

Hope Beyond Hell **Gerry Beauchemin, Malista Press, Texas** **A Review – Critique**

Critique by Peter Sammons - July 2017

Universalism

The thesis of this book is that all will be saved and brought in to God's eternal kingdom. It therefore runs counter to the normative Christian understanding of Hell and Heaven as both being eternal, and as destinies decided by attitude to Christ expressed and worked out in this life.

Beauchemin's thesis is that we are not to be unduly concerned about 'life' beyond the grave, as all will be saved, irrespective. Beauchemin posits that a "God of Love" could not send people to Hell as this would be unloving and, furthermore, that God would in some senses be defeated if He is 'compelled' to send people to Hell and that such compulsion demonstrates that God is not truly sovereign as He is defeated by Man's sin.

I review this book with three proverbial hats on my head: as a publisher, as a writer, and as a bible believing Christian. I find the book wanting in each of these three spheres.

Beauchemin in several places cites "the unconditional love of God" as undergirding his thesis, but he does not acknowledge that this specific phrase is nowhere found in Scripture (indeed it is a rather modern concept). More important, many would argue that the "condition" attached to the love of God expressed in e.g. John 3:16 is precisely the blood of Christ (John 3:14). Similarly Beauchemin does not define the loose and variable English word 'love' with its correct biblical cognates – agape (Greek) or hesed (Hebrew). I would cite Beauchemin's misunderstanding of God's love and His nature as love as being the key flaw in this entire enterprise.

Beauchemin takes the view that the doctrine of Hell makes God unattractive to the world at large, and that many accordingly reject what they see as a God of vengeance. This may be true in a limited sense, but those same people also

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reject the cross (as unattractive) and reject Jesus' call to pick up our cross daily and to follow Him (as unattractive). Generally people want salvation, but want no conditions attached to it. I would argue that this is what "Hope Beyond Hell" tries to offer them – it offers them something they actually WANT to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). I am immediately reminded that back in the 1970s the institutional church in the West was told that if it admitted women to Ministry then there would be millions of women who would suddenly be able to flock to church – presumably bringing their men-folk with them. Christianity would then be attractive and seen as non-exclusive. I note that since the 1970s the Western church's decline has been steady and unchecked. I am reminded that some tell us today that we must "meld" with other religions to become more attractive – and indeed some churches are doing this. Yet the decline of the institutional church remains unchecked by this supposedly "attractive" move. And today we are told that to accept the World's verdict on gender dysphoria will make the church attractive and non-discriminatory – which much of the church is now accommodating with gusto. And yet these churches' decline is, if anything, accelerating. I cannot help but think that a further surrender of Biblical truth as regards judgement and eternal punishment will make absolutely no difference whatsoever to people's attitude to Jesus and to the Cross – and that is what this really boils down to.

It is not the purpose of this review to "disprove" Universalism. Many have explored this subject from a Christian viewpoint. My own book "The Empty Promise of Godism" (about the interfaith/multifaith agenda) responds adequately to many of the classic questions that Universalism seeks to "answer", especially the nature and attributes of God, and what happens to those who never even hear the good news of Jesus. My book is freely available as PDF chapters via the Christian Publications International website. A very quick response to Universalism can be found here: <https://carm.org/christian-universalism>. The purpose of this review is primarily to point out that Universalism, especially the sort espoused by Beauchemin, raises as many questions as it tries to answer. So this review will focus on these.

Beauchemin and his book

This element of the review looks at "Hope Beyond Hell" as a publishing venture. I could not help but note and ponder the surname Beauchemin. Beau = good. Chemin = path. So is Mr Beauchemin offering us a new and better path to peace with God? I note that Universalism tells us that all will be saved. This to me implies a broad path, and that *starting point* and *journey route* are both unimportant as God will determine the end-point, irrespective. To many people this will be an attractive prospect; however I am bound to compare what Beauchemin proffers (a broad path that he pronounces 'good') with what the Lord Jesus specifically said: **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.**

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it". (Matthew 7:13-14, NIV). Whose thesis should I follow? That of Jesus or that of Beauchemin?

The book contains 2 pages headed "what others are saying". I Googled most of the cited commentators – a few do not show up at all – and without being too blunt, they are not a particularly impressive group! Clearly some are known as Universalists. One is a Mennonite – a noted liberal (i.e. non-Biblical) denomination. The only Briton amongst them claims to undertake 'research' into near death experiences and runs a website that seeks to counsel the bereaved with a Universalist slant. One commentator is a vanity publisher, one a musician, one a prosperity preacher. We find a similarly in Beauchemin's frequent quotations from other writers in support of his thesis; these are one-sided and Beauchemin does not seek to engage meaningfully with any text that offers a traditional alternate view. Also, as a matter of record, most of the books he quotes are well out of copyright – puzzling as he is by no means the only modern commentator to proffer a Universalist gospel.

The last point to make on this book *as a publishing venture* is to note that Malista Press is a vanity publisher. It must be notable with any book (of this controversial nature) that it has not commanded the support of a recognized Christian publisher. It is a DIY venture.

The Basic Thesis and Non-Sequitur

There are some people, amongst whom will be believing Christians, who are troubled about the eternal destiny of deceased loved ones. Whilst it is right that we should be concerned, especially before any profession of living faith in Jesus as Lord and as Saviour, it is not right that we should be fixated on this question. Either we trust God to do the right thing, whatever that may be, or we do not. God is not in need of advice on what is right and wrong, and grieving friends and relatives cannot be expected ever to see with clarity the whole picture from God's perspective. Either we trust Him in this matter, or we do not. Our objective should always be to seek after the Kingdom – in this world – and to tell others the simple *good news* wherever they are willing to listen to it. Note that the *good news* is not that "God loves you". Note that the good news is not that you can be saved. Note that the good news is not that Heaven awaits the saintly. The good news was expressed simply by our Lord Jesus. The good news is that the kingdom is NEAR! (See for examples Matthew 4:23 and Matthew 9:35).

Non-sequitur is a phrase that readers of *Hope Beyond Hell* should become familiar with. A non-sequitur is:

1. An inference or conclusion that does not follow from the premises or evidence.
2. A statement that does not follow logically from what preceded it.

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Throughout my review I penciled in the margin 'N-S' on every page where the author makes bold statements that to the theologically immature may seem to "follow" neatly, and yet in reality fail at both the scholastic and the logical levels: Just three examples will have to suffice in this critique:

(example 1)

"Because of the existence of Hell, most of humanity will suffer needlessly. How can a God of love create billions of people, knowing most will be tormented in hell forever?" (page 15). I would ask whether either of these propositions is widely believed amongst Christians, or is indeed a logical deduction from the words of Jesus. On page 15-16 the book proffers 13 bullet points that the author believes summarizes Hell as a doctrine. I penciled in the margin "none of these objections follows through logically".

It is a fact that many Christians are virtually illiterate as regards the Bible. I am sorry to have to be so blunt, but such 'students' will have zero ability to compare and contrast Beauchemin's assertions and choice verses with the broader scope of Scripture or of divine revelation generally. It is precisely at this sort of readership that this book is primarily aimed. Incidentally, Bible illiteracy is not confined to the ranks of the "laity"

(example 2)

"Most people believe God wills the best for every person on earth, but unfortunately, like us, He cannot get what He wants. We have brought God down to our own level. Because we cannot always get our will, it must be the same with God. We make His will out to be something merely hoped for or desired. In this section, we will consider what Scripture declares is His will for all humanity" (page 59). Again I penciled non-sequitur against this statement. What preceded it and what follows is not 'demonstrated' by the 'evidence' that Beauchemin proffers. Sadly those not well versed in Scripture and with no reference points will assume that Beauchemin must be right and that his arguments are 'logical'. But really they are not!

Throughout the book Beauchemin cites bible verses – sometimes he quotes them in full, sometimes he cites them in long strings of chapter-verse 'references'. In many places I considered them to be quoted entirely out of context. I think I am right that nowhere in the book did Beauchemin actually trouble to express the broader context from which a verse is taken and in which the original author meant his words to be understood. "A verse taken out of context is a pretext" says David Pawson. Never have I seen this truism more amply exemplified than in "Hope Beyond Hell".

(example 3)

Beauchemin cites Romans 14:10-12 as evidence that all shall be raised so as to defend their conduct at the Judgement Seat. He goes on to say: “*Note that “for” and “so then” link judgement (both before and after) with worship. Is this not evidence that there is a glorious purpose in judgement?*” I wrote ‘non-sequitur’ in the margin. The verse (taken out of context) does not ‘prove’ the point that the author assumes; at the very best it is merely a starting point for further discussion and exploration (page 75).

I suggest this is a weakness throughout the entire book.

Beauchemin’s basic thesis, then, is that because *God is love*, so He is defeated if He is ‘compelled’ to send anyone to Hell, because ‘love conquers all’ (page 13). The author believes in limited punishment in hell (e.g. page 75) and he also believe that many (all ???!) church attending Christians will also face limited punishment in Hell (e.g. page 77, 88 and 90). This element of the book is not explained adequately and I suspect that most of the Christians who want to believe in Universalism will raise at least one eyebrow at the thought that, although ‘saved’ as church-attending believers who have said a sinner’s prayer of repentance, they may yet face limited torment in hell. AND THIS IS WHERE WE MUST BEGIN TO EXPLORE THE UNANSWERED (INDEED UNASKED) QUESTIONS posed by “Hope Beyond Hell”:

- If everyone is ‘saved’ then have we put a ‘price’ on the blood of Christ?
- If everyone is saved, next time we hear of the murder of an innocent (say, a toddler) have we placed a “price” on that child’s life? So, for example, one child’s life might = one million years of torment. The “price” attached to the murder of the toddler then becomes one million years of torment in Hell. Result? The child’s life is no longer priceless – it has a price tag attached to it. And the ‘punishment’ somehow ‘makes up for’ the evil crime.
- As Beauchemin allows for limited torment, then WHO is undertaking the torment? Is it Jesus (who as the book’s cover says, holds the keys of Hell), or is it the Father, or is it the Spirit, or do they outsource the task to the angels?
- Is Satan also saved (and his angels)?
- If everyone is saved, what is the point of the cross?
- Why are the sheep and the goats (fundamentally) different? (Matthew 25:33).

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Beauchemin believes that the process of (time limited) torment in Hell then results in the 'victim' falling in love with God because, presumably, they come to "see" the effects of their sin, of the great "love" of God who is now displaying that love in the process of torment towards them, and so they are eventually filled with gratitude/love and at that point they are then admitted to the Kingdom.

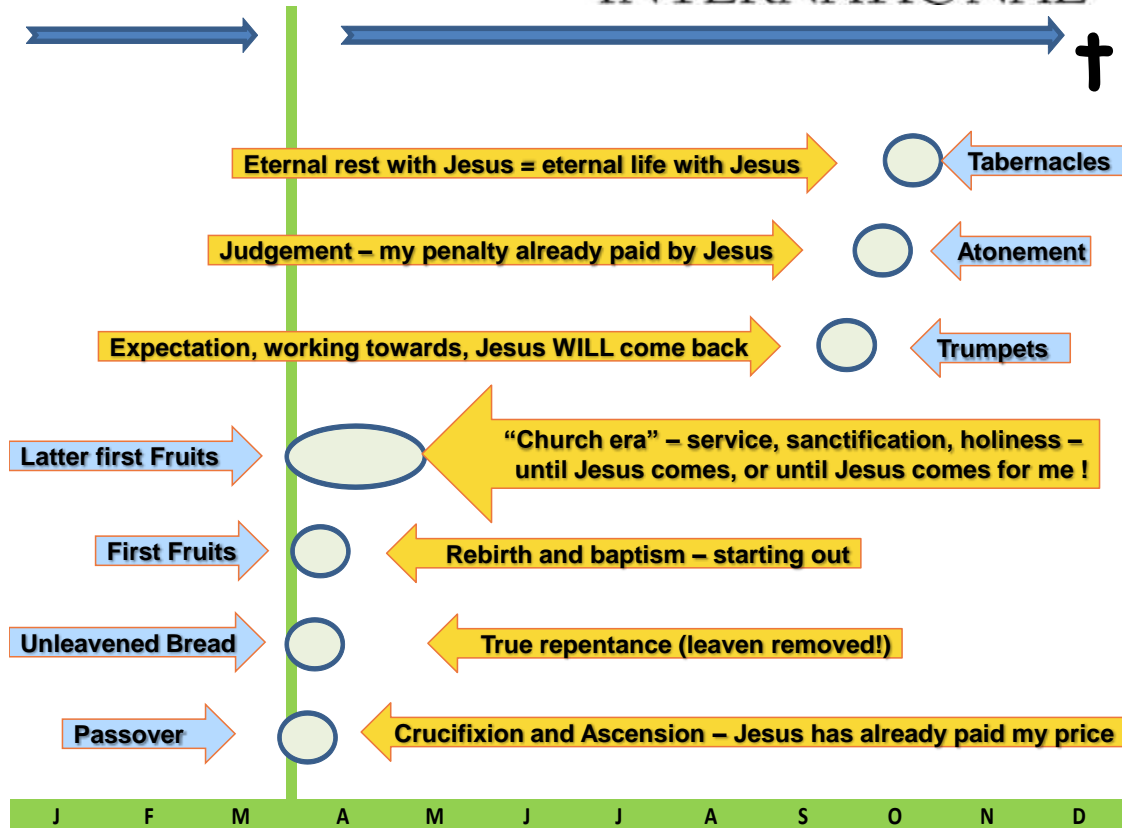
In several places Beauchemin uses the word "dragged" into the Kingdom – God does not so much 'draw' all men to Himself (John 12: 32); no this is correctly translated as "drags" all men to Himself, according to Beauchemin. See e.g. page 99. I think he is wrong on this but it certainly suits the purposes of his thesis.

Theology

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Beauchemin's theology is suspect: one example must suffice: on page 99 he says "*the phrase first fruits naturally implies there are second fruits*". This is part of his exploration of the concept of (and his rejection of) election in God's purposes. Absolutely not! Beauchemin displays here a complete lack of knowledge of where "first fruits" comes from. It comes from Leviticus 23. Following *first fruits* there comes, eventually, *latter first fruits*. I explore this subject in depth in my book "The Jesus Pattern",* where God's eternal purposes are set forth through the Hebrew Moedim. I suspect that Beauchemin has not even heard of the Moedim!

* <https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Pattern-Biblical-Feasts-Reveal/dp/099266747X>

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The Moedim are summarized above. In VERY simplified form, *first fruits* is Jesus, the first raised of a new humanity. *Latter first fruits* is (both, and simultaneously) all Jews who place their faith in Jesus and all Gentiles down through history who have placed their faith in Jesus. Both these groups are the eternal harvest – and a guaranteed harvest BECAUSE of *first fruits*. I repeat this is a gross oversimplification of a subject that I explore in 165 pages in my book, but I make the point here that Beauchemin makes assertions that display serious gaps in his understanding of basic Scripture. This does not give confidence that his overarching thesis (Universalism) is dependable – rather the opposite.

If “Hope Beyond Hell” has a favourite verse it is 1 Timothy 2:1-4, replicated here from the NIV: “**1** First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, **2** for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. **3** This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **5** For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time. **7** For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth”.

Beauchemin lays great store on verse 3 – 5 replicated here: “*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4](#) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5](#) For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6](#) who gave Himself as a ransom for all*”. The author’s thesis is that verse 4 means that God intends that ALL humans are to be saved and that any failure in achieving this objective represents a defeat of God who then ceases to be God! This is a false dichotomy, I believe. The normative Christian view of these verses could be stated thus: God does indeed desire that all should be saved and makes provision for all to be saved. But not all are saved because many reject Jesus as Lord and as Saviour and as King. Jesus did indeed give Himself as a ransom for all, and the debt of all can certainly be paid by Jesus, but sadly many will reject Jesus, so their debts remain unpaid.

Abdou’s Problem and Abortion is Merciful

In the introduction to “Hope Beyond Hell” the author posits what he presumably considers is an unanswerable situation – a *slam dunk* in American parlance. His imaginary Muslim friend, Abdou, has lost his wife and child in an imaginary tragic boating accident and comes to Beauchemin to find solace. He asks “*My wife and daughter have died a terrible death. Tell me I will see them again; tell me they are safe in God’s arms! Has your Jesus taken them to his heaven?*” (page 5). Whilst this situation is imaginary, it could potentially happen in real life, and it reflects perhaps a much broader issue, that some who have no faith in Jesus never the less expect and occasionally demand some comfort and assurance from this same Jesus whom they have rejected. When people are in real pain, how should the true Christian respond? Of course we should always ask ourselves – can this aggrieved and grieving person understand ANY answer that I choose to give him? (The answer is probably no). We cannot give “pat” answers to such difficulties but surely we should respond to it along these lines, after having issued an arrow-prayer to Jesus:

- ask your grieving friend “what would you do if you were God?” Depending on the answer, ask a follow-up: “why do you think that God would not act in the way you have just suggested?”
- you might go on to ask them, or suggest to them, that they might want (prayerfully) to work through their grief, but remind them that their journey of discovery will take years – and will probably change them for the better also.
- do they believe that God is good?
- do they believe that God is loving?

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- are they prepared to trust God whatever His decisions may be?
- gently remind your friend – **“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”**. (1 John 4:10, NIV). How did God show His love for us? John 3:14 provides the answer. God has shown His immense love through Jesus hanging on the cross (John 3:14 – *the Son must be lifted up*).

A true Christian will always be gentle with and offer hope towards those who are grieving. We are not obliged, though, to answer each and every question that a grieving person might put to us as though we were God. Yet Gerry Beauchemin seems to think that we should! This is not wise counsel.

We could posit to Gerry Beauchemin an equivalent hypothetical question: a grieving and angry mother seeks solace following the murder of her child. As she sees the murderer escape with a time-limited prison sentence (usually 12 years here in the UK) she approaches Gerry Beauchemin and asks him, angrily, “are you telling me that your God and that your Jesus is going to grant him eternal life and eternal bliss? Where is the justice in that?” For such a grieving parent the idea of a “snowflake” *forgiving God* could be equally unattractive..... We should not be in the business of providing pat answers

Another area of faulty ‘reasoning’ in “Hope Beyond Hell” is that abortion becomes a quick and sure method to “save” souls (page 155). We have of course heard this old chestnut before – if people are not born so they have not sinned, and so their souls must automatically go to heaven. Ergo – abortion must be good! Whilst the unborn who die/are terminated do go to Heaven (I have never heard any Christian argue otherwise!) Gerry Beauchemin is too suave for his own good (or for his reader’s good!). His argument is not clever. Indeed it probably rather emphasizes the vacuousness of his other arguments that he needs to stoop so low.

The same applies to his next situation posed (page 155) – this one apparently a true story. An American mother, plainly acting out of severe mental illness (though Beauchemin does not acknowledge this) apparently murdered her five children because she thought they might go to hell. Beauchemin blames theology for the mother’s severe plight and her even severer actions. I simply pose the question, would this tragic mother have found another “reason” to murder her children had she not been fixated with Hell? This is a silly argument but once again tends to highlight that “Hope Beyond Hell” is a theology built on sand.

Temporary Torment and the Stockholm Syndrome

We return to the question earlier. If all or most are “punished” temporarily in Hell, is Jesus now the torturer in chief? Does He gaze lovingly down from heaven and look at those suffering and shout to them “have you had enough yet? Do you love me yet”? The very idea is preposterous. Universalists have placed a “price” on sins e.g. one child murdered = half a million years in torment. And then that torment presumably cancels out the child’s death (?)

Christ’s blood is no longer priceless. It has a price on it. That must be the outworking of “Hope Beyond Hell”. Grace no longer applies because “punishment” has been exacted.

Does Judas Iscariot get, e.g. 5 billion years in torment because his sin was one of the worst ever? But what did Jesus say? (See Matthew 26: 24). But after that Judas then loves Jesus and sees the errors of his ways? Is Judas’s betrayal of Jesus therefore OK?

The idea that we are tormented and then come to faith in Jesus (or come to “see” the love of God) is pretty poor, to say the least. Psychologists speak of “*The Stockholm Syndrome*” where those who are tortured or abused eventually come to “love” their abuser. Just Google *The Stockholm Syndrome* for further insights. However “Hope Beyond Hell” seems to place its trust in a sort of everlasting Stockholm Syndrome taking hold of those who are temporarily tortured (by God/Christ – or someone else?). This idea seems pretty tacky to me, not to mention potentially blasphemous – as it assigns the devil’s methods to Almighty God.

No Hell?

Gerry Beauchemin does believe in (temporary) Hell. But plenty of Universalists do not even believe that. Let us assume for one moment that we take the next logical step away from the biblical doctrine of Hell – and that is usually expressed as either Universalism or Annihilationism. This means that EVERY sinner can shake their fist in the face of a Holy and Righteous God and say “you can’t get me!” Every sinner so choosing, then actually gets away with sin. All they have to face is annihilation. Many think precisely that; when they breathe their last in this mortal life then they sleep peacefully forever – in the words of John Lennon “no heaven above us, no hell beneath”. Quite attractive to so many people, yet Jesus has said something very different: Jesus talked about Hell more than any other person in the Bible. He warned, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Did He say this simply to scare us? The reality of hell should frighten us, because not one word in the Bible about hell would ever make you want to go there — not if you take it seriously. The Bible speaks of hell

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as a place of absolute loneliness and despair and hopelessness. It calls it a place of “darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13). (See also Hebrews 9:27).

Jesus did not talk about hell just to scare us. He talked about it because He wants us to know that God has provided a way of escape! God doesn't want you to be separated from Him forever. He loves you, and He wants you to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Unlike hell, heaven is a place of joy and peace and freedom from all the fears and pains of this world. Who wouldn't want to go there?

The Bridegroom and the Wise & Foolish Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13

Gerry Beauchemin plainly does not understand the precise statement of Jesus that once the doors to the wedding celebration are closed, they are never opened again (verse 10). The “foolish virgins” have lost forever their invitation to the wedding feast. See for example Stephanie Cottam's book “Ready or Not He is Coming” (Christian Publications International) for a full treatment of this delicate subject. Incidentally, Cottam's book contains a core message even in its title: ready OR NOT

Why was hell created?

Hell is the place of suffering prepared by God for the devil and his angels (Matthew 18:9; 25:41). The words *Hades* (Greek) and *Sheol* (Hebrew) are sometimes associated with hell. However, Hades/Sheol is simply the place or realm where the spirits of people go when they die (see Genesis 37:35). Hades/Sheol is not necessarily a place of torment because God's people were said to go there as well as the wicked. In the New Testament, we find that Hades is somehow “compartmentalized.” That is, the realm of the dead is divided into a place of comfort and a place of torment (Luke 16:19–31).

There are other words associated with hell in the Bible such as *Gehenna* and *lake of fire*. It is clear that there is an actual place where the spirits of the unsaved go for eternity (Revelation 9:1; 20:15; Matthew 23:33).

Everything that ever was or is or will be is created by God, including hell (Colossians 1:16). John 1:3 says, “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” God alone has the power to cast someone into hell (Luke 12:5). Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). Jesus said that hell was “prepared” for Satan and the demons (Matthew 25:41). It is a just punishment for that wicked one – and his demons. Hell, or the lake of fire, will also be the destination for those who reject Christ (2

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Peter 2:4–9). The good news is that people can avoid hell. God, in His infinite mercy and love, has made a way of salvation for everyone who trusts in God's Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 36; 5:24).

“Hope Beyond Hell” seeks to explain away all the foregoing, but since Jesus gave the warnings plainly, and they are recorded for us, whom should we follow – Beauchemin or Jesus?

Aeon / Aion

The single biggest “peg” on which “Hope Beyond Hell” relies is that the Greek word Aeon (or spelled in HBH as Aion) does not always mean forever/eternity. Whilst there is validity in this statement, the context in which Jesus warns of the judgement to come can most straightforwardly be understood to mean that of eternity. To read it in a non intuitive way is to break the first rule of theological exegesis – we read it as the writer/speaker obviously meant it to be understood and only in some additional way if there is a compelling and overwhelming reason to do so. Pinning HBH's thesis on “the love of God” (n.b. not defined anywhere in the book) the author ignores the fact that Jesus made at least seven direct references to Hell and usually when He refers to Heaven he simultaneously brackets it with Hell. If hell is not eternal then is heaven also not eternal? This question is not addressed in “Hope Beyond Hell”.

Also, how many times did the Lord Jesus speak about the love of God in relation to all Mankind? Answer: just once – John 3:16 – and there is some debate about whether Jesus said this or whether it was a commentary by the apostle John on John 3:14 – but that is a debate for another day! ¹ My comment here is not to question the love of God; my comment is to question whether our modern and thoroughly sentimentalized understanding of what “love” is in any serious way reflects the sheer majesty of that word and that truth when found in Scripture.

Whilst “Hope Beyond Hell” makes great play on the word aeon, one cannot help but think the “scholarship” that supports this is rather thin. Where aeon means one thing it is usually clear, where it means another it is generally equally clear. Beauchemin is compelled to re-translate aeon to fit his thesis. He assumes without so much as a blush that the broad body of bible translators down through two millennia have made a huge mistake. Whilst there are places where translators have made mistakes or applied wrong emphases, this does not seem to be the case with the Greek word aeon.

¹ Was John 3:16 a statement by Jesus or a commentary by John? Pre 1960s bibles, there they use speech marks, end Jesus' discourse at the end of verse 15. More modern translations extend the speech marks to end of verse 21. Which translators were right?

Conclusion

I repeat that Beauchemin does not deal with any serious writer (or indeed any scholar at all) who holds a 'traditional' view of Heaven and Hell. They are apparently all wrong. It is worth pointing out four UK books that delve into this question in depth, which "Hope Beyond Hell" will find somewhat inconvenient. These useful books explore the traditional and normative understanding of Hell:

- David Pawson – The Roads to Hell (most recent and still widely available)
- John Benton – How Can a God of Love Send People to Hell?
- Alex Buchanan – Heaven and Hell
- John Blanchard – Whatever Happened to Hell?

If "Hope Beyond Hell" is right then what difference might it make to the sharing of the gospel with a fallen world? Probably very little, as most people already ignore Hell as an issue. But what if Gerry Beauchemin is wrong? Is he needlessly (and defiantly?) administering a spiritual sedative – something to tell people to ignore their eternal future? If so, Beauchemin carries a heavy burden of responsibility.

He tells us that the Bible does not major on the theme of Hell and speculates that the reason for this is that eternal damnation simply does not happen. So, says Mr Beauchemin, the Bible is right but about limited punishment but that all those down through church history that have interpreted limited punishment as eternal punishment have simply been wrong.

What does Jesus offer, by contrast? What does the glorious gospel offer? What does the entire meta-narrative of Scripture offer from Genesis to Revelation? These all offer **HOPE BEFORE HELL!** Hell is not a major theme because it is meant for the devil and the devil is only a bit - part actor in the story of The Kingdom. Whist the Bible does not specifically expound this, we can say with assurance that *eternal life is an inevitable outcome from the moment of conception*, for good or for ill – surely one reason why God is very definite about the circumstances in which new lives are to be brought into this world ². Those who are destined for Hell walk in there with their eyes open; quite literally they have sided with the devil and his agenda in consciously rejecting the cross and the blood of Jesus in propitiation for their sins. There is absolutely no need for (and no real evidence for) a spurious 'Hope Beyond Hell' because all such hope is concentrated in the here and now! Jesus has lived for me! He has died for me! He is risen for me too! One day He will return for me, whether through death of 'natural' causes, or at the Parousia! That's all I really need to know and to place my hope in. Hope is very much concentrated *before* Hell and for that I praise Jesus – each and every day!

² Explored a little in my book "One Flesh – What Jesus Teaches about Love, Relationships, Marriage and a Lot More"