

it is difficult to speak, on the basis of Paul's letters, about the traditional bodiless existence of unbelievers immediately after their death, or about their final physical resurrection. For the purpose of further discussion the author assumes, however, the presence of Paul's conviction about the resurrection of unbelievers in his writings and wonders whether, on the basis of the available statements about the eschatological state of unbelievers, it is legitimate to defend one of the three views on hell. This analysis leads to the conclusion that none of the views can be proven without the accusation of overinterpretation and a priori assumption of a particular scenario on the afterlife fate of unbelievers, though these may be claimed to be derived from exegesis. Thus it turns out, in a further attempt to reconstruct the Pauline view of hell, that his lack of belief in the afterlife existence of the unconverted can be harmonized with the basic 'death' vocabulary which he uses to describe their ultimate fate. This means that Paul probably thought that the existence of unbelievers ends with their physical death.