

Abstract

Title – A Trinitarian Theology of Hell

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Theoretical Abstract

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Abstract: This paper explores the connections between a distinctly Christian conception of God as a triune being and the traditional doctrine of Hell. Most monotheistic religions generally share the same contours of both their vision of God and of Hell. Furthermore, most apologetic defenses of Hell could be applied to almost any religion. So both remain fairly simplistic in their understanding. However, if the vision of God is shifted from a simple deistic or Unitarian concept to a triune understanding, then it begs the question what other shifts might occur in the process. Many areas could be studied in this shift, but by juxtaposing these two core concepts together three unique ideas come to the surface in a distinctly Christian conception of Hell. First, a distinctly Christian understanding of God as a being who has existed for all eternity in loving relations within the God helps one to understand that Hell is an act of justice precisely because he's a God of love. Second, the relational character of God helps to understand that free will enables people to go to Hell. The first two propositions are two sides of the same coin which help to answer the problem of evil. Third, and unique to a Triune God alone, is a theory of inter-Trinitarian justice which allows him to be perfectly just and loving concerning the problem of Hell.

Christian worldview integration: Today, more than ever before we live in a pluralistic age where numerous worldviews are lived out. This can be a good thing in that it exposes our beliefs to be tested and to learn from others. However, this also prompts issues of doubt and delineating between competing claims to truth. If the Christian worldview is grounded in God who is incredibly distinct from other religions, then one would expect to see this impact all other areas of theology and life. Not only that it may help us in an apologetic an

polemic sense to see which conception of God has the most explanatory power for our belief and what we find in the world. My Christian worldview has challenged me directly to seek out and reflect how this might change the way I view life and theology. Because the traditional doctrine of Hell is one often fraught with accusations of hypocrisy at worst and challenge at best, I thought there would be no better place to start than this. My Christian worldview informed my research design by exploring central beliefs such as free will, creation, and justice. It has also informed my communication by placing it in a polite but polemical relation to Islam, a monotheistic religion that has its own doctrine of Heaven and Hell which is more closely aligned to popular cultural conceptions. By doing so, the differences are made all the clearer and shows that Christianity has far more to offer than is possible in an Islamic worldview. I hope that this research helps the culture at large to think more rigorously about Christianity and to put away any strawman arguments against it on account of the doctrine of Hell while at the same time pushing them to examine what undergirds their rightly cherished beliefs of love and justice.