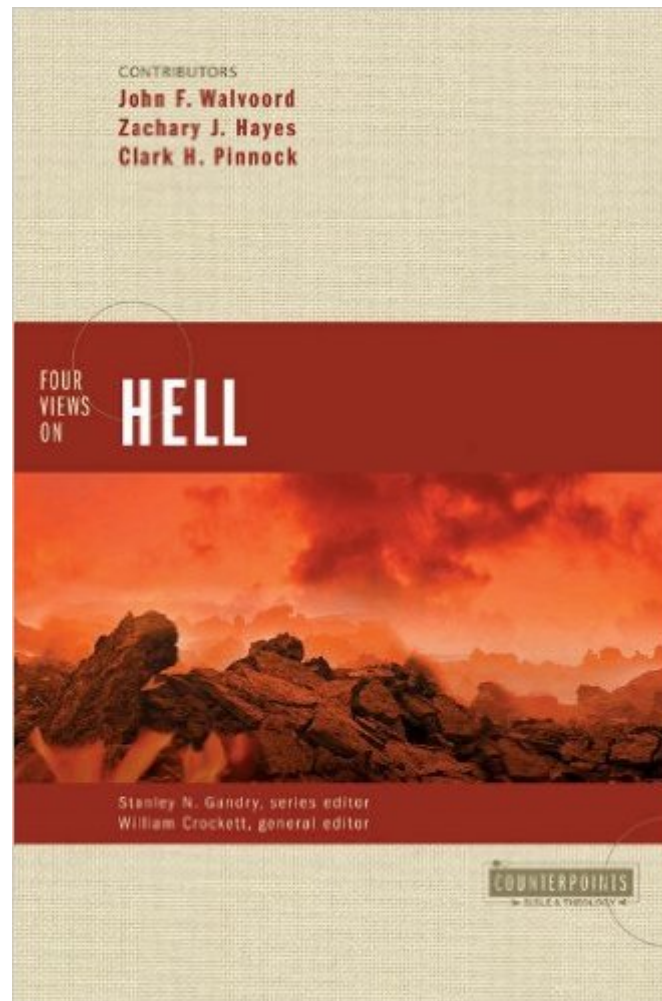


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# Four Views On Hell (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



## Synopsis

Most contemporary Christians acknowledge the doctrine of hell, but they'd rather not think about how God punishes the wicked. The authors of *Four Views on Hell* meet this subject head-on with different views on what the Scriptures say. Is hell to be understood literally as a place of eternal smoke and flames? Or are such images simply metaphors for a real but different form of punishment? Is there such a thing as conditional immortality, in which God annihilates the souls of the wicked rather than punishing them endlessly? Is there a Purgatory, and if so, how does it fit into the picture? The interactive Counterpoints forum allows the reader to see the four views on hell—literal, metaphorical, conditional, and purgatorial—in interaction with each other. Each view in turn is presented, critiqued, and defended. This evenhanded approach is ideal for comparing and contrasting views in order to form a personal conclusion about one of Christianity's key doctrines. The Counterpoints series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. Counterpoints books address two categories: Church Life and Bible and Theology. Complete your library with other books in the Counterpoints series.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book accomplishes its objective of presenting four differing views on hell. Obviously, it consists of four authors submitting defenses of their particular positions. A couple of the writers are more persuasive than their colleagues. This persuasiveness, however, stems more from the positions themselves rather than from the skill of the persons penning them. Walvoord begins with a simplistic, fundamentalist position of literal, eternal fire. Walvoord does a decent job of making his point. The issue is muddled, unfortunately, with the mantra of literal interpretation as the only method for persons who believe the Bible is inerrant. The connection with dispensationalism is apparent in the frequent, literal application of passages in Revelation. Crockett steps to the plate next with the metaphorical view. His presentation is the most convincing of the four, partially because of his skill but mainly because of the strength of the argument itself. Crockett sticks to the point and drives it home. Hayes takes his turn defending the purgatorial position. I was a bit surprised to find a serious consideration given to the idea of purgatory in a work of this nature. Hayes deserves credit for making a valiant attempt to communicate a Catholic belief to a predominantly Protestant audience. He offers little Scriptural support for his position, simply because there is little Scriptural support to be found. Pinnock concludes the presentations with his view of annihilation. Pinnock is not as convincing as Crockett, but gives some substantial Scriptural evidence and theological reasoning to support his position. Crockett does an excellent job of refuting Pinnock's argument in the brief response he offers.

Four Views of Hell is one of the best books available on the subject. Unlike other books on the same topic, the book dares to allow differing voices to be heard. But, this book may tell us even more about the prejudices and preconceptions of those who contributed to it than about the afterlife. John Walvoord is dogmatic in his "Literal" view that hell is a place of actual flames combining physical pain with mental and emotional depression and misery. I believe that literal is a particularly bad naming and this should have been called the "Traditional" view instead. William Crockett allows more credence to other views but still suggests that his "Metaphorical" view, hell is a state of mental and emotional depression and misery without physical features, are the only reasonable views. In the "Purgatorial" view, Zachary Hayes, gives an excellent synopsis of the development of this controversial idea, but the reader is left to wonder whether purgatorial is 'hellish' in the traditional sense or merely cleansing and refreshing. His treatment of the Roman Catholic doctrine is historical,

fair, and unapologetic. Clark Pinnock writes one of the best articles, to date, on the "Conditional" view. This view holds that in the end, most of the unsaved will become saved, and those who persist in rebellion and hold fast to doing evil will enter a state of oblivion and annihilation. Pinnock's article and counterpoints are excellent and by far the least prideful of the lot. The flaw, not with the book but with the contributors, is that they don't seem to read what the others have written. In their rebuttals they pick and choose their attack points often missing the very solutions to the problems they point out.

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