

STUDY OF HOW THE HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS STATES THAT ETERNAL HELL AND FREE WILL GO TOGETHER

Handbook of Christian Apologetics Says

Then the book complains that if there is no everlasting punishment then our choices make no infinite difference. It means that we can make choices that can put us in infinite misery or infinite happiness. Infinite means it lasts forever with no end.

Reason replies:

Who cares? Nobody except those who want justification for accepting Hell is a just doctrine. Are we to say that Hell should exist so that we can feel that our choices make an infinite difference? That is spiteful.

One thing is for sure, the believers are right that if Hell is justified that is one of the justifications as is free will which we will come to next. They are the only excuses for it for even justice is not enough. They mean that no sin deserves endless suffering and endless punishment. So they reason that if we go to Hell it is because of choice. If you argue that the damned deserve to go to Hell forever for their sins you will be seen as vindictive and harsh. But you are far worse if you argue, "They deserve it because they can leave but refuse to. It's self-inflicted." You can feel sorry for a man sentenced to life in jail but not for a man who stays in jail when the doors are never locked. So justice itself is not enough to account for everlasting torture in Hell. This is admitted on page 290 which says that our choice is the fundamental reason for the existence of Hell. Strictly speaking what happens is the damned person makes the choice to keep making choices to stay in Hell forever. You have to make the choice over and over again to keep it up. In reality you have an infinity of choices. It is not really choice but choices. The notion of a choice making an infinite difference as in sealing your eternal fate is nonsense. It takes an infinity of choices. Thus we have proven that Hell is a vindictive doctrine. The choice argument is itself Hell for it insults our intelligence.

Nearly all of our choices make no infinite difference in the Christian view. It is only the choice we make at death, according to the doctrine of Hell, that does that. Clearly the Handbook is making a spiteful and deceitful attempt to cover up the malice of their doctrine. It even resorts to contradicting the doctrine to defend it!

Our choices never make us who we are. It is our commitment to them that does that. It follows then that if there is such a thing as everlasting damnation, then it is not our sins that put us there but our refusal to repent. The damned think that God is wrong and they are right. Pick and mix Catholics then are doing the one thing essential for going to Hell.

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If there is no eternal damnation there is no free will.

Reason replies:

But that does not mean that anybody who dies in sin should be sent to Hell to be locked in sin forever for the lowest and most hardened sinner on earth according to the Bible can change and turn to God and become a righteous person. If somebody does not accept your love you just let them have it their own way and do not make a dungeon for them. Rather they should be allowed to change if they want to or to make themselves progressively worse and worse until they inflict everlasting torment on themselves which will never happen for we cannot choose such incredible misery. We cannot choose this because we have free will and free will is based on what we find attractive. It does not imply a defect in free will. Even those who do seek pain do so because they enjoy it. It is argued that if God did not let you send yourself to Hell then he would be guilty of ignoring your free will and giving you further chances of repentance that you do not want or will. If that is true then we have no free will now. It is a strange kind of free will that gives you the power to lose free will. It denigrates the alleged value of free will. Hell destroys the love of God by saying he gave us evil free will. If that is true the mortal sinner will go to Hell the second he sins. Interestingly, this objection is not answered in the section of the chapter that answers objections.

If we can't have free will unless we can go to Hell forever then we can't go to Hell as long as we are alive so we don't have free will now!

To say there is no free will without an eternal torment in Hell is ridiculous for another reason too. It means you have no free will unless you can commit sin that takes you to Hell once and for all. The problem with this is, nobody goes to Hell for sin at all but for dying in sin. It's the dying not the sin that puts you in Hell.

If there is no free will if there is no everlasting punishment then babies that go to Heaven having died in their cots never had free will for nobody who goes to Heaven chooses to leave it. They never had the chance to turn away from God forever. Heaven was forced on them.

And it would mean that pagans who can't commit sin that cuts them off God forever for they don't believe in such sin or in God or eternal punishment can't have free will either!

You can't choose everlasting punishment properly without believing in it strongly. So the less belief you have in the doctrine the less free will you have! You would need to know 100% that it exists. But that cannot happen unless you experience it forever. Its catch-22.

You can make a choice on earth that will affect your life forever. But that is just because life has to be that way. Life cannot function if we can keep changing our minds about everything. But that has nothing to do with the afterlife which should be different. There is no reason in itself why anybody can't go from Heaven to Hell forever if they want. It is not the choice in life that binds you but the consequences. To suggest it is any different in the afterlife and that a choice is everlasting is total madness.

To say that choice is an everlasting choice is not the same as saying a choice has everlasting consequences. A choice and its consequences are two different things. Believers deliberately blur the difference so that it appears that making an everlasting choice is possible.

If we need to believe in Hell, if we need to believe we have the power to go there or to create a Hell in order to have or believe in free will, then doubters of Hell and deniers are demeaning our freedom and should be stopped. Hell is a fundamentalist intolerant proposition. Few would take seriously the claim that we need to believe in Hell and God to have proper regard for free will.

If you can say people who die in sin as a result of sudden death before they had a chance to change their minds about going to Hell have chosen Hell, then why can't you say that homosexuals or heretics once they commit their "sin" have made a final choice? Why can't you say if they live good lives after their sin or if they claim to have repented they are lying and they are still destined to go to Hell? In brief, why single out the dead? It is fairer to choose the living than the dead. The living could be said to be throwing away the chance to repent which can't be said of those who die suddenly. If you claim the right to believe that sinners who die go to Hell forever, then you can't deny somebody the right to believe that this final choice can be made in life as well. You can say for example that a Christian who converts to Islam will never be forgiven even if she or he pretends she or he is. There is something warped about disapproving of people saying that or being angry when they do if you believe that those who die in sin choose Hell forever.

Catholics like to say that free will is the God-given choice between treating God and others as means or as ends. The evil person treats God or people as means. They are not valued much in themselves so their wellbeing becomes more unimportant. But this implies we are not made just for ourselves but are made just as choice-makers. It may be replied that you cannot be made for yourself and your own sake without being made capable of making choices - even self-destructive ones! In other words, you are not made to be your own person unless you have free will. But who cares as long as you are sufficiently your own person? The ability to choose everlasting torment is not necessary. We all know we are programmed - many of us believe we are partly programmed and some believe we are entirely programmed. But either way, we cannot be accused of being bad enough to choose everlasting punishment. God has no right to send me to Hell even if I am a mass murderer for it is not fully my choice.

Some suppose that if there is an all-good God then evil cannot exist. It must be an illusion. But how can an all-good creator of all things allow us to be afflicted by the useless illusion of evil? Christians say that evil is not an illusion and is real and God puts up with it because he wants us to be able to choose between loving and doing evil. But if evil is not a mere illusion it is still mostly an illusion. Evil is mistaking the way to do good. It is doing good the wrong way. Jack the Ripper may have thought he was doing good by killing the prostitutes as they would spread disease. The Christians argue that saying evil is a mere illusion that is useless to God is to say God cannot exist. Evil then would disprove his goodness or his almighty power. They reason that evil can only exist if God needs to put up with it. God would not be a real God without goodness and without being all-powerful. But if they are right then their own doctrine that evil is largely illusion is not much of a help either! It follows then that those who sin are deceived when they sin and are not fully to blame for it. Thus it is impossible for angel or human to go to Hell. Some say that Hell is empty but it really exists. We see that Hell cannot exist.

To have the right to go to Hell forever you would have the need to go there. But it is ridiculous to imagine you need that!

To say you must love the sinner and hate the sin is say, "I love the sinner but...". Hell makes that but bigger and louder

therefore it is not a good or helpful doctrine. It only appeals to people who have lost much empathy and who cannot be decent enough to abandon the doctrine.

People seem to think that if people go to Hell though poor God does all he can to keep them out of it, that a Hell made by our own stubbornness is better than one where God actually sentences the person there for all eternity. They seem to think that being sentenced to Hell implies Hell is crueller than a Hell where we stay of our own accord. But the Hell where we go as a result of a divine condemnation is actually more comforting for God will not make the person suffer more than they deserve. If we torment ourselves in Hell then it could be unimaginably agonising and God can do nothing.

Christians argue that to suggest that nobody should suffer or be punished in Hell goes with an unworthy view of God and man. The implication is that you will go to Hell for not believing in Hell! They certainly maintain that if you truly honour our free will and honour God for doing so that you will agree with eternal punishment.

Finally

Religion gives too many guesses as to why a God of love can have people in Hell forever. In such a serious matter the reason is needed not guesses. You don't say when somebody is sentenced to death that "maybe its because." That insults the seriousness of the matter. Some say that Hell is everlasting not because you deserve it to be but because God does not give you the resources to repent once you die or when you die. They say that is your choice. Or they say you can repent but won't. They oddly argue that if there is no Hell there is no free will. But that is an assumption. It is taking advantage of our desire to believe we have free will. In other words we are being taken advantage of. And it does not follow that God can abandon you and use your choice as an excuse for that is what it is. It is said that as it is fundamentally good to live the damned do not want to be put out of their misery by being put out of their existence so in that sense they choose to live forever and thus to suffer forever. But that is not a choice in the same way as putting a gun to somebody's head to get them to do something is not giving them a choice. It is cruel in the extreme to use such an excuse for Hell. Why we go there needs proof for it is too serious of a matter to get wrong. It is not fair to say God has people in Hell even if they might deserve it when he may not have them there. Do you want to say Miss Carson hit Johnny and was right to if she did not in fact hit him? Hell is just a passive aggressive judgemental doctrine that respects nobody not even God.

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