

HELL AND A MERCIFUL GOD

by Jack Kinsella



The question has been asked so many times that has morphed from a question into a challenge; "How can a merciful and loving God condemn people to eternal torments in hell?"

The question is not just posed by atheists and skeptics, but also by some sincere, but woefully uneducated Christians. The argument has some merit on the surface. God is love. All men are created with a sin nature.

Since, by definition and design, all men are sinners and our Creator God is love, it logically follows that a loving God who created sinners would be unjust in condemning them to hell for being what they are.

God is the Righteous Judge. If He is so righteous, it seems logical that He would take into account the mitigating circumstances.

Especially since the chief mitigation is the fact it was the Righteous Judge that created the unrighteous sinner and that unrighteousness is the default condition of man. That cannot be stressed strongly enough.

The default condition of mankind is that of utter depravity. People are not born good and then learn bad things. It is precisely the opposite.

There is a common canard in our society that dictates that racism, for example, is learned behavior. A 'learned behavior' is something that has been taught to someone, or a way of thinking that they did not come up with themselves.

The prevailing worldview is that children who grow up to be racists are taught to be racist as a child. In this view, unless a child is taught to be racist, he will grow up to be 'color-blind' so to speak.

An article posted on the American Psychiatric Association's website attempted to argue against racism as a 'mental illness', claiming that racism "is mainly a product of learned behavior," and "a majority of explicitly racist persons do not have any psychopathology."

I don't know if racism is a mental illness, but I know that racism is not something that children are taught. It is something that they must be 'untaught'.

Children are racist by nature. Studies conducted that put one black pre-schooler into a classroom full of white pre-schoolers showed the white pre-schoolers abused, ostracized and teased the black kid corporately, that is to say, they did so as a group.

Reversing the situation produced the same results; the black kids abused, ostracized and teased the white kid, again corporately. Were all these pre-schoolers taught to be racists?

Moreover, who taught them to be abusive? Who taught them the principles of boycott, or ostracization?

These are fairly advanced principles for pre-schoolers—it took Jesse Jackson a lifetime of effort to fine-tune them into the social weapons they are today. Where did these kids learn to be racist?

Any school teacher will confirm that children are not only racist, they are mean. Kids are really small terrorists without advanced weaponry or a cause. And we were all kids.

If we reach back far enough into our memories, it is fairly obvious that the cruelest people we ever met were our own classmates.

Everyone remembers that one kid who was taunted unmercifully, (maybe it was you) because of their skin color, their religion, their social status, or some other characteristic that made that kid different. (I remember a kid we all teased because he was ugly.)

I was teased unmercifully because I had no hand-to-eye coordination. When we would choose up sides to play baseball, the two team captains would choose their players until they got to me. Then they'd fight over who got 'stuck' with me—as if I wasn't there.

My nicknames were alternatively, "Easy Out" and "Butterfingers"—two terms that make me cringe to this day.

Children have to be taught not to hit each other, bite each other, they have to be taught not to steal, to show respect, not to lie, etc.

Prisons are full of folks who blame their upbringing for their shortcomings. That's a cop out. Children needn't be taught bad values because 'bad' is their default state.

Prisons, as rehabilitation centers, attempt to teach 'good' values—or the word 'rehabilitation' is meaningless.

A long example to prove a short principle; We are born sinners. Evil is our default condition. It is goodness that is the learned behavior.

To return to our original premise, if a loving God created us without a spark of goodness, then how could He then condemn us to an eternity of torment for being what He made us to be—and still call that 'perfect justice'?

It is worth noting that the only inherently evil creation in the corporeal (physical) world is humanity. Animals aren't evil by nature. They do what comes naturally.

Sin isn't a learned behavior. It is something that must be unlearned. The degree to which a human being 'unlearns' selfishness, cruelty and sadism becomes the measure of his goodness. Provide the right set of circumstances, say, New Orleans after Katrina, and humanity reverts to type.

Doctors murder patients to save themselves. People with no criminal record become looters. The strong prey on the weak. Right and wrong, as social concepts, essentially evaporate.

Man was created in God's image. He was created with the ability to discern between right and wrong, and was also created with the ability to choose which path to take.

This planet is the only place in God's creation where evil is permitted unfettered operation. Theologians call it the 'cosmos diabolicus'. It is enclosed by an atmosphere which keeps evil from escaping out into the universe.

When Satan came to present himself before the Lord, "the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." ([Job 1:7](#))

It is Satan's domain. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he offered the Creator of the Universe a bargain:

"the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." ([Matthew 4:8-9](#))

Although Jesus is the Creator (and Satan knew it) the 'cosmos diabolicus' was Satan's to offer.

So, again we return to the central question: "How could a loving God condemn us to eternal torment for being what He made us to be?"

A lion who hunts down and kills an injured wildebeest that can't keep up with the herd isn't doing evil because he selected the weakest and most vulnerable prey. That's what he was created to do. He has no other choice.

And THAT is where God's perfect justice comes in. We DO have a choice. We were created specifically to that single purpose. So that, when given the choice, we could then choose God.

God's perfect justice demands that there be some provision of salvation for those who choose Him—or He could impose no penalty for those who choose to reject Him.

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Therefore, man has a choice between 'good' (God) and man's default nature of evil (self). Jesus Christ represents God's perfect justice.

Having defeated the sin nature by living a perfect life, He was uniquely qualified to pay the penalty perfect justice demands, because no created being could earn the currency necessary to pay the price on their own behalf.

Each of us is acutely aware of our sin nature. We spend a lifetime seeking to overcome it, and in so doing, learn that it is impossible. We then are confronted with a choice.

We can choose Heaven by humbly accepting the offer of Pardon extended to us, knowing it is not something we earned, cannot earn, and cannot buy or steal.

Or we can choose hell, the place prepared as the eternal repository for sin after this cosmos diabolicus is destroyed at the end of human history.

The earth will have served its purpose as a confinement area for sin, and having served that purpose, "shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." ([2nd Peter 3:12](#))

After Satan is banished to hell and sin is contained, the cosmos diabolicus gives way to "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." ([2nd Peter 3:13](#))

God doesn't condemn us to hell. He condemns sin. But in His mercy, He provides a way for us to shed our sin nature through the regeneration of salvation.

But we are the ones who make the final choice. It is indeed perfect justice that the condemned be given the choice—while still in their sins—of where they will spend eternity.

Having expressly provided the choices to us, it would be utterly unjust of God to ignore the choice we make. God is just, so He honors the choice we make.

Till We Meet At Jesus' Feet