

THE FLAWS OF ANNIHILATIONISM

According to the Seventh-day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Worldwide Church of God and the Christadelphians the wicked will one day be destroyed, put out of existence, permanently. Instead of going to burn alive forever in Hell they will simply undergo eternal death. This doctrine is called annihilationism. Annihilation-ists may believe that we have immortal souls which are the real us which are put out of existence by God or that the soul is not inherently immortal and is just the life-force of the body which body is the real person.

A good response to cults that say that the traditional Hell is unscriptural can be read in Walter Martin's book, Jehovah of the Watchtower.

Would God rather put a person out of existence then punish that person forever? What is the kindest? The person would probably rather be non-existent. But ethics decrees that the person is absolutely valuable and must not be destroyed even to end the worst of suffering. If persons are not this valuable their welfare is not worth worrying about. Annihilationism denies morality and replaces it with hypocrisy. The only thing it can say in its defence is that the Bible denies this morality and even commands capital punishment.

Persons should be more important to God than suffering or sin so he should not put them out of existence. Sin should be wrong for it hurts and degrades us meaning that we are more important than it.

The Holy One of Justice cannot merely put the damned out of existence as if the pain they caused or willed doesn't matter. Mere death is too lenient so they would need to be tortured before it. And as long as they exist until they enter Heaven which may be never they will be able to sin or repent. If they sin, God will have to keep punishing them as long as they sin. If they sincerely ask for forgiveness then he will have to change his mind about destroying them. Either way, he will not be able to annihilate them. Annihilationism is unreasonable. It makes God unjust for it isn't fair to put the fornicator out of existence in the same way as you do this to the mass-murderer. If God is good then he punishes.

If people are destroyed then they can never repent. But if they are alive in Hell they might though they never will at least God can say they can have a chance if they want it.

Annihilationists argue, "If Hell is unending and unimaginable agony and the souls can escape by repenting but won't and God is sure that they will never repent then he should put them out of existence to prevent them from living forever to suffer and pile on sins – for every moment one persists in sin is a new sin – by sinning for that long. It is better to condone their sins by ending their existence than to let them sin and suffer forever. It results in more sin. God loves sin if he lets them live".

God can freeze their wills so that they can sin not more but remain in the sin they have. The sin will exist whether or not the person is frozen or dead so it makes no difference to him.

The Christians have another objection, "How could God decide when to kill them? He would have to kill them soon after death for to let them live even for a while would be letting them sin. If he does that then sin doesn't matter. Why be afraid of sinning if both the wicked and the just have nothing bad to fear? Non-existence is painless." The objection is an insult to God for it says that anything even making sure people sin forever is better than saving people from everlasting sinning in hell leaving them the power to change for the better which is complete lunacy.

Annihilationism cannot be proven by reason.

Annihilationism is alleged to be taught in the Bible.

Paul declared that the wages of sin is death but that the gift of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23). He is just saying that bodily death is punishment and that bodily immortality is God's gift, he does not say that non-existence is the price of sin.

Death in the Bible often means spiritual death, that is, the state of being separated from God and not being his friend. It means the state of being dead or no use to God (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:8; Hebrews 9:14). Eternal death or eternal destruction in the Bible can mean eternal sinfulness.

It is argued that when God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they committed the sin of eating the forbidden fruit that the ultimate penalty for sin is unending non-existence. But God never told them that death would be their punishment. He just said it would happen. Their deaths were to happen that day, the day they sinned. Nothing happened. So Christians

have a fanciful answer, "They died spiritually and not physically."

The Bible never says that physical death alone is the punishment for sin.

Matthew 10:28, where Jesus commands us not to fear those who can kill the body but not the soul but to fear God who can destroy both is used to prove that one day God will put the wicked out of existence. But Jesus said God can do it not that he would. The verse implies that death is not the end and that the person survives it.

1 Timothy 6:16 proclaims that God is the only immortal being. If it is true that people had been raised to immortality since the death of Jesus and who was raised himself then this simply means that God was the only absolutely immortal being. Other immortal beings can lose theirs but he cannot. He is immortal in himself but other beings are only immortal because of him.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 hopes and forecasts that the wicked will suffer eternal ruin away from the presence of the Lord. Destruction does not mean going out of existence here but the destruction of the soul by turning it into something corrupt and hateful and evil.

Hebrews 10:26, 27 says that sinners will be consumed by the fire of the wrath of God. Annihilationists emphasise that this says consumed not torment. But the phrase, fire of the wrath of God shows that this is not literal fire. Sinners will be killed by God's wrath – that is they may die without fire. We still say a person burns with anger. And anyway the damned could be consumed in Hell with God continually making bodies for them from the ashes so that they be consumed forever and ever. They could be half consumed and God restores them again to be consumed again. Iron can be said to be consumed in fire even though the fire does not destroy it. Verses 29-31 make it clear that a fate worse than being stoned to death awaits those who break God's law at the hands of God. God is really vindictive. These verses are really vindictive because they want this to happen to anybody who rejects Christ and the Spirit of grace!

Revelation 20:14 says that being thrown into the pool of fire is the second death. Does it mean that people who go there cease to exist? It cannot for all God has to do is to will them to stop existing and does not need to go to the trouble of making a fire to dispose of them in. They must be there to be tortured. Annihilationists reply that the first death must have been physical death so the second must be the death of the resurrected wicked. But with the doctrine of original sin, you can say that the first death was our coming into being in sin, in spiritual death, and that the second death is our final abandonment to sin and separation from God. Revelation says that death itself was thrown in. It makes no sense to say that death ended in the fire if that was what it was for and maybe physical death ended in the fire for it was full of immortal beings. It ended the second they became immortals.

The places where the Bible says that souls die are not meant literally for we talk about souls when we don't mean souls. Soul often means breath in the Bible which confuses things further. When the breath dies it ceases.

The Case for Faith page 255 says that if God annihilated the damned to spare them the suffering of losing him forever he would be treating them as a means to an end or degrading them. What is meant by this is that if you choose to reject God forever then he is doing you wrong and treating you as a non-person by refusing your choice (page 254). But the damned wouldn't want to suffer forever and especially over such a nice God! It would be like a child choosing to suffer forever by refusing sweets he would really like. The damned would want to get away from God if they hate him so much that they would rather be put out of existence. They hate him because they love themselves too much so their wanting to suffer consciously forever would be absurd. The suffering wouldn't be doing God any good or themselves. People don't all make the same choice. All the damned making the choice to stay conscious and suffer makes no sense. At least some would choose to be put out of existence. What about their right to choose not to exist?

However, if you argue that human life is more important than happiness you can then argue that God is right to keep the damned in existence despite their suffering. On this reasoning, you can't say that the most important thing is for people to be happy. If lives are not more important than happiness then how can you say that people should be happy? Life needs to be the most important thing for happiness to have any importance at all.

Those who say that the Bible says that there is no Hell and that death will be the end for the wicked are wrong and reason is against their annihilation doctrine too.