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Four Views On Hell: Second Edition (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



Synopsis

Recent years have seen much controversy regarding hell: Do we go to heaven or hell when we die? Or do we cease to exist? Are believers and unbelievers ultimately saved in the end? This second edition of *Four Views on Hell*, featuring all new contributors, highlights why the church still needs to wrestle with the doctrine of hell. In the familiar counterpoints format, four leading scholars introduce us to the current views on eternal judgment, with particular attention being given to the new voices that have entered the debate. Contributors and views include: Denny Burk: Eternal Conscious Torment John Stackhouse: Annihilationism (Conditional Immortality) Robin Parry: Universalism (Ultimate Reconciliation) Jerry Walls: Purgatory General editor Preston Sprinkle concludes the discussion by evaluating each view, noting significant points of exchange between the essayists. The interactive nature of the volume allows the reader to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of each view and come to an informed conclusion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ever since Rob Bell's *Love Wins*, evangelicals have rushed to the defense of the traditional doctrine of hell. Bell's book was more suggestion than substance and raised the most ire among those who never read it, but there have also been a number of intelligent treatments on the fate of unbelievers and the nature of hell. *Four Views on Hell, Second Edition* showcases four options currently being discussed among evangelicals. Under the editorial eye of Preston Sprinkle (coauthor of *Erasing*

Hell) with contributions from Denny Burk, John G. Stackhouse Jr, Robin Parry and Jerry Walls, this book presents the case for hell as eternal conscious torment, annihilationism, universalism and purgatory.^{9780310516460_5}This new edition of *Four Views on Hell* reveal how the contours of the debate have changed since the publication of the first edition in 1992. The original edition had two contributors arguing hell consists as 'eternal conscious torment,' one arguing for literal fire (John Walvoord) and metaphorical (William Crocket), one contributor arguing for annihilationism (Clark Pinnock) and a Catholic contributor extols the virtues of purgatory (Zachary Hayes). In the current edition, the traditional doctrine on hell is represented by Burk. Burk doesn't take eternal fire as a literal flame as Walvoord did (28), though he does emphasize the eternal aspects of hell's duration. John Stackhouse takes up Pinnock's mantle in arguing the terminal/conditionalist/annihilationist position. Parry provides the biblical, theological case for Christian universalism (a new to this edition) having previously published *The Evangelical Universalist* (under the pseudonym of Gregory McDonald).

I have read some books on hell recently that I found disturbing. While the concept of hell has always been a part of Christian theology, exactly what that term means has been debated. This book helped clarify the four major, or current, views on hell. This edition is written by different authors and contains a new entry from the original edition because of the change in popular concepts about hell. There is a growing belief in annihilation among evangelicals, the concept of Christian universalism is gaining ground, and Protestants have been looking at the traditional Catholic view. Arguing for the traditional view is Denny Burk. He is a Professor of Biblical Studies and the director of the Center for Gospel and Culture at Boyce College. Annihilation, or terminal punishment, is covered by John Stackhouse. He is the Samuel J. Mikolaski Professor of Religious Studies and Dean of Faculty Development at Crandall University in New Brunswick. Robin Parry defends the Christian universalism, or ultimate reconciliation, view. He has a PhD from the University of Gloucestershire and serves as the commissioning editor for Wipf and Stock Publishers. Jerry Walls, Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University, assumes a traditional view of hell but also holds that Christians will undergo a time of sanctification after death and before being resurrected. Each author presents his case and then the others have short articles of rebuttal. I was raised with the traditional view of hell in the framework of Reformed faith. I appreciated Burk's emphasis on a high view of God in defending the traditional view. He argues that our aversion to the traditional view of hell reveals a diminished concept of God. I was least impressed with the argument for a type of purgatory.

The topic of Hell is easily one of the most theologically revealing conversations of our present day. Still, the landscape of the conversation has taken a slight shift from that of previous generations. It seems like now, more than ever, the traditional understanding of Hell is being thrown aside by a sizable percentage of evangelical Christians as they look to investigate its biblical veracity against other viable options. It is here that the reader will discover the usefulness of this much anticipated second edition of *Four Views on Hell* (edited by Preston Sprinkle) and its ability to function as an introductory entrance ramp onto the main stage of the conversation. For this second edition, Zondervan has enlisted a new roster of contributors. This decision by the publisher, in my opinion, helpfully displays the conversational shift that has taken place since the first edition. The contributors include Denny Burk (traditional view), John G. Stackhouse Jr. (annihilationist view), Robin Parry (universalist view), and Jerry L. Walls (purgatory view). Those who are acquainted with the previous volumes in the Counterpoints series will be on familiar ground here. Each contributor has written a positive presentation defending their position (roughly 26 pages per essay), followed by a brief response from the other three contributors (roughly 5 pages per response). This interactive format does well to cultivate civility within the conversation and present each position for proper evaluation. Each of the major essays included in this volume are unique in that all of the contributors offer explicit acknowledgement of the existence of Hell. Each contributor also claims the title "Evangelical" when constructing a framework for the conversation, but the actuality of such is debatable.

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