

be said to be in their right mind, and might not it be unjust for God to be punishing crazy people so severely?

Some religious people say that it is too late to change your mind once you are in Hell. You had your chance to repent, but didn't take it. This makes as much sense as a parent whose child wants to eat a cactus forcing the child to eat the whole thing after it pricked its tongue and found that cactus-eating is a bad idea. And to make the analogy more exact, the parent wouldn't just make the child eat the cactus, it would make the child eat cactus after cactus for all eternity.

This doesn't sound like justice.

In fact, nothing about Hell sounds like justice.

Could an infinitely loving, good, and just being really have created such a system?

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## DOES HELL MAKE SENSE?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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*the fire and torture.*

*\*Some religions believe that Hell is just separation from God, without all*

laws — is such a large sin that eternal punishment is completely just. But isn't the magnitude of a crime in part determined by how much damage it does or could do? And isn't it true that a mere human could not possibly do any damage to this crime's victim — God? That leaves us with eternal punishment for doing something that caused no damage. Not exactly just. Perhaps sinful humanity is so dirty and repulsive that we can't be allowed into Heaven without first being cleaned by Jesus. Okay, maybe that's the case. But then why is the only alternative to Heaven endless torture? Why couldn't God create a place that isn't Heaven, but that the only thing horrible about it is its distance from God? Wouldn't that be more loving and just? Some argue that God doesn't send anyone to Hell. Rather, people choose to go to Hell by rejecting God. If that's the case, don't you think these people would change their mind as soon as they experienced Hell? Wouldn't they immediately repent of their sins and accept God? If they didn't, could they in any sense

HELL, IN THE traditional Christian sense, is a place of eternal torment where unrepentant and unrepentant sinners are punished until the end of time. Does a Hell of this kind make sense, given that it was supposedly created by an infinitely just and loving God? The first thing we have to decide is what kind of crime is so severe that justice demands eternal punishment in payment. In those versions of Christianity that hold with this image of Hell, being born human and not accepting Jesus as your savior may be considered sufficient to earn you damnation. They might say that all the little sins over the course of one's lifetime, particularly when added to the "original sin" of Adam and Eve, earn one an eternity of torment. This essentially makes being tortured forever humanity's default state, something you have to get out of instead of something that you are given as punishment for a specific act. Others might say that the sin of rebelling against God — either by refusing to recognize him or breaking his

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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM:

## INSTRUCTIONS

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We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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