

A critique of James Bryan Smith's book, *The Good and Beautiful God*

Tim and Connie Davis
whateverispure.org

December 8, 2015

This document illustrates the false teachings presented by James Bryan Smith in his book *The Good and Beautiful God*. The book should be entirely discarded because it distorts the Gospel and introduces and encourages the teachings and practices of Renovaré. Renovaré distorts the Gospel, denigrates the authority of Scripture, and advocates unbiblical practices in the Christian life. A full critique of Renovaré is posted at whateverispure.org. The following table provides a summary of the differences between Smith's distorted gospel and the true gospel presented in Scripture. The rest of this document elaborates on each of these comparisons.

Topic	Smith's view, as presented in <i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>	Scriptural view
Judgment	God is not our judge	God is our judge and we are guilty of sin; He forgives those who repent
Before conversion	sin not normative	we are enslaved to sin
Result of sin	only causes harm	also kills
God's view of sinners	delight, regardless of actions	unrepentant sin not tolerated
Sin	does not separate us from God	separates us from God
Hell	on earth, can escape	lake of fire, no escape
God's wrath	temporary	eternal
Jesus' forgiveness	given to all, regardless of repentance	given to all who believe and repent, no one else
Rejecting God's love	God feels pain, nothing more	our eternal death
Heaven	now, on earth	not yet, not on earth

All quotations in this document, whether from Scripture or from Renovaré materials, are placed in Helvetica font (like this). All emphasis and quotation marks are from the original material (except where quotation marks are added to inline quotes, by convention). All underlining in Scripture is added by the authors. Greek and Hebrew words are in italics.

About this document: This document is online at <http://whateverispure.org>.

Although this document is self-contained when read on paper, the PDF version at whateverispure.org includes many clickable links to web sites for more information. Such links are made only to authoritative web sites. For example, all of the quotes from Smith's book can be read online via Google Book Search, at this link: <http://books.google.com/books?id=uB1z0cCzDF0C>. Scripture verses are from www.biblegateway.com. The definitions and uses of Greek and Hebrew words are from blueletterbible.org. Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This document is Copyright ©2015, Tim and Connie Davis. All Rights Reserved. This document may be freely distributed in hard-copy or electronic form. If distributed, this document must remain unmodified in both content and format, and distributed at or below the cost of photocopying, postage, etc. Contact info@whateverispure.org for more information.

1 James Bryan Smith, co-founder of Renovaré

Renovaré is an organization co-founded by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith that advocates mystical meditative practices, distorts the gospel, and has an errant view of Scripture. For example, Renovaré claims that Genesis is prehistoric borrowed mythology, and that Isaiah’s prophesy about Jesus is merely in the “interpretative imagination” of the early Church. They advocate mystical meditation in which repeated words or phrases are used to drive away all thoughts. In this meditation, they claim to receive actual words from Jesus after entering a realm of darkness populated by evil spirits. They claim that Scripture is a secondary “indirect” revelation at the same level as culture, cataclysmic events, forms of worship, preaching, and sacraments.

Many of Renovaré’s distortions of the gospel are to be found in the book entitled *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, James Bryan Smith, 2009, Book One of the 3-part *Apprentice Series*. Smith’s book is an introduction to Renovaré, and an invitation to “come and walk with” them.

You may not immediately recognize it, but the book you have just read is very much a part of what Renovaré is all about – it has the same DNA as Renovaré So I hope you don't stop here
Come and walk with us. (back page of the book)

Since Smith invites his readers to follow Renovaré, all of the teachings and practices of Renovaré must also be considered when evaluating the distortions found in Smith’s book. A full discussion of these distortions and false teachings is found in our primary document, *Renovaré Teachings and Practices that Contradict Scripture*, posted at whateverispure.org. This document focuses solely on James Bryan Smith’s book, *The Good and Beautiful God*, and is a subset of our primary document.

2 Smith’s Distortion of the Gospel

The following tables show where Smith’s distorted gospel differs from the gospel presented in Scripture. All quotes in the left column are from *The Good and Beautiful God*, by James Bryan Smith, unless otherwise noted.

<p>Smith: God is not our judge.</p>	<p>Scripture: God is our judge and we are guilty of sin. God forgives those who repent.</p>
<p>Smith quotes the authors of a book entitled <i>Story Revisions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World</i> as saying "Narrative is the central function ... of the human mind." Smith then says in his own words:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. ... And here is the main point: these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, pp. 24-25)</p> <p>In Smith's mind a false narrative is life-ruining. Smith then calls the following a false narrative:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If God were our judge, the verdict would be "Guilty as charged." (Smith, p. 78)</p> <p>According to Smith's view, the false narrative that is ruining our lives is this: God is our judge and the verdict is "guilty." Smith makes no distinction between the way God views forgiven Christians versus non-Christians, because in his view, all people are forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus not only forgives the sin of all people for all time, he broke the power of sin itself. (Smith, p. 153)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>God judges both the believer and the unbeliever.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:17-19)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (John 5:28-30)</p> <p>We are all guilty of sin, having broken the entire law.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)</p> <p>God will judge the sins of men. God's judgment on sin is an integral part of the gospel. Without it, the reason for Jesus coming to save us has no meaning. Distorting this truth distorts the gospel.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:11-16)</p> <p>References to God's wrath and anger appear with equal frequency in the Old and New Testaments. God's characteristics (both His love and His wrath) do not change from the Old to the New Testament.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? (Romans 3:5b-6)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Smith: God is not our judge (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: God is our judge and we are guilty of sin. God forgives those who repent (continued).</p>
<p>Smith quotes Exodus 20:5 as an example of this false narrative “seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible.” Smith says that God is telling us a life-ruining false narrative when He speaks His word in Exodus 20:5.</p> <p><i>“God is an angry judge. If you do well, you will be blessed; if you sin, you will be punished.”</i> Not only is this narrative found in most primitive religions, it is also seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 20:5 we read the following warning about idols: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parent, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.” The rabbis in Jesus’ day taught this, and it was the dominant narrative among the people Jesus associated with. ... Though it has ancient Jewish roots, this narrative is also held by modern Christians. (Smith, pp. 40-41)</p>	<p>Although we all deserve death, God loves us so much that He provides a way for us to be forgiven, at great cost to Himself.</p> <p>As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-16)</p> <p>God is a jealous God, but He is also patient and calls people to turn back from their evil ways.</p> <p>You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (Exodus 20:5)</p> <p>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)</p> <p>Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’ (Ezekiel 33:11)</p> <p>God calls people to repent because He “has fixed a day” when He will judge “all people.”</p> <p>Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)</p> <p>God forgives our guilt if we repent.</p> <p>I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:5)</p> <p>Because of God’s goodness and love, He has provided a way for us so that if we repent and believe in Him, we do not bear the punishment our sin deserves. Those who do not believe in Him oppose His goodness, and the penalty for sin remains on them. See also John 3:17-18, Revelation 14:6-7, Revelation 20:12-13, Romans 2:5-11, and Matthew 25:31-46.</p>

<p>Smith: Sin is not normative before conversion.</p>	<p>Scripture: Enslaved to sin before conversion.</p>
<p>Smith claims that sin is not the norm or the standard for the unbeliever.</p> <p>While sin is not actually normative before conversion (even the unregenerate don't say about sin, "Hey, that was really life-enhancing!"), sin <i>after</i> conversion is even more disconcerting. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, p. 158, emphasis in original)</p>	<p>Prior to coming to Christ, we are enslaved to sin, and "by nature children of wrath." According to the Scriptures, sin is clearly normative before conversion, because it is our "nature."</p> <p>Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." (John 8:34)</p> <p>For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Titus 3:3)</p> <p>But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18)</p> <p>And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:1-3).</p>

<p>Smith: The only reason God does not want us to sin is because sin harms us.</p>	<p>Scripture: Sin does more than harm us, it kills us.</p>
<p>According to Smith, the "only" consequence of our sin is that it harms us.</p> <p>True, God does not want us to sin, and God does want us to do well. But that is only because sin harms us, and acts of goodness are healing both to us and to the recipients of our goodness. (Smith, p. 77)</p> <p>Smith never says that unrepentant sin leads to eternal death.</p>	<p>The penalty for sin is eternal death:</p> <p>Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:41,46)</p> <p>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).</p> <p>See also Ezekiel 33:11 on the previous page.</p>

<p>Smith: God looks at us with delight regardless of what we have done.</p>	<p>Scripture: God does not look on unrepentant sinners with delight.</p>
<p>Smith quotes a story that describes God looking at us with delight, like a baby staring at people.</p> <p>THE GOD WHO DELIGHTS IN YOU. ... a simple story of discovering God in the face of a child “The baby was staring intently at other people, and as soon as he recognized a human face, ... he would respond with absolute delight. ... I realized that this is how God looks at us, staring into our faces in order to be delighted, to see the creature he made and called good ...” (Smith, pp. 86-87)</p> <p>Smith affirms this “narrative” by asking a rhetorical question.</p> <p>What if God were actually like the one in this narrative, a God who responds to us with “absolute delight” regardless of how we look or feel, or what we have or have not done? (Smith, p. 87)</p> <p>Smith claims that God looks at us “with ‘absolute delight’ regardless” of whether or not we repent. Smith’s view is based on his own interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son (see discussion in the table immediately below). He claims that the father took delight in the prodigal son even when the son was unrepentant.</p>	<p>God hates the wicked (unrepentant sinners).</p> <p>For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. (Psalm 5:4-6)</p> <p>The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face. (Psalm 11:5-7)</p> <p>See also Galatians 3:10, Hebrews 1:8-9, Deuteronomy 27:26, Ephesians 2:3, and Psalm 45:6-7.</p> <p>In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), the father waited patiently for the son to repent and return. However, the father delighted in the son <i>only</i> when the son turned from his sin. Prior to the son’s repentance, the father felt compassion for his son, but did not take delight in him. Instead, the father said twice that “this son of mine was dead” (v. 24 and v. 32).</p>

<p>Smith: Sin does not separate us from God.</p>	<p>Scripture: Sin separates us from God.</p>
<p>Smith says that sin does not separate us from God. He discusses the story of the prodigal son, and then wraps up with his “chief point:”</p> <p>The chief point is that there is only one thing that separates us from God, and it is not our sin. It is our self-righteousness. Our self-righteousness does not turn God from us, but us from God. It is not my sin that moves me away from God, it is my refusal of grace, both for myself and for others. (Smith, p. 102)</p>	<p>Scripture says that sin separates us from God.</p> <p>For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)</p> <p>But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)</p>

<p>Smith: Hell is on earth, and the doors of hell are locked from the inside.</p>	<p>Scripture: Hell is a lake of fire from which there is no escape.</p>
<p>Smith believes that hell is on earth and can be escaped at any time. He says that “hell is simply isolation from God,” and “a person ... who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth.” He says a person may leave hell at any time by accepting God’s love.</p> <p>Because God is love, hell – a place of separation from God – is necessary. Love does not demand love in return; it is not coercive. God does everything he can to reach out to us, and yet people are free to reject that love. Hell is simply isolation from God. A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. God will not violate the choices we make. People may choose to bar God from their life. Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (Smith, p. 125)</p>	<p>Scripture says there is no escape from hell, a place not only of isolation from God, but eternal torment as well.</p> <p>Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)</p> <p>In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ... But Abraham said, “... between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.” (Luke 16:23,25a,26)</p> <p>Jesus holds the keys to hell.</p> <p>When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” (Revelation 1:17-18)</p> <p>Unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire and will remain there permanently. No mention in Scripture is ever made of a resurrection from “the second death.” Instead, Jesus says that “nothing unclean ... shall ever come into” heaven.</p> <p>But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)</p> <p>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21:24-27)</p> <p>See also the next page on the eternal wrath of God.</p>

<p>Smith: God's wrath is temporary.</p>	<p>Scripture: God's wrath is eternal.</p>
<p>Since Smith views hell as merely on earth, and escapable, he also sees God's wrath as temporary.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God's wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i>. (Smith, p. 121, emphasis in the original)</p>	<p>The wrath of God endures forever on those who do not obey the Son.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God <u>abides</u> (<i>menō</i>: remain, abide, continue to be, not to perish, last, endure; remain as one, not become another/different) on him. (John 3:36)</p> <p>The penalty of disobeying the gospel is “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)</p>

<p>Smith: Jesus forgives the sin of all people for all time.</p>	<p>Scripture: Jesus forgives the sin of all who repent (and no one else).</p>
<p>Smith states the universalist* position that all sin is forgiven for all people for all time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus not only forgives the sin of all people for all time, he broke the power of sin itself. This does not mean everyone is saved. Only those who call upon his name experience that forgiveness. (Smith, p. 153)</p> <p>Smith states that all are forgiven, but not all are saved. In doing so, Smith redefines the word <i>saved</i>. According to Smith, being “saved” means experiencing the forgiveness that everyone already has, regardless of repentance. In Smith’s view, everyone is forgiven of all their sin, but not everyone knows, feels, or experiences that forgiveness.</p> <p>*universalism: “a theological doctrine that all people will eventually be saved.” (Webster’s Dictionary).</p>	<p>Scripture says that forgiveness is available to all, but given to only those who believe in Him (and to no one else). Those who do not believe are not forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)</p> <p>Jesus says there is a sin that shall not be forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31). See also Mark 3:29 and Hebrews 10:26-31.</p> <p>Believers cannot commit this sin, since it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to repent and believe.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)</p> <p>Referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus says.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (John 16:8-9, see also John 16:14-26)</p> <p>The sin which cannot be forgiven (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) is to reject the Holy Spirit’s enabling of repentance and belief, because forgiveness only comes to those who repent. Those who harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit will not enter His rest.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.” ... And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:7-9,18-19)</p>

<p>Smith: The only result of rejecting God’s love is that God feels pain.</p>	<p>Scripture: The result of rejecting God’s love is eternal death.</p>
<p>Smith asks a question.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What would happen if humans rejected his love? (Smith, p. 139)</p> <p>He then answers it on the same page. The only thing that happens is that God feels pain.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God experienced the pain of unrequited love. (ibid.)</p> <p>No mention is made of any other consequence. The above statement is Smith’s entire answer to his question: “What would happen if humans rejected his love?”</p>	<p>If we reject God, we suffer eternal destruction.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “the LORD will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31. See also Isaiah 26:11 and Deuteronomy 32:35-36).</p>

<p>Smith: We can experience heaven now, on this earth.</p>	<p>Scripture: We are not yet in Heaven because Heaven is not on this earth.</p>
<p>Just like his notion of hell (on earth), Smith also says we can experience heaven on earth.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As a Christ-follower ... you are a completely new person who is able to experience heaven now and will be fully glorified on your final breath in this life. (Smith, p. 156)</p>	<p>Jesus goes to prepare a place for us in Heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)</p> <p>See also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.</p>

James Bryan Smith's hell compared with Scripture:

The table below compares and contrasts Smith's notions of hell and the Scriptural view of hell.

	Smith's view of hell	Scriptural view of hell
Description	<p>Simply isolation from God Because God is love, hell – a place of separation from God – is necessary. ... Hell is simply isolation from God. ... A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, p. 125)</p>	<p>Thirst, eternal fire, demons In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame." (Luke 16:23,24)</p> <p>Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14)</p> <p>the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matthew 25:41b)</p>
For who?	<p>The unbeliever Love does not demand love in return; it is not coercive. God does everything he can to reach out to us, and yet people are free to reject that love. ... A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. (ibid.)</p>	<p>The unbeliever But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)</p>
Go when ...	<p>You bar God from your life God will not violate the choices we make. People may choose to bar God from their life. (ibid.)</p>	<p>God sends the unbeliever Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41a)</p> <p>fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28b)</p>
Duration, Purpose	<p>Temporary; just verdict Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (ibid.)</p> <p>God's wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i>. (ibid., p. 121, emphasis in the original)</p>	<p>Eternal punishment These will go away into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46a)</p> <p>He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)</p>

3 Annotated Bibliography

Below is a summary of all quotes taken from James Bryan Smith's book *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3531-7. Page numbers in left column of the table refer to pages in this document where the quote appears (if viewing the PDF, click on them to go to that page). Page number(s) in the original source follow each quote.

page	quotation
2	You may not immediately recognize it, but the book you have just read is very much a part of what Renovaré is all about – it has the same DNA as Renovaré (back page)
3	these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives. (pp. 24-25)
3	If God were our judge, the verdict would be “Guilty as charged.” (p. 78)
3, 9	Jesus ... forgives the sin of all people for all time, (p. 153)
4	“ <i>God is an angry judge. If you do well, you will be blessed; if you sin, you will be punished.</i> ” Not only is this narrative found in most primitive religions, it is also seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 20:5 we read the following warning about idols: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parent, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.” The rabbis in Jesus’ day taught this, and it was the dominant narrative among the people Jesus associated with. ... Though it has ancient Jewish roots, this narrative is also held by modern Christians. (pp. 40-41)
5	sin is not actually normative before conversion, (p. 158)
5	True, God does not want us to sin, and God does want us to do well. But that is only because sin harms us, and acts of goodness are healing both to us and to the recipients of our goodness. (p. 77)
6	What if God were actually like the one in this narrative, a God who responds to us with “absolute delight” regardless of how we look or feel, or what we have or have not done? (p. 87)
6	The chief point is that there is only one thing that separates us from God, and it is not our sin. (p. 102)
7, 11	Hell is simply isolation from God. A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. ... People may choose to bar God from their life. Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (p. 125)
8, 11	God’s wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i> . (p. 121)
10	What would happen if humans rejected his love? ... God experienced the pain of unrequited love. (p. 139)
10	As a Christ-follower ... you are ... able to experience heaven now and will be fully glorified on your final breath in this life. (p. 156)