

Divine Punishment

differing views

“Hell”

“Annihilationism”

“Universal Restoration”

Hell

- In ancient Judaism ... in the Torah ... there is no concept of eternal reward ... or punishment ... for the individual.
- Effects of Hellenization in Late Second Temple Judaism ... along with an opposition to “Deuteronomic Theology” led to speculation about reward and punishment in an afterlife.
 - Books of the Maccabees
- This speculation came to an abrupt halt after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE ... but later reemerged during Rabbinic development culminating with the completion of the Talmud in the late 6th century CE.

Hell

- Jesus ... in his teaching ... could not have mentioned “hell” because there was no developed Jewish concept ... or **word** for such a place.
- “Punishment without place” ... or duration ... does appear in Christian scripture using a number of metaphors ... Gehenna ... furnace of fire ... outer darkness ... weeping and gnashing of teeth ... late of fire ... etc.
- Early Christianity had no detailed ... generally accepted concept of the rewards or punishments in an afterlife.

The Apocalypse of Peter

Visions of Heaven and Hell

Apocalypse of Peter

Referenced by Clement of Rome (d ~99 CE)

Visions of Heaven and Hell

Show us the brethren who have gone forth out of the world before us.

- Heaven
 - their raiment was like the sun.
- Hell
 - a lake of flaming mire and punishing angels.
 - blasphemers hung by their tongues above the flames.
 - murderers were afflicted with clouds of worms.
 - the rich rolled around on red-hot pebbles, sharper than swords.
 - those who caused abortion ...
 - those who defiled their bodies ...

Apocalypse of Peter

“I saw another (place), squalid, and it was the place of punishment; and those who were punished there ...”

- “And there were certain there hanging by the tongue: and these were the **blasphemers** of the way of righteousness; and under them lay fire, burning and punishing them.”
- “And there were also others, women, hanged by their hair over that mire that bubbled up: and these were they who adorned themselves for **adultery**; and the men who mingled with them in the defilement of adultery, were hanging by the feet and their heads in that mire.”
- “And I saw the **murderers** and those who conspired with them, cast into a certain strait place, full of evil snakes, and smitten by those beasts, and thus turning to and fro in that punishment; and worms, as it were clouds of darkness, afflicted them. And the souls of the murdered stood and looked upon the punishment of those murderers and said:

○ God, thy judgment is just.”

“Annihilationism”

... the belief that the final fate of those who are not saved is literal destruction ... a ceasing to exist ... in any form.

... the wicked will eventually be destroyed or annihilated completely by God.

Argument ...

Divine just and love make *eternal* suffering in hell a morally repugnant idea.

... an unfair punishment for the *finite* sins of God's creatures (people).

Is man(kind) capable of committing any act so heinous as justifying eternal punishment?

Origen

Prolific Writer
Speculative Theologian

His Life

- Born (Alexandria) 185 CE
- Father martyred 202
- Director of Catechetical School in Alexandria 203?
- Begins extensive writings 215 - 220
- Expelled from Alexandria 232
Resident in Caesarea
- Arrested and tortured 251?
- Died 254

His Works

- He was most prolific:
 - Epiphanes estimates his works at over 6,000 pieces ... Jerome says probably fewer than 2,000.
 - Wrote an entire book on the first part of the first verse of the gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word...”
 - A scribe copied his daily homilies.
 - Of his original texts, only eight books in Greek remain on the gospel of Matthew, and nine books on the gospel of John.
 - Hundreds of his homilies and translated editions of his works exist.
 - ***Treatise on First Principles*** ... Theology (Latin translation ... Greek fragments)
 - ***Against Celsus*** ... Christian faith superior to Greek philosophy

Universal Restoration

(apokatastasis)

“We think that the goodness of God, through the mediation of Christ, will bring all creatures to one and the same end.”

- Ransom paid for our salvation ... to the devil ... but he is tricked.
- But ... each of us must freely associate himself with this triumph.
- For the elect ... “the freedom of the will will be bound so that sin will be impossible.”
- The reprobate will always be fixed in evil ... for they wish to be evil ... it has become second nature to them.”

Origen, however, became angry when he was accused of teaching that even the devil will be saved.

Universal Restoration

(apokatastasis)

Origen's concept of **free will** is an early philosophical view ...

- Man can choose “the good.” Evil does not exist in and of itself ... it is simply a rejection of the good.
- When confronted with the “ultimate truth,” i.e., God ... man, as an intellect, will always choose the good ... God.
- To not choose the good is not so much sinful as it is ignorant.
- It may take “multiple ages” for an individual soul to be able to intellectually choose the good.

Ultimately, the “saved” do not rejoice in heaven while the damned suffer in hell ... all souls return to a reunion with God.

Origen vs. Origenism

- Origen's detractors of the 4th century argue against the Origenism of the day rather than against Origen himself.
- Origen's teachings became focal points for theological controversies in the 4th through the 6th centuries.
 - The arguments had little to do directly with Origen or his teachings.
- Origen is condemned (long after his death) by the permanent domestic synod in Constantinople in 543 and 553 CE.
 - Condemnation is signed by all five Patriarchs of the Church.
 - Origenism may have been condemned at the 5th Ecumenical Council but this condemnation does not appear in the minutes.
- The condemnations show little understanding of Origen's work or intent.

Origen

A Summary

- Most prolific of early Christian writers.
- Provided seminal work on the understanding of the Trinity long before his contemporaries.
- Allegorical understanding of scripture is important and useful when not taken to extremes.
- Work on pre-existence of souls, pre-history, and its implications on the Incarnation were ultimately condemned.
- Theories of “universal restoration” are not what they seem based on some of his other writings. Bottom-line is unclear.
- Never condemned during his lifetime, and his supporters were many.
- Origenism later condemned because of abuses of those who used his name and writings.

Revelation ... A Final Note

“Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead ... standing before the throne ... **And the dead were judged according to their works ...**

Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. **Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.**” (Rev 20:11-15)

- No more death ... no more abode of the dead (Hades)
- If Hades is Hell ... no more Hell (annihilated)

Revelation ... A Final Note

“And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of [heaven](#) from God ...” (Rev 21:2)

“I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The [nations](#) will walk by its light, and the [kings of the earth](#) will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day - and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the [honor of the nations](#). But [nothing unclean will enter it](#), nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Rev 20:11-15)

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in [the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death](#).” (Rev 21:8)

Aion ... Eternal

Is Punishment “Eternal” ?

“Eternal” Punishment ???

Judgment ...

- Matt 25:41 ... **Eternal fire** ... prepared for the devil and his angels.
- Matt 25:46 ... **Eternal punishment.**
- 2 Thess 1:9 ... **Eternal destruction** ... for those who do not know God.
- Jude 1:6 ... **Eternal chains** ... for the coming of the judgment.
- Jude 1:7 ... **Eternal fire** ... Sodom and Gomorrah.

“Eternal” ???

“Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day.

Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” (Jude 1:5-7)

Punishment:

- Destruction
- Kept in darkness ... for the judgment.
- Cities were destroyed ...

“Eternal” ???

aion ...??? ... eternal

In Christian prayers:

- ... as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, **world without end**.
- ... now and ever and unto the **ages of ages**.
- “Duration determined by the subject to which it is applied.”
 - ... an indefinite duration.
 - Age of a dog ...
 - Age of a person ...
 - ... like the word “big”
- In some Greek classics, *aion* is translated as “life.”

A Study

Aion appears in the Christian scriptures 200 times; 128 times as a noun, 72 times as an adjective. (Brude's Concordance)

– Translations:

- Eternal ... 44
- Ever ... 73
- World ... 39 ... Worlds ... 2
- Everlasting ... 25
- Never ... 7
- Evermore ... 3
- Ages ... 2
- World without end ... 1
- Course ... 1
- Former ages ... 1
- No translation ... 2

Eternity ??

Because we exist in time is there any way ... any use ... in attempting to understand the concept of eternity ... the infinite ... forever ??

Conclusion

- The word *Sheol* in the Hebrew Scripture does not have an early connotation of the concept of Hell ... but as a “neutral” abode of the dead.
- *Hades* was simply the translation (Greek) of *Sheol* into the Christian Scriptures.
- *Gehinnom*, in the Talmud, does have a meaning associated with divine punishment ... although with finite limits.
- *Gehenna*, in the Christian scripture is associated with the valley at Jerusalem ... and allegorically with a place of punishment.
- *Tartaroo*, in the Christian Scriptures, is described as the abode of the devil and his angels ... until judgment ...

Conclusion

- The words in Scripture, both Hebrew and Christian, usually associated with Hell ... don't actually signify the concepts of a Hell later developed in Christian thought.
- But ... there are stories (parables) and teachings in later Jewish development, in the Talmud, and in Christian Scripture that do clearly point to a time/ place of divine punishment ...
... and cleansing ???
- But ... the concept of “eternal” or “never ending” as far as this punishment is concerned is not at all clear from the wording of Scripture ... and later developments and interpretation ...