

Mr. Heretick

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I have decided to be honest about my principal heresies (as others perceive them). Now, if you don't have time to read this, I will understand. In fact, I would rather you *not* read this. Because if you read this, you may not want anything to do with me, and I would prefer to enjoy your fellowship. So if you will kindly not read this, I will have fulfilled my duty to warn you about me, without your knowledge of me having actually changed, and we can still be friends.

No one has yet called me a "heretick" (KJV spelling) to my face, (that I can remember; although my memory is capable of being selective), but some of the wonderful answers to Bible puzzles I have found are unpalatable to today's religious establishment.

I would love to fellowship with your church, sharing music (Dorothy and I own the Family Music Center and would love to share either of two musical groups; one including children) as well as Bible discussion. But not under false pretenses, by hiding that portion of my Mat 5:14 "light" which might make my fellowship unacceptable to you.

Other than what I explain here, my theology is very average, proceeding from the acceptance of every "jot and tittle", Mat 5:18, as placed there and preserved there by God. I will be glad to answer any specific questions. My theology has been very public, published on my Uncle Ed. Show (Mediacom, central Iowa, channel 15) since 1995, in my Prayer & Action News since 1989, and snippets of it in newspapers and on radio concerning issues like abortion, sodomy, and immigration.

I have cried to the Lord to understand the kinds of paradoxes in Scripture which make theologians bite and claw each other, laymen split churches, unbelievers mock God, and Satan unopposed in his march across America. I have rejoiced over each revelation God has granted in response to my prayers, meditations, and Bible research. But with many of them, upon returning to "real life", I felt sadness at the realization, "oh, they're not going to like *that!*"

So I would like to list all the wonderful Bible answers I have found, and Bible solutions to today's attacks on our nation, our freedom, and our faith. When you find problems with any of them, I would be thrilled if you would respond to them, in detail, with questions or criticism, in the spirit of the "noble" Bereans. Acts 17:11. But I won't ask that of you, or expect that of you. Willingness to engage with people who disagree is a rare quality in this generation.

Yes, in answer to your question, I understand that some of the things I believe are so unthinkable, that it is irrelevant whether they are true. Indeed, some of the accusations against me are so ugly, that it is nearly irrelevant whether they are true. Certainly my media critics have gone to great lengths to label some of my positions as "extremist" or "fanatic", but have taken no trouble to explain how they are not "true".

If these insights are true, God must have revealed them to many others besides myself. So why have I not heard them elsewhere? Perhaps for the same reason my own insights are little known to others: wherever these insights pop up, I expect them to be shoved back down, as much when others pop them up as when I do. Because they are surely just as unacceptable to today's religious establishment, whether they are announced by me or by others.

I have found many wonderful answers which are not controversial, but here, in the spirit of full disclosure, is a list of my most controversial positions, in the order of their importance to me.

1. Christian Political Involvement Belongs in Church.

The problem: pastors occasionally sermonize about sins in our culture. As if it is important to know what God says about them. But when laymen hear those sermons and are inspired to carry God's message into their culture, they are told to leave the church premises if they want to do that, because "that is politics" and we do not want to "offend" sinners who might otherwise come to our church to hear "(what's left of) The Gospel". The result: smoldering resentment and disenfranchisement among a small but passionate minority of the laymen most frustrated by the lack of Christian opposition to sin in our society, as government increasingly entrenches to protect the most depraved sins.

America is hit by a triple whammy: 1. Instead of *protecting* us from sins, government *sponsors* them. 2. When sermons about sins inspire zeal to oppose them, activism is driven off the church premises because "that is politics". 3. Activists rarely quote the Bible outside church, thinking they got enough of its wisdom at church and thinking they will be more credible if the public doesn't know the Bible verses that are the real reason for their positions. Perhaps they believe only pastors are authorized to quote the Bible in public.

Silence about sin by Salt not only destroys America as a nation, but ourselves as individual Christians. When we vote for the friends of sin, we will eventually commit sin ourselves. That is because the only protection from committing sin is to consider it unthinkable, which we cannot, and vote for it. When church members vote for the friends of sin and the church is silent about that crime against God, the church itself endorses sin by omission, and falls prey to Hell.

When Church provides no forum where church members can educate each other about sin, its nature, its lures, its strategies, and how we can shut it down, because every minute must be reserved for reinforcing the doctrines that separate us from other churches, as if it is more eternally important that we understand whether to take communion annually or daily than whether we murder our babies, I think churches have their priorities upside down from what God gave us.

God's Solution: The Holy Spirit Gift of "governments" listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28, according to all my commentaries, means a "church administrator" only, and has nothing to do with exercising whatever influence we have over the spiritual direction of our government. But I can't think of a single church administrator mentioned in the Bible, [unless it would be Judas, John 13:29], while the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith is full of heroes who confronted their governments, many of whom gave their lives doing so. Therefore "activism" has its place in church, alongside the many other gifts. Its censorship on any church premises, of the relating of sermons to society's sins, renders sermons irrelevant to our society, and to all who must live in it. It is not "OK" for church members to vote in support of the very sins their pastors censure. That is like taking a battalion of soldiers to battle who just shoot at whatever moves, rather than reserving their bullets to focus on the enemy. There ought to at the very least be discussion of how sermons apply to specific candidates and specific political issues, so members at least are informed of the spiritual consequences of their votes.

Why is there so much resistance to God's commandments and examples? Why do people say "Jesus never got involved in politics" when half His teachings were to officers of the Sanhedrin, Israel's combination legislature and Supreme Court? What prophet was ever martyred by other than the government he had "offended"? Why was Paul so glad he could witness to "the palace"? Could it be, not that Pastors and their Boards don't really care that much about the Bible, but that they don't want to "suffer persecution for the cross of Christ"? Galatians 6:12. Because any church that lifts a finger to expose and oppose society's sins will definitely lose its Country Club reservations.

The stakes are high. Avert your eye, sin's victims cry, and Babies die.

(My book on this subject is "The Gift of 'Governments'", posted at www.Saltshaker.US.)

2. Church Discussions during Worship

The problems: You don't even want to know all the heresies that lurk in the hearts of your fellow church members who have sat by your side in your favorite pews for years. Nor are you likely to ever find

out, because even in “Sunday School” where there is a little bit of discussion, topics are carefully chosen and restricted to not be “controversial”. Really weird theologies fester in darkness where light is censored because shining light on darkness is, by definition, “controversial”. Brother Content likes this arrangement just as thoroughly as Brother Crazy. Brother Content does not want his Sunday Morning Experience to be awakened by shrieks of ignorance crying out to be tested, and Brother Crazy isn’t particularly crazy about being scrutinized. Brother Content has no pressure on him to read his Bible, since his pastor is handling that job fine, there being no opposition which is allowed expression. Brother crazy has no pressure on him to read his Bible, because no one is challenging him to defend his craziness, because no one knows about it. However, every once in a while, someone lifts up the sheet a couple of inches, before gagging on the stench of death blowing out from under the covers. He quickly drops the sheets while running for another can of politeness-grade Lysol.

The system forces people to become crazy who don’t want to be. Without a forum where you can discuss what you have found in the Bible over the years, where your findings can be corrected as needed, self-correction isn’t easy. Pastors enjoy the blessing of being corrected all the time, a blessing denied most laymen.

Take me, for example. Do you know how hard it has been for me to get feedback on my writings? Fortunately I have a wonderful wife who, especially when we first married, eloquently criticized me from a very traditional perspective. Her help has been invaluable. Outside of that, the opportunity has been very spotty. Out of 200 people who read my articles, it is hard to find one who will critique even a little of it.

People who have no vision of actually making the world a better place have no particular reason to document whether their opinions about their government and society are true. But I intend to present my perceptions to newsmakers and experts, where I fear being made a fool of for quoting a source which turns out to be crazy. I fear not just for the sake of embarrassment, but for the sake of time wasted shooting at clouds while very real enemies are advancing. So I really need, and appreciate, any errors anyone is willing to point out in any of my statements. Of course I will defend myself up to the point you persuade me, so you may need patience; that is part of receiving correction.

Another problem is the limited wisdom available to the flock, when only one in one hundred are allowed to share theirs. Pr 15:22 “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” Also 11:14, 24:6.

Issues and projects are composed of details, which are harder for just one person to establish than several people. Not only because of the limited wisdom of only one, but because of one’s natural inclination to be intellectually lazy where there is no scrutiny. A congregation needs ways to double check questionable but important pastoral assertions, and any responsible pastor longs for ways to check his facts so he doesn’t embarrass himself before God and man. “Two or three witnesses” are God’s safeguard against unsupported claims, but today’s church structure would label a 2-3 person committee that criticizes their pastor as “divisive”.

Another problem is division. 1 Corinthians 1 dumps on the Corinthians for considering splitting into a scant *four* denominations, not today’s 4,000. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 calls them crybabies for not being able to get along. 12 explains their need for each other. 13 explains the love they need for each other. 14 explains the kind of interaction they should conduct during worship services, in order to work out their differences. 15 says divisions are so serious they are life threatening. (Perhaps because the Gifts of Healing are no longer available to all, when they are divided.)

God’s Solution: 1 Cor 14:23 (in a worship service) **let the prophets** [who correct, equip, comfort, v. 3] **speak two or three** [at a time, in a panel discussion] and **let the other** [audience] **judge** [verbally evaluate, question, etc]. The whole chapter states seven times (vs. 1, 5, 12, 24, 26, 31, 39) that “all” should “προφητευσω”, which is defined in verse 3 as to equip, correct, and comfort. The word means to bring a message from God, which is why the word is often used today as a synonym of “preach”. Except that “all” are to do it, not just one.

A “sermon” which no one may interrupt, either for a question clarification, correction, or comment, has no precedent in the Bible or in Jewish synagogue practice of the time. Paul’s “manner” was to “reason” with people in synagogues every Sabbath. Acts 17:2. Also 18:4, 24:25. Even where the KJV

says he “preached”, Acts 20:7, the Greek word is the same διαλεγομαι which means the same as our English “dialog”: meaning, reasoning; verbal interaction between two or more people.

Jesus’ ministry almost entirely consisted of dialog. Only one seventh of the time is it recorded that His preaching was *not* verbal interaction with others, (20 out of 146 incidents), and at no time did He discourage questions or even criticism. ευαγγελιζο, usually translated “preach” in KJV, is used in Luke 8:1 to describe Jesus’ ministry, showing that word should not be translated as an unintermittible sermon.

Jesus reasoned in synagogues, Mat 4:23, despite being extremely controversial. Can you imagine any modern pastor allowing Him to speak, after finding out He doesn’t agree with them?

1 Cor 14:24-25 even promises revival “if all prophesy”! How then can we sincerely pray for revival today, and prohibit the very interaction which God says is the key to it, as well as the key to restoring Biblical unity?

When only one speaks, and censors dialog, and cannot persuade the pastor in a private meeting, anyone with a sincere disagreement has no other way to take a stand against the error he perceives than to “vote with his feet”, perhaps go start a new church, and perhaps take half the church with him. But if discussion is permitted, the strongest stand he can take is to remain, explain his theology, and the opposing sides will sharpen each other and resolve most of their differences.

With no Biblical precedent for an unintermittible sermon, and the promise of revival if this pagan institution is abandoned, how did it become such a staple of modern Christianity that Biblical dialog has become unthinkable in any Des Moines worship service?

How can any pastor answer “Well I might go along with that in a Wednesday class, but not during the Worship Service, where I, the shepherd, have the spiritual responsibility for my sheep”, when it is God who said do it during a worship service, and one would think a shepherd would want to take responsibility for his sheep by the instructions God has laid out?

The stakes are high. Avert your eye, sin’s victims cry, and Babies die.

(My book, “Who Owns the Pulpit?”, is posted at www.Saltshaker.US.)

3. The “hereticks” God wants us to shun are those who shun “heretics”

The problems: We have become so righteous that we are able to find fault with every church just about equally. As soon as we identify our fault, we split a church over it. We are so divided that even when the project is to keep two people together who have chosen each other as the easiest to love on the whole planet, we only succeed half the time!

We are so divided that even when we multiply 2 times 2, we get 1!

We preach against each other, vote against each other, pray against each other. Matthew 12:25: “...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:”

God’s Solution: αἰρετικος (Gr: hairetikos, KJV heretick) does not mean “an unacceptably wrong doctrine”, as the Catholic church has defined it ever since they burned John Huss at the stake. It means “schismatic”. A schism is a division. A denomination is the ultimate division.

Titus 3:10 doesn’t tell us to “reject” those who disagree, but those who divide people. Censoring dissent divides people. Encouraging dialog brings people together.

No one was shunned in the NT over an honest difference of theology. Shunning was for a personal problem, Mat 18:15; scandalous immorality, 1 Cor 5; freeloading, 1 Thes 3; “deceivers” who talk but don’t walk, 2 John 7-10 and Gal 5:12/6:12.

“Deceivers” divide. They tell you, to your face, a sweeter story then they tell about you, behind your back. They spread false charges. They make people suspicious of each other. Gossips. Talebearers.

Romans 14 describes the incredible latitude we must give our Christian brothers for variation in theology. Even for such huge theological wars over the centuries as what meat to eat and what day to worship, we are to remember our brother who disagrees with us will stand before God, not us. Therefore we are not the judge of whether God will accept them.

Where church discussions as God commands are conducted, theological differences are a small

problem. Assuming we can learn the lesson of Love, in 1 Corinthians 13, that prepares us for the lesson of intercommunication, in 1 Corinthians 14, theological discussion of differences need not be aggressive, argumentative, hostile, etc. but only interesting and educational.

God wants us to be “one”. God does not say it just once: John 17:11-23, Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:46, 4:24, 4:32, 5:12, 17:26, Romans 12:5, 12:16, 15:6-7, 1 Cor 6:16-17, 8:6, 10:17, 12:8-26, 2 Cor 11:2, 13:11, Gal 3:28, 5:13-15, Eph 1:10, 2:14-18, 4:4-7, 5:21-33 (where Christian unity is side by side with marital unity), Php 1:27, 2:2, Col 3:15, Heb 2:11-13, 1 Pet 3:8, 5:5.

But in what sense are we one? Spouses are “one flesh”, Ge 2:24 Mt 19:5,6 Mr 10:8 1Co 6:16 Eph 5:31. That doesn’t mean spouses agree on every detail! But they are committed to remaining with each other, communicating, reasoning, working through disagreements, turning marriage into a laboratory of relationship skills equipping them to interact successfully with the world.

America’s future safety depends on whether her churches will return to that unity.

God’s unity isn’t “tolerating” error so you can sit down, smile at each other, in an “ecumenical” service that pretends theological rifts are unimportant, and never “argue”.

God’s unity is where we “provoke one another to love and good works” and “exhort [correct] one another daily”. Hebrews 10:24-25.

The Church At Jerusalem didn’t all meet in the same place. Numbering thousands, they met “house to house”, just like today. What we lack today is their communication. When controversy arose representatives of the small congregations met to hammer out an agreement which all could support. When controversies arise today, we don’t associate with each other because we think we are supposed to “come out from among, and be separate from” “hereticks”.

We turn this word upside down from God’s meaning, dividing ourselves, leaving Satan’s march across America unresisted.

The stakes are high. Avert your eye, sin’s victims cry, and Babies die.

4. Sin is so serious that stopping it is justified.

The problems: Civil disobedience was never popular. Even when Martin Luther’s disobedience sparked revolt across Germany; even when U.S. colonists were at war with Great Britain over their mere freedom; even when Gandhi’s disobedience set India free; even when Martin Luther King’s civil disobedience inspired Blacks to march across the South, the very beneficiaries of these movements could not entirely refrain from criticizing them.

It is never popular to break the law.

Richard Wurmbrand’s “Voice of the Martyrs” still suffers reproach for breaking foreign laws to smuggle Bibles.

And when Randall Terry’s Operation Rescue inspired 100,000 Christians to submit to arrest and jail in order to save lives, until 1992 when Congress increased the penalty for blocking an abortion door to almost the penalty for shooting an abortionist, even mainstream proliferers remained scathing in their criticism.

But misunderstanding of the “Rule of Law” leaves Christians theologically helpless to stop any government protection of sin, since protection of sin means criminalization of stopping it. Our misunderstanding condemns us if we follow the example of Heroes of the Faith in Hebrews 11, which honors the Israelite midwives for deceiving Pharaoh; Moses for slaying the slave driver; Rahab for betraying her nation; etc.

God’s Solution:

Pr 24:10 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. 11 If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Notice God is not talking about common murderers, who lack the power to openly, predictably, transport their victims before killing them. God is talking about stopping murderous governments. God is

talking about breaking the laws of a murderous government.

That passage was quoted by Randall Terry for years, to justify blocking doors, until Michael Griffin shot and killed abortionist David Gunn in about 1992. Terry never said a word about Proverbs 24 after that.

A year later, Paul Hill shot abortionist John Britton in the same Pensacola abortion clinic, where, by the way, my own cousin is a Public Defender.

Right after the first shooting, a year before Paul's own action, he asked me and many others to sign a "Defensive Action Statement". I did. The statement said that unborn babies are humans, and killing them is murder; therefore, whatever force is justified to defend a born baby from being murdered is justified to defend an unborn baby.

I didn't want to sign it. But the logic was irrefutable. I knew it would end any chance I had to be a great popular leader, because even though no one could refute it, no one would accept it either. The conclusion it forces is just too unacceptable: that it is right to shoot a government-protected murderer. Never mind he is the most heinous kind of murderer, slaughtering the most innocent with the most exquisite tortures. Never mind his fraternity has slain 50 million in the Land of the Free alone. "That's breaking the law!" they tell *me!*

I was attacked by the Des Moines Register. I learned how to slant the facts in a news article. I was attacked by my Republican party, and by mainstream prolife leaders. No one ever, in all those years, attempted to refute the logic of the statement! Instead, Christians would attack with sound bites of Christian-sounding "old sayings" like "two wrongs don't make a right", which isn't even in the Bible, and which makes poor theology because stopping mass murder is not a "wrong"; nor is obeying Proverbs 24:10 a "wrong". Occasionally a news article would actually report the statement verbatim, without comment, as if the unacceptability of the conclusion makes any merit in the logic moot!

But I take my marching orders from God. Besides Proverbs 24 and Hebrews 11, I am impressed by Romans 13:1, obey the "higher powers". Does anyone notice the plural? All that follows that verse assumes the "higher powers" can be obeyed; that is, that they do not conflict. That is the heart of Christian law abiding: when God's law and man's laws agree, no Christian has any excuse for violating them. But what about when they conflict? Then which do we obey: the lower power, or the highest power? Well, duh, "we ought to obey God rather than man". Acts 5:29.

Sin ought not to be tolerated, no matter how much political power its protectors enjoy. John the Baptist had no legal freedom to criticize Herod's sin. None of the prophets enjoyed Freedom of Religious Expression when they rebuked their kings. Jesus faced many death penalty charges, by the representatives of the Supreme Court of the land, (the Pharisees).

Jesus commanded armed self defense in Luke 22:37-38. If it is justified to defend yourself, how much more justified to defend another, who is both innocent and unable to defend himself?

This logic does not mean everyone is called to this physical battle. It does mean that when someone is, we as Bible Believers have an obligation to speak truthfully, without concern for what the world thinks of us, about what God has to say about it.

Even when merely asserting the Truth is personally very costly.

If we cannot do even this, Satan will only laugh at our approach.

Abortion is not the only issue crying out for truth. Sodomite marriage demands opposition. Violent Islam, and even the violence of its Holy Book, demands opposition, even though we are being taught to fear Muslim retribution.

Oh, does that make it a little warmer? A little closer? The danger feels a little more real, doesn't it, when the victim is not some unseen innocent baby somewhere, but You! God works that way: as you treat others, Life has a way of treating you.

There may today be loving words which Jesus would have me speak.

There may be on the paths of sin, some wanderer whom I should seek.

So Saviour, if thou wilt be my guide, though dark and rugged the way,

I'll go along, my hand in thine, and say what you want me to say!

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord! O'er land, or mountain, or sea!
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord! I'll be what you want me to be!

Fortunately for us today, our Constitution has enshrined Biblical understanding of the Rule of Law. Every state has a Necessity Defense (Called "Compulsion" in Iowa, 704.10) which says if you break a law to save a life, that isn't even a public offense.

Our Founders quoted Blackstone about second, after the Bible, and one of Blackstone's most famous quotes was "any law that violates the laws of God is no law at all." This enshrines Jesus question, "Is it lawful to do good?" Mark 3:4. Well, of course it is. The very purpose of law is to do good. Even tyrants must justify their laws as having some legitimate purpose, or people will rebel. Not just Americans, but no one in the world, under any government, would respect a law whose explicit purpose was to do evil!

Evil laws are not laws, God insists. When Christians stop acting like they are, we will make a lot better progress against creeping tyranny. We may not be able to stop the coming Antichrist, but we can be among the ones he has to fight, rather than the ones who vote him into power.

The stakes are high. Avert your eye, sin's victims cry, and Babies die.

5. Hell's Gates do not lock out God's Love and Grace

The problems: The concept of Hell as a place of terrible suffering is not the part of traditional theology which nonbelievers find unaccountably cruel and which theologians struggle to square with Biblical teachings about love, grace, and proportionate punishment.

The part that causes these problems is the assumption that God's Love and Grace no longer exist, in Hell. That no matter the depth of repentance of anyone in Hell, God allows no return to fellowship with Him.

That God's Grace lasts only the microscopic sliver of eternity which we call "time", and after that, God never forgives. Never loves. Is consumed by intractable "wrath". And then for all eternity He tortures His enemies with infinitely more suffering, in each moment, than the most ruthless tyrant achieved in his whole lifetime.

This tradition enables unbelievers to mock God as being less merciful than Hitler, and sound convincing.

If the Bible actually said that, I would insist, right along with most theologians, that my inability to explain inconsistencies between the nature of Hell and fundamental Biblical teachings on Grace and proportionate punishment is no reason to dismiss God's teaching on Hell.

But the Bible doesn't actually say that.

My book, "Hell Fire: Heaven's Loving Purpose", spends 360 pages examining every Hell-related verse. It disproves not only Protestant tradition, but Catholic purgatory, Universalism (everyone will eventually be saved and Hell emptied), and Annihilationism (the lost will suffer a while and then thoroughly "die", ceasing to exist, then Hell will end).

"B-but," you say, "those are the only options and you just rejected all of them!"

I find one more option.

God's Solution: Hell is designed by God in the same way parents design spankings, according to Hebrews 12. Its purpose is correction, followed by reconciliation. The problem is our free will. Some have hardened their hearts so much that they will never, ever return to God; not even from Hell. They will remain there for all eternity. But the way out is made available, though after "paying" a terrible price, in the terminology of Matthew 18:34.

This doesn't mean Hell isn't real, eternal, and terrible. As I explain on my front cover,

If your hard heart resists good, God, light, love, truth, evidence, life, and grace, now – doubting God's promises and coveting the fruits of darkness – what do you think will happen between now and Eternity to stop your running from God forever?

Hell Fire is spiritual reality. It is justice. It is your debt which you must "pay" if you

forfeit Grace – Matthew 18:34 – as huge as your heart is hard: *twice* the **cruelty**, of word or deed, you do or wish upon others; *twice* the world **suffering** you might ease but flip off; *twice* the **kicks** you aim through the door when Love and Innocence come to help; *twice* the **ignorance** you earn by resisting correction; and *twice* the **chains** of your wisdom, talent, and potential withered from disuse. Forever, if you remain as stubborn as you are now.

Heaven does not provide Hell to hurt you. Hell is not the chaotic brainless destruction of the terrorist's bomb, but the intelligent soul-saving slicing of the surgeon's knife. The flames which torture, in Hell, those who hate God, are the same kind of flames which purify God's beloved saints – two different fires are never described in the Bible – just as the Light which cowardly Christians hide is the same Light *from* which sinners hide.

I have not found this theory, which I call “potential purification”, anywhere, yet as you can imagine, my Scriptural case doesn't arouse much curiosity among theologians, most of whom are not at liberty to reexamine their denomination's doctrines, no matter how strong the Biblical case, without losing their jobs.

Here are a few verses and analyses I was able to crowd on the back page of my book, continued on one inside page:

12 Bible Reasons to Reconsider Tradition

A few Scriptures supporting Potential Purification.

1. When the Bible talks about a *purpose* for fire, it is correction, Hebrews 12, a synonym of purification, Hebrews 12:29, Malachi 3:2, 1 Peter 4:12, Acts 2:3. Fire *consumes* dross from gold, and chaff from wheat, Matthew 3:12, which is an aspect of purification. The Greek word for fire is even spelled “pur”. Never does the Bible specify that God uses any kind of fire, anywhere or at any time, without this purpose. Certainly the doctrine, that each and every person who goes to Hell will remain there forever, *implies* that Hell never rehabilitates or purifies, since it would seem unreasonable for God to keep someone in Hell who has been purified. But the assumption that Hell's purpose is pure torture, without any potential purification or rehabilitation of any kind, imposes on theology a purpose never given by God and contrary to the only purpose God ever gave.

2. When the purpose of God's *punishment* is specified, it is always rehabilitation and restoration, Deuteronomy 28, Proverbs 19:18, 13:24, 22:15 23:13-14, 29:15, 17. God compares His purpose for punishment with that of loving parents, in Hebrews 12, concluding the chapter by calling Himself “consuming fire”.

3. The Greek word $\theta\epsilon\iota\omicron\upsilon$ (*theiou*) for “brimstone” in the “lake of fire and brimstone”, Revelation 14:10, 20:10, 21:8, means “divine” as well as “sulfur”. The word means both because Greeks used sulfur for incense to sanctify their temples. If the purpose of “fire” is purification, the lake is a “lake of divine purification”.

4. “Fire” is the experience of saints and sinners together, Mark 9:49 and 1 Peter 4:12. Nowhere is the fire that purifies saints described as a different fire than what “torments” the damned. Mark 9:43-50 treats them as the same kind, except that in Hell it is not “quenched”; yet saints should welcome it perpetually.

5. Jesus said what distinguishes fire in Hell from fire upon saints is that fire in Hell is “not quenched” (KJV) or extinguished, (meaning, before the fuel is consumed), which raises the expectation that the *after* the fuel is consumed, the fire *will* go out.

6. God used a word for “torment” which literally means “touchstone”. (*A rock upon which both pure and impure gold must be rubbed – saints and sinners – in order to compare the color of the streak – their reaction to the same trial – to measure purity.*)

7. The debtor in Matthew 18:34 will stay in Hell “till he should pay all that was due”. Why didn't Jesus say “forever”? Why the analogy of a debtor's prison? Debt is finite. (Although really huge.)

8. Jesus implied the possibility of forgiveness, for some, in “the world to come”. (Matthew

12:32) He has the “keys of Hell”, Revelation 1:18 – power not only to shut but to open, Isaiah 22:22. The Bible indeed warns of people who will remain in Hell forever, but never specifies that not one soul will be restored from Hell to fellowship with God. (See Part 4.)

9. Jesus described “their (plural) worm (singular)” in Hell, alluding to a parallel passage in Isaiah 66, in which God could have mentioned a simple maggot, or *any* other worm, but instead specified the “crimson worm” whose blood sacrifice for its young on a piece of wood is a perfect metaphor of Jesus’ shed blood for us on the Cross, suggesting that Jesus’ cleansing blood is available even in Hell for the redemption of the damned who will finally turn to Him.

10. God gave no higher proportion, for how much greater Hell’s torments will be than any sinner’s torments of others on earth, than “double”, Rev 18:6-8, Isa 40:2, 61:7, Jer 16:18, 17:18, Zec 9:12, or even less: “according to their works”, Pr 24:12, Mt 16:27, 2Ti 4:14.

11. Greek tenses in Revelation 14:9-12 are inconsistent with the traditional view – producing tense disagreement from one modern translation to another – but consistent with Potential Purification.

12. 1 Timothy 2:4, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” This may not mean God will “sentence sinners to salvation” who would rather flee from God’s love, but it seems a strong assurance that it will never be *God* shutting the door to salvation in any repentant sinner’s face.

(Similar passages: 2 Peter 3:9. “willing...that all should come to repentance.” John 6:44, 12:32, “I...will draw [drag, or lift, or inspire others to choose] all [men] unto me.” Acts 3:21 “...the restitution of all things...” 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 “...in Christ shall all be made alive...and when all things shall be subdued unto [shall obey] him...” *[all things are already subject to Him physically; the only thing left to be subdued is willing obedience]* Philippians 2:9-11 “...that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” 2 Corinthians 5:19 “...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” *[This disproves the theory that God’s Holiness makes Him unable to endure the presence of evil, so Jesus had to suffer the infinite torture demanded by God while God stayed away. If God’s keyword on Earth is “reconciliation”, how can His nature reverse itself just because we die?*

Yes, God has “wrath”. But have you ever looked up the Greek word, *opḗ*? It means “desire; violent passion”. Desire? That is not blind, vengeance-seeking rage. That is violence which passionately desires some goal. What goal? Hebrews 12 says God’s goal for punishment is like the goal of good parents: correction, leading to reconciliation. Hebrews 12 even ends this comparison with a sentence linking this very goal-focused correction with the function of Hell: “For our God is a consuming fire.” (My book, “Hell Fire: Heaven’s Loving Purpose”, is posted at www.Saltshaker.US.)

Interdependence of these goals: if you value political involvement such as abortion opposition, you need churches to allow you to talk, without a hair trigger for censoring “heresy” or controversy. Where discussion is welcome, theologically challenging ideas like mine about Hell will not be disruptive, but will be educational.