

IS THE EXIT DOOR IN HELL ALWAYS OPEN AND THE PROBLEM IS NOBODY WILL USE IT?

If the Christian doctrine that unrepentant sinners who have turned their backs on God will go to everlasting punishment the moment they die is true then how does that impact on the doctrine of free will - which is essentially the doctrine that we can change our minds purely of our own volition?

One answer is that the person hardens themselves in evil forever and though God can heal them they will not let him.

The other answer is that you choose to get God to fix your will in evil for all eternity.

Here we are looking at the first answer.

Some think that God has nothing to do with Hell at all and we make it by our sins and we suffer it against the will of God and the horror of Hell is in having lost the God we crave. Do you suffer in Hell all of your own accord?

Sometimes, when one thinks of Hell one thinks of a place where hate-filled beings freely sin for all eternity. You think of God offering them the grace of repentance for he loves them but they won't accept it and just scream blasphemies all the more and spit blood in his face. In this view, God has had nothing to do with either actively or passively with their being in Hell for he can't force them – and he does not punish them but they create their own sufferings. But now it is time to slash up this doctrine that the souls who are being punished forever stay in Hell forever against the will of poor helpless heartbroken God of their own accord.

The endearing thing about the theory is that it says that Hell is no use to God because reason says it as well.

To say that people do the best with what they have, even if they do some extremely harmful things, is really to say that belief in sin is useless and even vile. If this is true, then there is no way everlasting punishment for sin can be justified. If sin is evil then it is not evil enough to justify being kept in Hell.

Catholics argue that God does all he can to keep people out of Hell. If so, then he doesn't give the wicked more evidence that he exists and loves them because they don't want him to. The idea that he would be forcing them if he made himself too obviously attractive to them is nonsense. You are never more free than when you are drawn to something like God that is supposed to be so good. Why do some missionary priests die young? God is not trying too hard.

It is odd to argue that people who never looked or cared for God in life suddenly will care when they die and suffer horrendous agony at the thought of what they have thrown away. It can only happen if God changes their feelings to torment them. So God has a lot to do with Hell and its agony then!

The doctrine that God is passive in relation to Hell really denies the teaching of Jesus that Hell is eternal punishment. You can't really punish yourself. True punishment is forced on you from outside. Even if God makes you punish yourself this is still God using you against yourself so he is still the real punisher. It is not you. To inflict torment on yourself to pay for some wrong you have done may be masochism but it is not punishment.

So to say you punish yourself is deflecting that this is another way for God to punish you. You are accused of self-inflicting it which is absurd and is not possible. Its a cover up and a lie and the believer has no moral compass when doing so.

If God does not punish, then he does not take sin seriously. If you think God is right to do that then clearly you hate the sinner when you hate the sin. If sin is evil and you oppose punishment then you do not take it seriously and you don't care about the harm done to the victims of sinners.

If God respects your free will enough to let you go to Hell forever then is it a case of him letting you get what you deserve because you deserve it and because your free will demands this treatment? Yes. The notion that this is not punishment is bizarre. To say your free will keeps you in Hell is the same as saying you are being punished.

People usually say we should not hate anybody because even if they do bad things that is not the whole picture – they have an even bigger good side. The doctrine of Hell claims that you will be so bad that you turn away from everybody and God and from happiness and not just for a while but forever. You can become ready for Hell in this life even though you won't seem totally bad! Obviously then Hell does away with the very reason for saying hate is bad. The doctrine is evil.

Interestingly the doctrine that evil is banal in the sense that it is so ordinary implies that Hell will be full of surprisingly normal beings! It shows that evil is not cartoonishly monstrous but more subtle than that.

The apostle Paul said he spoke for Jesus and Jesus spoke in him (1 Thessalonians 2:13, 4:2/ 2 Corinthians 13:3). He declared that if it were possible he would consent to be lost, that is damned and separated and rejected by God, if it could mean Israel could be saved in his stead (Romans 9:1-5). He stated that this was the truth and that the Holy Spirit revealed it to his conscience that it was true, "It is the truth that I have tremendous anguish over my people Israel and wish I could be lost and cut off from God to save them and I say this in union with Christ. My conscience assures me that it is the truth as does the Holy Spirit." This clearly indicates that the modern Christian notion that we make our own Hell and that God doesn't punish us there is false. If we make our own Hell it would be a sin to wish that you would sin and curse him and be lost forever even to save others. God sends people to Hell of his own free will. God went to the trouble of revealing to Paul that Paul would go to Hell for Israel to indicate his approval of Paul's feelings and anguish. The Church cannot say that the wish came when Paul was overcome by weakness and so his wish that would normally be a sin couldn't be for he didn't fully consent to it.

We know from the objectivist movement and from the ethical egoists that people can be selfish in a way that benefits others. That would be real selfishness. After all, if you care about yourself more than anybody else it hardly makes any sense to go about stealing and drinking to excess all the time. That is not caring about yourself at all. The notion that the people in Hell are there because they are selfish is just a cover for the fact that the doctrine seeks to put the blame on them. It is about getting God off the hook. It is vile to do that when God's existence is unproven. They are slandered because selfishness and hatred do not necessarily go together. It is assumed that because they are selfish that they are riddled with hatred for God and everything.

Is the suffering of Hell as bad as the fact that you defy God to be there? For the believer, in the light of the notion that God comes first for his own sake, it is not the suffering that should be focused on but the defiance of God. It is the disrespect shown to God he cares about. It is callous to be more worried about God than the suffering caused! The doctrine of God coming first is certainly inferring that going to Hell is not as bad as being selfish or self-centred not god-centred. Jesus said we are to love God alone ultimately - ie be all for God. That amplifies the fanaticism of this doctrine so that it cannot be any worse.

Most priests today define Hell as a place where there is no love for the love of God is shut out by the people in Hell. Each one is alone and feels unloved though God loves him or her. These doctrines are not in the Bible. They are lies told to rationalise the contradiction between the everlasting misery of Hell and the doctrine that Jesus was the perfect man and pure fountain of wisdom. Jesus described Hell as everlasting punishment. Self-inflicted isolation is not punishment. To say that God does not punish is to say that the saint in Heaven and the sinner in Hell should be equally praised. And why stop there? Why not say it of saints and sinners on earth too? Hell is not defined as the state where there is no love but as the state of everlasting punishment. Nowhere did Jesus say the main problem with Hell was that there was no love there. He speaks only of the emotional and physical pain there. He said the rich man in Hell wanted out to warn his brothers and gives no hint that the man was insincere. The Bible and the philosophers ask us to assume the person is good [though they might not be] when you see them doing good.

If you argue that God does not punish and rewards sins and thereby punishes the victims of the sinners then if you believe in the version of Hell taught by those priests you will surely end up in it. You want a Devil for a God and that is what you will get if the existence of Hell is true.

The saints no longer can sin for they are so attracted by God. They cannot resist him. There is no free will in Heaven and the saints are rewarded for having no free will while the damned are punished for still having it.

Reason and experience show that the reason why we act is very complex. There is a mixture of good and bad reasons behind everything we do. No matter how evil you want to be, you will never be that evil. You cannot be bad enough to freely isolate yourself in Hell forever from the God who pleads with you to come to him.

The damned are not mad. Madness happens to bodies not spirits. Anybody staying in Hell for all eternity is suffering from stupidity not evil. People cannot validly choose to go to God's torture chamber from which there is no reprieve. Thus the doctrine that they deserve it is vindictive.

If we suffer forever of our own accord in Hell then it is nonsense to speak of being God-fearing for there is nothing to fear in God. We have only to fear ourselves. But the Bible commands fear of God. Why should we fear Hell if nobody can put us there but ourselves? Fearing ourselves means "I fear me and those around me." That is a fast track to hate.

Christianity says that you can't come to God unless he does something magical or supernatural called grace to attract you. If one needs grace to please God and gain favours from him one has no free will until grace is given. God cannot torture an

unfree being for they cease to deserve it when they lose responsibility. So, the damned must be free if God is good.

He must give them graces to assist them towards penitence if the Catholic and Protestant idea is true that none can start loving God again or even think of making real peace with him without the graces. If he does not then he is forcibly preventing them from leaving Hell. If he gives them grace it is to taunt them with it and it is only offered for it is impotent and to confer free will on them so that they will misuse it and sin.

If Hell is very painful or even very boring - remember if evil is banal then Hell is banal then surely the time must come when the souls there will think that they have had enough and repent and go back to God. If it isn't so bad then there is no real need to deeply worry about it. Hell must be a ball compared to Heaven when the damned are determined to stay in Hell. The Church boasts about the martyrs who died on earth to testify to God and his power and ignores the martyrs in Hell who did more than them to prove that God is bad and should not be submitted to.

Some forms of Christianity have strangely taught that sinners should be pitied. It is impossible to see how you could sincerely pity somebody who is wilfully evil. Their sins are supposed to be their own fault and it is crazy and impossible to pity anybody that causes their own problems and it is really false pity because you are hating them in the sense that you are pretending they are not to blame for what is bad for them. If we don't pity them then we either hate them to some extent or we don't care what happens to them. But if we are supposed to pity them then it follows that if there is a Hell then we should pity them immensely more than we would if there were no Hell. When we find a murder victim or the victim of a rapist we should have more compassion for the attacker for the attacker is the one in most danger of Hell. Though we should pity the victim we should pity the attacker so much that there will be no room for pitying the victim and it is not our fault. Hell would imply that we should be soft and ineffectual people.

The attempt to make Hell out to be against the will of God is not the nice kindly theory it seems. You cannot refuse to impute cruelty to God and then say that he set up the laws that take us there though it is the ultimate in cruelty. Its very unkind.

We conclude that the doctrine of souls being detained in Hell because they won't repent and as long as they won't which is forever, is a superstition. It is a terrible thing to teach you can damn yourself forever no matter how it happens or if you stay freely or if you are made to stay. That is telling you the one person you should fear is yourself. In other words, that you are the only real enemy. That is hardly conducive to self-esteem. Nobody could be trusted if we could be that bad.

FINALLY

The notion of poor God being helpless and unable to get souls out of Hell is nonsense and an affront to his power. When the living repent and the damned won't he must have done something to them or put them in a situation that ensures that they won't repent. He wants them to weep and curse there without ever being comforted.

Instead of honouring human nature by saying we can't become evil enough to willingly stay in Hell forever, believers put the fact that the existence of Hell is stated in their scriptures first. They prefer to accuse us of potentially infinite evil than contradict their scriptures.

Not a single word of the New Testament says Hell is where you have to go for you won't return back to God and get his forgiveness. It does say there is a Hell and that the angels will throw you in there on the last day if you have not turned to God - throwing people into the fire of Hell is torturing them. It calls it everlasting punishment. If you put yourself in Hell and won't leave then God is not punishing you. If you are thrown there and abandoned by God who sentences you to eternal damnation then he is. The doctrine that misusing free will is responsible for you going to Hell and not a judicial decree of a just God is actually a denial that God cares about sin. A parent who wants to treat you as if you did nothing wrong when you unrepentedly murdered your brother does not care about justice. If you refuse to meet that parent you are being stupid not punished. Do believers want to believe that you deserve to be punished forever for being stupid? That would be out and out barbarism not punishment.

Hell is about punishment not about reform. But even if it is not about reform, it has to keep the door open so that the person can reform if they want to. A God that does not leave that door open is pure evil. The doctrine denies that he leaves the door open. Thus Hell leaves us adoring an evil God and condoning and celebrating his evil.