

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT IN HELL IS A SPITEFUL DOCTRINE

Many Christians admit that they see some sins or crimes as inconceivably horrible and so worthy of damnation that inside they just curse and wish evil on the people that commit them. They argue that this is God's gospel written on the heart telling them that everlasting and merciless banishment from the presence of God and his angels and saints is the only appropriate thing. You can be sure that with people like that there are many people they don't care about and if they end up in Hell.

Main Points

Christians and Muslims believe unrepentant sinners will go to Hell forever if they die. Some say it is your own creation or God puts you there because you deserve it. Some say it is both judicial and a choice.

They argue that nobody goes there - not even a child - who would have chosen differently and better if they got another chance and lived longer. In that way, they admit how unsympathetic they are. Not even God can know what would happen in a future that never happened. Hell is a malicious doctrine in itself and in how it affects believers. The saints in Heaven must have a malign attitude towards the damned.

Believers say that the most evil thing you can do is ignore such a wonderful God and even killing babies is not as bad. If you kill babies, you are more evil in so far as you intend to reject God by this action than you are for actually killing. Thus you ask for Hell if you reject God. This is an extremely judgemental doctrine. Even if you don't think there is a Hell, the notion that God alone matters still accuses you of the ultimate evil if you reject or ignore God.

Many are okay with saying you keep yourself in Hell but do not like saying God has anything to do with it. So they are happier with saying you deserve it than that God gave you justice! That is bizarre and hypocritical and sentimental of them.

Nobody can know if Hell exists. They can only believe it does. Belief can be wrong for people can easily err.

Therefore it is vindictive to preach that people can deserve Hell. Belief is not enough. You need to know before you can have the right to teach that Hell exists.

Punishment is only needed on earth as a necessary evil for some control of bad people is necessary. It is not needed in the afterlife. To hope that there punishment then is just vindictive.

To take comfort in the notion that the damned suffer in Hell and it is all the damned's own fault and own doing is judgmental. Anybody can feel okay with the suffering of another if they find some way to imagine that most or all of it is their own fault. Human nature likes to do that for it does not like feeling a lot of outrage over the suffering of others and is too uncaring to most people anyway.

Believers sometimes comfort themselves by imagining that only one in billions is going to go to Hell. That is as callous as saying it is okay for some strangers baby to die out of billions but not okay if too many die. It does not matter if there is one person in Hell or billions. It is still terrible.

Suffering and evil

How can an all-good God let evil happen? Why do babies suffer if God has the power to prevent it? The Christians claim that part of the answer is that suffering is temporary. That is a lie for they believe that certain sinners will suffer everlasting punishment in Hell.

If all the answers to the problem of evil fail that means they are evil themselves. Christians are answering evil with evil. The answers condone God allowing evil to happen. That is bad enough but if you say there is a Hell the evil you are condoning knows no bounds.

Wishful thinking?

You are suffering at the hands of another. You may make yourself feel better by deciding that one day they will pay for being bad. They may pay in the afterlife. You feel better when people tell you to hit her or him. You will not do it but wish you could but you are glad they support your wish that you could hurt the person. None of the responses is sensible. The

person might never pay. Also, being violent to them will only escalate things. Wanting to see violence will only lead to you wanting it more. That is not good either. If you were truly good you would rather see the person reformed than punished.

The victims are blamed

If you are in Hell you are in Hell forever. If you are not in Hell then you might change for the better. Surely it is better to risk somebody sinning for countless centuries or forever as long as God keeps the door open in case they will repent. Many evil people will change given long enough. The Church reasons that it is an insult to God to expect him to honour the intransigence and malice of the sinner by keeping the door open. But he is not honouring those attitudes. He is waiting to see them overcome even if that never happens. The Church persists in saying that the notion that God is obligated to keep the door open is blasphemous. What the Church is doing is simply attributing evil to God and calling it good and insulting those who see it to boot! It is blaming the victims as well.

Roman Catholicism teaches that homosexuals and adulterers and heretics and murderers and blasphemers will suffer everlasting torment in Hell if they die without repenting. When you tell the Catholics that they hate the homosexuals and adulterers and heretics who go to Hell forever for their sin, they say, "We do not hate them. Neither does God. Nobody condemns them. They condemn themselves. They are condemned by their own choices." But that is what the do-gooding people who hate you say. They like to blame the victim. And it is not true that you condemn yourself - you cannot judge or punish yourself. If bad things happen after doing wrong that does not mean you brought all of the bad things on yourself. It might be said that some of the bad things are consequences but you cannot say they all are. Or you might not know what are consequences and what are not. If I cut my finger off, the bad consequences will be the risk of infection, being unable to do certain things because of the loss of the finger and the trauma of what I have done. But the infection is caused not by the cutting but by the lack of care. It is possible to try to get an infection and fail. So it is really down to bad luck and a bad immune system. And if I practice I will be able to do without the finger. And what is done is done. If I cannot accept what I have done, is that down to me or my psychological makeup? If the trauma is down to the way I am, then it is a result of the way I have responded to cutting the finger off and not the hacking off of the finger. The so-called consequences are not really consequences and it is judgmental hypocrisy to say they are. Whether it is adultery or heresy or any other action, it is true that the consequences are not really consequences. If I am offered entry to Hell forever to suffer I will decline. Those who sin to deserve Hell cannot really choose Hell. Part of them is blind to what it entails. They might believe in theory that eternal torment is awful but it has not sunk in. To take them seriously if they choose Hell and to put them there is cruel. You cannot choose anything properly unless you have full knowledge of what you are choosing.

Need faith in God to believe in morals?

The false view that we must believe in God to seriously believe in morals shows how vindictive belief in Hell is. If God commands right because it is right then we don't need belief in God to be moral. By implication we need belief in Hell even less. Surely belief in God would take priority over belief in Hell! Suppose Hell is a good doctrine. Then it follows that Christians should not be saying you need to believe in God to believe that morality is authentic and not just opinions. They should be saying you need to believe in a God who punishes unrepented evil eternally to really believe.

The Christians ask if something is moral just because God commands it or if God commands it because it is moral. If actions are right only because God commands them then what if he commands us to torture and slaughter the old women next door? And if God does not create morality it follows that moral standards are true whether there is a God or not. Neither of these options show that we need God to believe in morality. It is either one or the other. The Christian claim that both are false and that morality is God's nature cannot work for it has to be one or the other. If morality is God's nature then the questions are still not solved. Its another copout again. God says it matters that we believe in him so clearly he commands us to believe the Christian lie. It follows then that belief in God is dangerous to morality and right and wrong and for a Christian to say there is a Hell is therefore just plain nasty. Their excuse that God is so good that there has to be a Hell is shown to fail then. Because goodness is independent of God he cannot have the right to damn anybody.

Merely possible?

Some daring theologians want to teach that Jesus and the Church have never declared that anybody is going to Hell but have merely said that it is possible (page 1176, Catholicism, Father Richard P McBrien, HarperSanFrancisco, New York, 1994). But Jesus in the gospel promised to send a person to Hell for not visiting prisoners and said that Judas the traitor is going to his own place. Jesus predicted what he would say to those who came before him without loving God. He said he would tell them to go away for he never knew them and they would be condemned. It is more than a possibility when it is easy to go to Hell. Jesus predicted that people would be lost forever. Other theologians are saying that Hell is not God punishing us but us rejecting God. Others are saying that because God is the source of all good and community we are rejecting all that is good and all that has to do with community so we are choosing to destroy or annihilate ourselves and so Hell is where we cease to exist.

Such considerations are saying that punishment is bad. They certainly arise from a suspicion that it is better to believe we make our own Hell than that God has anything to do with it. They arise from a suspicion that believing you could be so bad that you annihilate yourself is better than believing that God punishes you forever! They are attempts to sweeten people to Christianity who are turned off by the evil vindictive God of traditional faith by appealing to their finding equal or worse evils almost attractive! So a God who punishes somebody mildly for all eternity is an abomination and believing in a Hell, a madhouse, which a person freely creates is better! How absurd.

Reform excluded

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. To worship such a God is vindictive. Imagine then how vindictive it is to approve of his Hell? The doctrine denies that he leaves the door open. Thus Hell leaves us adoring an evil God and condoning and celebrating his evil.

The notion that if you really believe there is no Hell then you will kill and do all sorts of terrible things is saying that the only thing that stops religious people from being total psychos if their fear of Hell is taken away. People who need faith in hell to restrain themselves are irreformable - they prove that by saying others can go to Hell and do and belong there.

Finally

Hell is a vindictive doctrine both in the kind of principles it stands for and what it does to people's hearts and morals. That is not to mention the kind of God that goes with it.

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