lord, if not the Savior and Lord of all?" "God's punishments (in Hades) are saving and disciplinary, leading to conversion." Chastisement (kolasis) is for the good and advantage of him who is punished." "We can set no limits to the agency of the Redeemer; to redeem, to rescue, to discipline, is his work, and so will he continue to operate after this life." (*Mis. B. VI, c. 6*)

**ORIGEN** (~203): God is a "Consuming Fire...[because he]...consumes evil thoughts, wicked actions, and sinful desires when they find their way into the minds of believers." "God's consuming fire... annihilate[es] that which harms his children." (*De Principis. I.2*)

**GREGORY OF NYSSA** (~370): "Whoever considers the divine power will plainly perceive that it is able at length to restore by means of the aionion purgation and expiatory sufferings, those who have gone even to this extremity of wickedness." "The soul which is united to sin must be set in the fire, so that that which is unnatural and vile may be removed, consumed by the aionion fire." (*De an. Et Res. li. P. 658*)

**BASIL THE GREAT** (~370): "It is the sins which are consumed, not the very persons to whom the sins have befallen." "The mass of [Christians] say that there is to be an end of punishment to those who are punished." (*De Asceticis*)

**JEROME** (~375): "The wrath of the fury of the Lord [comes] in pity and with a design to heal, in order that every one may return to the confession of the Lord, that in Jesus' Name every knee may bow, and every tongue may confess that He is Lord. All God's enemies shall perish, not that they cease to exist, but cease to be enemies." (*Mic. V. 8*)

**THEODORET THE BLESSED** (~400): "In the present life God is in all, for His nature is without limits, but he is not all in all. But in the coming life, when mortality is at an end and immortality granted, and sin has no longer any place, God will be all in all. For the Lord, who loves man, punishes medicinally, that He may check the course of impiety" (*Homily on Ezekiel vi. 6.*)

**PETER CHRYSOLOGUS** (~435): "Never would Christ have said, 'You will never get out until you have paid the last penny' unless it were possible for us to get cleansed...in the world to come." (*Sermon on the Good Shepherd*)

**MARTIN LUTHER** (~1520): "God forbid that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depth of the Divine mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future." (Letter to Hanseu Von Rechenberg in 1522)