

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

Part 6

Punishment

just / conscious / eternal

Destruction

death / ruin / uselessness

Banishment

deliberate / unbridgeable / final

Traditionalism's Great Challenges

- How can an all-merciful God damn those he loves?
- How can an endless punishment be just?
- How can an everlasting hell harmonize with the promise that in Christ, God will defeat evil and reconcile all things to himself?
- How can those in the KOH enjoy eternal bliss knowing that loved ones are suffering, and suffering forever?

Christian Universalism: Hell is used to sober the wicked, that they might see their need for God. Eventually, all will submit and be saved.

Conditional Immortality: After suffering the just punishment for their sins, each will, as an act of God's mercy, be annihilated.

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- A) Justice demands that punishment for sins be proportionate to their seriousness, and it is unjust for a punishment to be disproportionate to the seriousness of the sin (or sins).
- B) No human sin or lifetime of sinning can be infinite in seriousness.
- C) An eternal Hell is infinite punishment.
- D) To punish human sins with hell is to punish human sins disproportionately to their seriousness.
- E) Therefore, an eternal hell is an unjust punishment for human sins.

Does God have a morally sufficient reason for the continued existence of those in hell?

If so, what might that be?

If not, then it would appear that an everlasting hell *would be* unjust.

Does Christian Universalism really solve the disproportionate problem as it claims?

- It undermines God's justice for it fails to properly condemn sin; the punishment doesn't fit the crime.

Does Conditional Immortality really solve the disproportionate problem as it claims?

- It is not obvious that annihilation is genuinely a lesser punishment -- *and more proportionate* -- than that of eternal suffering.
- Once the sinner's punishment has been satisfied, why is he not at that point released from hell and granted entrance into heaven? Why, exactly, is he annihilated?

The real question *isn't* which picture of hell is preferred or more merciful, but which one is truly proportionate?

Which one *rightly* demonstrates God's retributive justice against sin?

Does God have a morally sufficient reason for the continued existence of those in hell, as Traditonalists claim?

Yes. God's justice requires it.

Why does justice require it?

Solution #1: The Continuing Sin View

The damned continue to sin in hell, and their sins are met with continued punishment, into eternity.

Solution #2: The Infinite Seriousness View

The heinousness of a crime corresponds to the status of the victim; therefore any sin against an infinitely holy God is infinitely severe and deserves an infinite punishment.

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1Corinthians 15:24-28

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet."

Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Ephesians 1:9-10

... he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Colossians 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Can Traditionalism provide a satisfying way to harmonize a reconciled universe with an everlasting hell?

- 1) Reject the Continuing Sin View of God’s justice.
- 2) Accept hell as part of God’s divine order; all rebellion has ceased and it’s inhabitants willingly submit to Christ’s lordship and accept their just punishment.