

No More Tears in Heaven? — 37

Phil Stilwell
Independent Scholar
ORCID: [0009-0009-3725-8682](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3725-8682)
Revised August 2026

Central claim

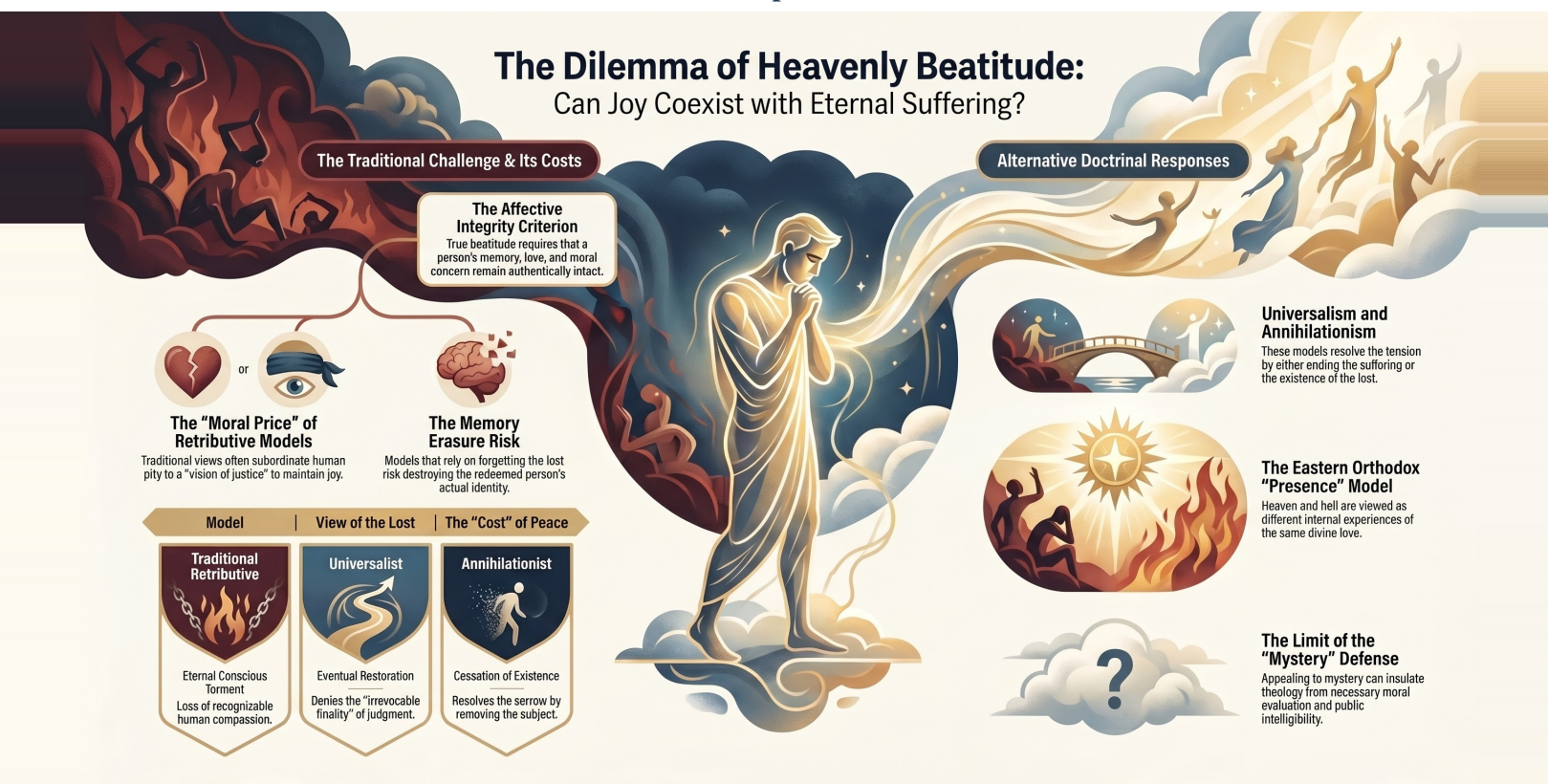
The five-part Christian package that combines eternal conscious torment, retained recognition of loved ones, continuing concern for their good, irrevocable loss, and a heaven without sorrow carries an unmet affective-integrity burden. If loving knowledge of a beloved's irremediable suffering makes grief *prima facie* fitting, a defender must identify what defeats that reason without diminishing love, knowledge, or relational continuity. Universalist, annihilationist, revisable-hell, and sorrow-compatible accounts avoid this exact burden by revising the package; this comparison does not disprove Christian eschatology, but promises and labels do not defend the full conjunction.

Preview:

Target package	Affective bridge	Two coherent routes	Bounded result
Endless suffering, accurate awareness, continuing concern, irrevocability, and no sorrow.	Loving knowledge of irremediable loss makes grief <i>prima facie</i> fitting.	Explain what defeats that reason while preserving affective integrity, or revise one of the five claims.	Familiar labels do neither; revised Christian eschatologies remain open.

The issue is not whether consolation is promised, but whether the full package explains how grief ceases without quietly changing what love, knowledge, or beatitude mean.

Visual preview:



The preserved visual contrasts retributive affective reordering and memory loss with universalist, annihilationist, presence-model, and mystery responses. It maps the main routes; it does not establish that any route is true or that every Christian eschatology is affected equally.

Abstract

The five-part Christian package that joins eternal conscious torment, retained recognition of loved ones, continuing concern for their good, irrevocable loss, and heavenly beatitude understood to exclude sorrow faces what this paper calls an unmet *affective-integrity burden*. If a person accurately knows that a beloved suffers without end and beyond rescue, grief is *prima facie* fitting; a sorrow-free outcome therefore requires an account of what defeats that reason and why the change preserves rather than diminishes loving agency. A comparative analysis of Revelation 21:4, classical affective reordering, and current responses finds two kinds of reply. Memory restriction, sorrow-compatible beatitude, universalism, annihilationism, and revisable hell avoid the exact burden by revising a package claim or the bridge from love to sorrow. Free choice, divine presence, perfect justice, and mystery claim to preserve all five claims but leave the relevant transformation unexplained. Thus familiar replies do not yet discharge the burden. This conclusion is comparative and bounded: it does not disprove Christian eschatology or rule out a future account that meets the burden. Retaining all five claims, however, requires more than naming the resulting state perfected, just, or mysterious. A public answer must explain how accurate concern for an irremediably suffering beloved remains recognizable as love when fitting grief is absent.

Keywords: heaven; hell; beatitude; love; memory; sorrow; eternal conscious torment; eschatology

1. The Package Under Pressure

The question in the title is not a request for imaginative speculation about the weather of heaven. This paper's answer is narrow: the five-part tearless-torment package carries an unmet affective-integrity burden. If the redeemed remember those they loved, know that some of them suffer without end, continue to desire their good, and yet cannot grieve, a defender must explain what defeats the reason for sorrow without diminishing love, knowledge, or relational continuity. The pressure falls on this conjunction, not on Christianity as a whole.

The target is a package, not Christianity as such. Contemporary Christian thought contains sharply different accounts of punishment, separation, destruction, restoration, freedom, and finality (Brown, 2023; Talbott, 2025). The argument applies only where all five of the following claims are affirmed:

1. **Endless conscious suffering:** at least some persons undergo suffering or grievous deprivation without a terminal limit.
2. **Accurate recognition:** at least some redeemed persons know the identity and condition of persons they loved in earthly life.
3. **Continuing concern:** perfected love still includes willing the beloved's good rather than merely endorsing a verdict about the beloved.
4. **Irrevocability:** the lost person's condition cannot end through restoration, repentance, release, or any later change.
5. **Sorrow-excluding beatitude:** heavenly fulfillment is taken to exclude every sorrow responsive to the beloved's condition.

These claims will be called the *tearless-torment package*. The name is diagnostic, not rhetorical. A Christian account that denies eternal conscious suffering, allows eventual restoration, restricts awareness, or makes some lucid sorrow compatible with beatitude has already revised the package.

The demand generated by this conjunction is the *affective-integrity burden*: when loving knowledge makes sorrow *prima facie* fitting, an account that excludes sorrow must identify what defeats that reason and show that the change preserves love, knowledge, and relational continuity. The governing thesis is that familiar defenses of the full package have not yet met this burden; they either revise a component, redescribe the problem, or appeal to a transformation they do not explain.

Terminology matters here. *Theism* is the general position that at least one deity exists. A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity, including the moral attributes, intentions, and actions assigned to it. The present

argument assesses a Christian God-concept joined to the tearless-torment package. Failure of that package would not disprove theism, the resurrection, heavenly life, divine judgment, or every Christian account of final destiny.

The intended reader may still regard the package as traditional, scriptural, or necessary. The requested intellectual change is smaller and more exact: do not count the promise of consolation as the explanation of consolation, and do not treat the word *perfected* as though it already showed that love, recognition, and moral concern survive intact. The explanatory work begins where those labels end.

2. Why the Problem Is About Love, Not Merely Mood

Grief can be painful, but the argument does not assume that every painful emotion is a defect. Some emotions are intelligent responses to what matters. Fear can fit danger; remorse can fit wrongdoing; gratitude can fit undeserved aid; sorrow can fit the serious loss of someone loved. Calling such an emotion *fitting* means that the object gives a person a reason for the response. It does not mean that the response must dominate consciousness, remain forever at one intensity, or mechanically follow from belief.

This distinction strengthens the familiar eternal-separation argument. Reitan (2002) examines the claim that the damnation of some is incompatible with the blessedness of others, and Hassoun (2015) directly develops the problem of lovers separated between heaven and hell. More recent work divides the challenge into suffering, separation, and regret, showing that removing one symptom may leave the other pressures intact (Bungum, 2023). The central insight is simple: another person's good is not merely information to a lover. It is a reason for attention, hope, action, and—when the loss is grave and irremediable—sorrow.

The paper therefore does not rely on the brittle premise that no one can experience joy while grieving. Human life repeatedly shows the opposite. Parents can delight in one child's recovery while grieving another child's death. A person can be grateful for rescue while lamenting those not rescued. Mixed emotion is not incoherence. Indeed, allowing a form of lucid lament in heavenly life is one way to escape the target package. The pressure arises only when beatitude is said to exclude every sorrow even though loving awareness of irreversible suffering remains.

Nor does the argument assume that the damned are innocent. A person can be responsible for a catastrophe and still be fittingly mourned. Families grieve the self-destruction of persons who refused help. Citizens can lament a deserved sentence while affirming that accountability is justified. Responsibility can change what response is appropriate, but it does not turn a person's ruin into no loss at all. The free-choice defense of hell consequently addresses the origin of the condition; by itself, it does not explain the emotional peace of those who love the person within it.

The justice of endless punishment is a separate question. Philosophers have challenged whether finite wrongdoing can warrant unending suffering and whether retributive accounts fit perfect goodness (Adams, 1975; Kvanvig, 1993). Those arguments may reinforce the present case, but this paper need not settle them. Even if the punishment is just, loving knowledge of a beloved's unending ruin may remain a reason for sorrow. The issue is not only whether the verdict is deserved. It is whether perfect love becomes invulnerable to the beloved's irreversible loss.

3. The Affective-Integrity Burden

The affective-integrity burden can be stated without specialized notation.

The central burden argument

1. If a person continues to love another, accurately knows that the beloved suffers without end, and knows that the loss is irrevocable, then sorrow for the beloved is *prima facie* fitting.
2. The tearless-torment package says that at least one redeemed person stands in that relation to at least one lost person while possessing beatitude that excludes sorrow.
3. When a fitting sorrow is absent, an explanation is owed: the account must show what defeats the reason for sorrow and why the change preserves rather than diminishes love, knowledge, or personal continuity.
4. Merely naming the altered state *perfection*, *justice*, or *mystery* does not supply that explanation.
5. Therefore, the tearless-torment package carries an unmet affective-integrity burden unless such an account is provided.

The conclusion is intentionally modest. It is not a formal contradiction between the bare ideas of happiness and knowledge. A defender could deny that sorrow is fitting, deny that love still wills the lost person's good in the relevant way, deny accurate awareness, or understand beatitude as compatible with lament. Each move is logically available. The argument asks what the move costs and whether it still leaves the original package intact.

This is why a purely verbal reply fails. Suppose a defender says that perfected love will necessarily agree with perfect justice. That may be true. But agreement with a just verdict does not yet entail emotional indifference to the person judged. If the response goes further and says that no pity or sorrow can remain, it has chosen an affective theory. It must then explain why the transformed concern remains the perfection of love rather than the suppression of one of love's recognizable consequences.

The burden is also comparative. Universalism denies irrevocable final loss. Annihilationism denies unending conscious suffering. An open-door or revisable-hell account denies that the condition can never change. A sorrow-compatible view denies that beatitude excludes all grief. These accounts face their own scriptural and philosophical problems, but they do not contain the same five-part conjunction. A defense of the conjunction must therefore do more than show that every alternative has costs. It must show why its own cost is not the loss of affective integrity.

4. A Promise Is Not a Mechanism

The first way to obscure the affective-integrity burden is to substitute a promised result for an account of how that result is achieved. Revelation 21:4 promises that mourning, crying, and pain will be no more (National Council of Churches, 2021). The verse has enormous pastoral force. It does not, by itself, say whether grief ceases because no beloved suffers, because every loss is repaired, because painful knowledge is absent, because desire is transformed, because sorrow coexists with a deeper mode of joy, or because eschatological imagery is not a literal psychology of individual affect.

The distinction between result and mechanism is not skeptical wordplay. Eschatological language employs judgment, fire, exclusion, victory, resurrection, city, feast, and divine presence in ways whose relations are contested across Christian traditions (Brown, 2023). To infer a complete theory of memory and emotion from one promised result is to make the text answer a question it does not explicitly address.

The problem therefore cannot be dissolved by repeating the promise. If someone asks how a bridge bears weight, the assurance that it will not collapse is not yet the engineering account. Likewise, the assurance that tears cease is not yet an account of how accurate recognition, continuing concern, irrevocable torment, and the cessation of sorrow fit together.

This underdetermination cuts in both directions. Critics should not claim that Revelation itself forces memory

erasure or moral indifference. Defenders should not claim that the verse supplies a psychologically transparent reconciliation. The philosophical question begins after the exegetical limit is acknowledged: among the available mechanisms, which preserves the most central commitments at the lowest moral and conceptual cost? This is the affective-integrity burden in its scriptural form: the promise fixes the outcome, while the defense must supply the preserving explanation.

5. The Classical Affective-Reordering Answer

Aquinas directly undertakes the transformation that the affective-integrity burden asks defenders to identify. In the *Supplement* to the *Summa Theologica*, question 94 asks whether the blessed see the sufferings of the damned, pity them, and rejoice in their punishment. The blessed know the punishment; they do not pity the damned because pity would involve wishing a misery removed when, on the account, right reason aligned with divine justice does not will its removal; and they rejoice not in suffering considered by itself but in the manifestation of justice and their own deliverance (Aquinas, 1947).

This position preserves recognition, knowledge, finality, and sorrow-free beatitude. It escapes by revising the emotional consequence of love. Once the lost are fixed in a condition that justice does not permit to end, perfected charity no longer wills their release. Pity would be irrational because its object is no longer a good that ought to occur.

The answer is logically disciplined. It should not be caricatured as simple sadism, and it distinguishes delight in suffering from joy in justice. Yet the distinction does not remove the central moral cost. The redeemed person's relation to the beloved has changed so deeply that the beloved's endless misery no longer supports pity. A concern that once responded to need by desiring relief now responds to the same need by endorsing its permanence.

That may be the intended conclusion. But it is a concession about affective continuity, not a refutation of the objection. The question becomes whether the transformed attitude deserves to be called the perfection of neighbor-love. The phrase *right reason* cannot settle that dispute by itself, because the content of right reason depends on the very theory of justice and finality under examination. If the punishment's irrevocability is assumed in order to show that pity is unfitting, and the absence of pity is then used to show that irrevocable punishment is compatible with perfected love, the account risks moving in a circle.

The strongest version of this reply must therefore defend three bridges: why endless and irrevocable suffering is just; why justice makes desiring its cessation irrational; and why a love that cannot desire relief remains recognizably continuous with the charity commanded before death. The first bridge concerns punishment, the second moral emotion, and the third personal and relational identity. Establishing one does not automatically establish the others.

6. The Main Response Routes

The principal replies divide into two types. *Package-revising* replies deny or reinterpret one of the five claims and therefore escape the exact conjunction at a stated cost. *Package-preserving* replies claim to retain the conjunction but propose a bridge—justice, divine presence, affective transformation, or mystery—that is supposed to defeat fitting sorrow. Only the second type directly undertakes the affective-integrity burden; a response is not a defense of the full package if it succeeds only by leaving that package.

6.1 Allow sorrow within beatitude

One route denies that perfect heavenly life must be emotionally flat. Sorrow might remain as lucid lament without despair, resentment, helpless rumination, or loss of communion. The redeemed could know a beloved's condition, grieve it appropriately, and still possess an overriding good that prevents grief from destroying fulfillment.

This view preserves more of ordinary love than the sorrow-excluding account. It also changes the interpretation of the promise that mourning will be no more. The promise might concern crushing grief, alienation, or the final defeat of evil rather than the impossibility of every painful response. Whether that reading is exegetically adequate is a theological question. Philosophically, however, it shows that joy and grief need not be treated as exhaustive alternatives.

6.2 Restrict memory or awareness

A second route denies accurate recognition. Perhaps the redeemed do not know who is lost, cannot attend to their condition, or no longer retain the relevant memories. This move directly blocks the knowledge premise. It also creates a relational-continuity question.

Memory is not the only condition of personal identity, and not every healed or reorganized memory destroys the person. The objection should therefore avoid the slogan that any forgetting equals annihilation. The narrower concern is that love for a particular person depends on a history of recognition. If heavenly peace requires systematic ignorance of that person's fate, the account must explain how the redeemed retain the relationship rather than merely the abstract capacity to love someone.

Selective ignorance also raises an explanatory question. A perfectly ordered afterlife would not confront the limitations that make ignorance unavoidable in ordinary life. If painful truths are hidden specifically because accurate knowledge would disturb beatitude, peace begins to look curated. The defender must say why epistemic restriction perfects agency rather than protects a desired emotional output.

6.3 Reorder desire and emotion

The Aquinas-style route preserves knowledge but denies that grief remains fitting. The redeemed see the lost person's condition through a perfected understanding of justice. The beloved's good is no longer identified with release, restoration, or relief; it is identified with the right order of the whole.

This account is strongest when it does not pretend that nothing important changes. It explicitly claims that earthly pity can be disordered. Its difficulty is explaining why the good of an individual beloved ceases to support sorrow while love for that individual remains. A parent may accept that a guilty child deserves punishment and still lament the child's ruin. The appeal to justice therefore needs a further premise: in the final state, the deserved and irrevocable character of suffering defeats every reason for sorrow. That premise is controversial precisely because many forms of morally admirable compassion survive acknowledgment of responsibility.

6.4 Revise the destiny of the lost

Universalist, annihilationist, and revisable-hell accounts alter the object of knowledge. Universalism denies that loss is final. Annihilationism denies that conscious suffering continues without end. Open-door accounts allow the lost eventually to respond, repent, or leave; Buckareff and Plug (2005), for example, argues that divine love supports continued opportunity for reconciliation. Each view removes at least one condition that makes grief permanently fitting.

These are not cost-free victories. Universalism must address freedom, judgment, and resistant agency. Annihilationism must address destruction, scriptural language, and whether nonexistence is a satisfactory end for a beloved. Revisable-hell accounts must explain why change remains possible and what postmortem agency is like. Still, a cost to an alternative does not restore the original conjunction. It shows that Christian eschatology contains a genuine choice among burdens.

6.5 Recast hell as the experience of divine presence

Some Christian accounts treat heaven and hell as different experiences of the same divine presence rather than two places to which persons are externally assigned. The Orthodox Church in America presents divine love as joy to those who love and torment to those who reject it (Orthodox Church in America, n.d.); Manis (2019) develops a philosophical divine-presence model that retains eternal conscious suffering while rejecting a simple retributive infliction account.

This move can answer objections aimed at a deity who actively administers torture for retributive purposes. It does not automatically answer the eternal-separation problem. If the lost still suffer consciously and irreversibly, and the redeemed still know and love them, the fitting-sorrow question returns. The phenomenology and causal story have changed; the beloved's unending condition has not. The presence model therefore helps only if its fuller account also changes finality, the possibility of response, the nature of love, or what beatitude excludes.

Table 1: How the main replies address or revise the target package

Response route	Move made	What it preserves	Effect on the burden
Sorrow-compatible beatitude	Revises what beatitude excludes	Knowledge, love, relational continuity, and possibly finality	Escapes the exact package; must explain how lament and fulfillment coexist
Memory or awareness restriction	Revises accurate recognition	Sorrow-free beatitude and the lost person's stipulated condition	Escapes the knowledge premise; must explain continuity without curated ignorance
Affective reordering	Revises continuing concern or the love-to-sorrow bridge	Knowledge, finality, and sorrow-free beatitude	Must show why justice defeats pity without diminishing recognizable love
Universalism, annihilationism, or revisable hell	Revises endless suffering, irrevocability, or both	Loving concern and intelligible grief responses	Escapes the exact package; must defend the revised destiny on other grounds
Divine-presence model	Changes the causal account, not necessarily one of the five claims	Divine omnipresence and a non-torturer account of causation	Leaves the burden intact if suffering remains endless, known, and final
Mystery or unspecified transformation	Posits a possible but unspecified bridge	The full package and epistemic humility	Preserves possibility, but does not yet supply a public explanation

Table 1 makes the comparison visible. The first four routes revise a package claim or the bridge from love to sorrow; the final two can retain all five claims but do not by themselves explain why fitting sorrow disappears. Every serious response pays somewhere. The target package is not vindicated by announcing that alternatives also pay. Its own price is the claim that perfected love can confront an irremediable beloved's suffering without fitting sorrow. That price is the affective-integrity burden.

7. The Strongest Replies

The strongest package-preserving replies do not deny the five claims. They argue that responsibility, overwhelming divine goodness, perfect knowledge of justice, or an unknown transformation defeats the reason for sorrow. Each must be judged by the same test: does the proposed feature explain why grief is no longer fitting while recognizable love remains, or does it merely rename or suppress the response that needs explanation?

7.1 The lost freely choose their condition

Free-choice accounts aim to reconcile hell with perfect goodness by locating final separation in the person's own decisive rejection rather than in arbitrary divine exclusion. Walls (1992) develops a sophisticated version of this strategy. It is a serious answer to the question of responsibility. It is not yet an answer to the question of grief.

Suppose a beloved freely and culpably chooses ruin. The choice may justify blame, respect for agency, or refusal to coerce. It does not make the ruin unreal. Love often grieves precisely those losses produced by stubborn agency. To move from *self-chosen* to *not sorrow-worthy*, a defender needs a principle showing why responsibility eliminates rather than changes the form of fitting grief.

The continuing-sin response adds that persons in hell endlessly renew the basis of punishment. Philosophical discussion shows that its success depends on the nature of the suffering and the agency preserved within it (Himma, 2003). Even if the account explains duration, it does not settle affect. A lover can lament an endless pattern of culpable refusal, perhaps more intensely because the refusal continues.

There is also a finality question. If the lost retain agency sufficient to choose badly forever, why is a later good response impossible? If they are fixed so that good response is no longer possible, what fixed them, and why does respect for freedom require preserving the result rather than restoring the capacity? The argument here does not prove that an adequate answer is impossible. It shows that *free choice* is the heading of an answer, not its completion.

7.2 The greater good overwhelms finite sorrow

Another reply says that direct awareness of supreme divine goodness so fulfills the redeemed that finite losses cannot disturb beatitude. This can support a sorrow-compatible account in which grief remains but cannot defeat joy. It is harder to use it as an argument that no grief is fitting.

Greater joy does not ordinarily cancel the reasons supplied by lesser goods. A person who receives an extraordinary benefit does not thereby lose every reason to mourn another person's death. If the claim is that the divine good transforms the structure of reasons themselves, the defender must explain why concern for finite persons is fulfilled rather than displaced. Otherwise, the answer secures peace by making creaturely love morally weightless before a greater object.

7.3 Perfect knowledge reveals the verdict's justice

Perhaps sorrow persists only because earthly agents misunderstand justice. Once the redeemed see the complete truth, they recognize that the lost person's condition is exactly right. This reply is stronger than a bare appeal to authority because it links emotion to corrected judgment.

Yet knowing that a verdict is just and wishing that the underlying tragedy had not occurred are compatible attitudes. Judges can impose deserved sentences without delighting in the history that made them necessary. Victims can support accountability while wishing the offender had become different. To eliminate sorrow, perfect knowledge must show not merely that the condition is deserved but that no counterfactual wish, regret, or compassionate response remains fitting. That is an additional moral claim, not an automatic consequence of justice.

7.4 Heavenly psychology exceeds present understanding

Epistemic humility is appropriate when discussing an afterlife no one can presently observe. It blocks overconfident claims about the only possible psychology of resurrected persons. It also limits the defender. A merely possible unknown reconciliation does not provide positive reason to think the conjunction works.

The asymmetry matters. A critic should not claim a strict contradiction unless the premises warrant it. A defender should not advertise coherence as established when the proposed bridge is unspecified. Mystery

preserves logical possibility; it does not turn compatibility into explanation. If the package is offered as morally attractive or publicly defensible, its central terms must remain intelligible enough for assessment.

8. What an Adequate Answer Must Show

The affective-integrity burden does not demand an exhaustive map of heavenly neuropsychology. It asks for enough conceptual content to show that the words *love*, *knowledge*, *justice*, and *beatitude* still connect in a recognizable way. The following five questions turn that burden into a public-explanation test.

1. **What is known?** Does the redeemed person know the lost person's identity, suffering, responsibility, and inability to escape? If knowledge is restricted, why is the restriction a perfection rather than protection from distress?
2. **What good is willed?** Does love still desire relief, repentance, restoration, or any improvement for the lost person? If none is possible or desirable, what remains of willing that person's good?
3. **What happens to sorrow?** Is grief absent, transformed, episodic, or compatible with a deeper joy? What reason defeats it?
4. **Why is the condition final?** Is finality imposed, chosen, metaphysically fixed, or continually renewed? Why can no later change alter it?
5. **What would count against the account?** If memory, pity, indifference, approval, and mystery can each be invoked as needed, does any possible emotional outcome place pressure on the doctrine?

The fifth question is the sharpest. A view becomes evidentially insulated when every outcome counts as confirmation: grief would display love, absence of grief would display perfection, memory would display continuity, forgetting would display healing, horror would display justice, and peace would display beatitude. An account that can absorb every possible result without cost has not explained the result; it has protected itself from evaluation.

The every-outcome test

1. If every possible emotional or cognitive outcome can be relabeled as perfected beatitude, no outcome can show that the account has failed.
2. An account that permits no internal failure cannot use a favorable outcome as public confirmation that love, knowledge, and sorrow have been reconciled.
3. Therefore, an adequate answer must state what these commitments jointly require and what would count as failing to preserve their integrity.

This does not mean eschatology must be experimentally testable. It means a public claim should specify enough internal relations to permit rational comparison. If continuing love has implications in ordinary moral life but no implications once they become inconvenient in the afterlife, the concept has changed. The defender may argue for that change. The defender may not simply assume it.

The decisive reader-facing question

If accurate knowledge of a beloved's unending and irremediable suffering would not make any form of sorrow fitting, what does perfected love still do in response to that person's condition—and why should that response be recognized as the perfection, rather than the defeat, of love?

9. Conclusion

The paper's central result is that the five-part tearless-torment package bears an unmet affective-integrity burden unless it can explain what defeats the *prima facie* reason for grief without diminishing love, knowledge, or relational continuity. This is a narrow result. It does not show that all Christian eschatology is false, that every transformation of emotion destroys personal identity, or that joy and sorrow can never coexist.

Love supplies the pressure. If a redeemed person knows that a beloved suffers without end and beyond rescue, grief is *prima facie* fitting. The full package must therefore explain what defeats that reason and why the change preserves love, knowledge, and relational continuity. Revelation's promise states the desired result but not its mechanism. Free choice can address responsibility without erasing tragedy. Perfect justice can justify a verdict without making lament irrational. Affective reordering can remove pity, but only by defending a changed account of love. Memory restriction can remove distress, but only by explaining why curated ignorance perfects the person. Mystery can preserve possibility, but not public warrant.

The alternatives show the real shape of the choice. Universalist, annihilationist, revisable-hell, memory-restriction, and sorrow-compatible accounts revise a package claim or the bridge from love to sorrow and incur their own costs. Divine-presence and mystery replies can preserve the package, but they leave the affective transformation to be explained. The conclusion is therefore comparative and bounded: familiar labels do not discharge the burden, but a revised eschatology or a future preserving account remains open. Readers who affirm the full package should ask not merely whether tears cease, but what love has become when they do.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

A.1 Plain-language reconstruction

- P1.** If a heavenly person continues to love a lost person, accurately knows that the lost person suffers without end and beyond restoration, and retains ordinary rational sensitivity to the beloved's good, then sorrow for that person is *prima facie* fitting.
- P2.** The tearless-torment package says that at least one heavenly person continues to love a lost person and to take that person's good as a reason for concern, knows that the lost person suffers without end and beyond restoration, and possesses beatitude that excludes actual sorrow.
- P3.** If sorrow is *prima facie* fitting but absent, the package owes an account of the transformation that defeats the sorrow and of why the transformation does not corrupt love, knowledge, or personal continuity.
- P4.** Repeating the labels *perfected*, *just*, or *mysterious* does not itself provide that account.

Conclusion. Therefore, unless the missing transformative account is supplied, the tearless-torment package carries an unmet affective-integrity burden. This conclusion does not entail that every Christian eschatology is false or that no possible account could meet the burden.

A.2 Symbols

Let x range over redeemed persons and y over lost persons.

$L(x, y)$: x continues to love y and to take y 's good as a reason for concern.

$K(x, y)$: x accurately knows y 's condition.

$D(y)$: y suffers consciously without end and beyond restoration.

$F(x, y)$: sorrow in x concerning y is prima facie fitting.

$A(x, y)$: sorrow in x concerning y is actual.

$B(x)$: x possesses beatitude that excludes actual sorrow.

$M(x)$: the package owes an adequate account of why sorrow is absent in x without corrupting love, knowledge, or continuity.

A.3 Symbolic form

The burden form is:

$$\forall x \forall y [(L(x, y) \wedge K(x, y) \wedge D(y)) \rightarrow F(x, y)] \quad (1)$$

$$\forall x \forall y [(B(x) \wedge F(x, y) \wedge \neg A(x, y)) \rightarrow M(x)] \quad (2)$$

$$\forall x \forall y [B(x) \rightarrow \neg A(x, y)] \quad (3)$$

$$\exists x \exists y [L(x, y) \wedge K(x, y) \wedge D(y) \wedge B(x)] \quad (4)$$

$$\therefore \exists x M(x). \quad (5)$$

Deductive validity. Given (1)–(4), the conclusion follows. From (4), choose an x and y for whom love, knowledge, endless irrevocable suffering, and sorrow-excluding beatitude are jointly present. Premise (1) yields $F(x, y)$; premise (3) yields $\neg A(x, y)$; premise (2) then yields $M(x)$.

Support for the premises. Premise (1) is a substantive moral claim supported by the ordinary connection between love and concern for a beloved's irremediable suffering; it is strong but defeasible rather than self-evident. Premise (2) states the public explanatory standard used throughout the paper. Premise (3) follows from the sorrow-excluding interpretation of beatitude. Premise (4) does not describe every Christian view; it instantiates only the target package. The valid inference therefore establishes the affective-integrity burden conditionally, not a deductive disproof of Christian eschatology.

References

- Adams, M. M. (1975). Hell and the god of justice. *Religious Studies*, 11(4), 433–447. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500008763>
- Aquinas, T. (1947). *Summa theologiae* (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Trans.) [Supplement, question 94, articles 1–3]. Benziger Brothers. Retrieved August 14, 2026, from <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/5094.htm>
- Brown, D. (2023). Hell. In B. N. Wolfe et al. (Eds.), *St andrews encyclopaedia of theology*. University of St Andrews. Retrieved August 14, 2026, from <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/Hell>
- Buckareff, A. A., & Plug, A. (2005). Escaping hell: Divine motivation and the problem of hell. *Religious Studies*, 41(1), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412504007437>
- Bungum, D. (2023). Theodicy, regress, and the problem of eternal separation. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 11, 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.2023-11.0314-65012012>
- Hassoun, N. (2015). Eternally separated lovers: The argument from love. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 93(4), 633–643. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2014.997766>
- Himma, K. E. (2003). Eternally incorrigible: The continuing-sin response to the proportionality problem of hell. *Religious Studies*, 39(1), 61–78. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003441250200625X>
- Kvanvig, J. L. (1993). *The problem of hell*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195084870.001.0001>
- Manis, R. Z. (2019). *Sinners in the presence of a loving god: An essay on the problem of hell*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190929251.001.0001>
- National Council of Churches (Ed.). (2021). *New revised standard version updated edition*. National Council of Churches; Friendship Press.
- Orthodox Church in America. (n.d.). *Heaven and hell: The orthodox faith, volume iv: Spirituality*. Retrieved August 14, 2026, from <https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/the-kingdom-of-heaven/heaven-and-hell>
- Reitan, E. (2002). Eternal damnation and blessed ignorance: Is the damnation of some incompatible with the salvation of any? *Religious Studies*, 38(4), 429–450. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003441250200611X>
- Talbott, T. (2025). Heaven and hell in christian thought. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved August 14, 2026, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heaven-hell/>
- Walls, J. L. (1992). *Hell: The logic of damnation*. University of Notre Dame Press.