



The horrific influence of the Christian doctrine of Eternal Torment upon western civilization.



I am now convinced that the false teaching of eternal torment has contributed more to the moral downfall of this world (especially that of the Western nations) than anyone can or ever could calculate. We, ourselves, have terribly underestimated its effects. I will quote here from a rare piece of literature, *Christ Triumphant*, published by Thomas Allin in 1890. An intellectual man (and very much a realist), he was nevertheless a man of vision, insight and passion. If what Mr. Allin tells us in the following words was true of his generation, how much more true is it today? How much more ashamed should we be, who have grown so complacent as to forget that we are carriers and continuers of this flame of truth?

Further, I write because of how deeply and painfully convinced I am of the very serious mischief which has been, and is being, produced by the [eternal torment] views

generally held.¹ They in fact tend, as nothing else ever has, to cause, I had almost said, to justify the skepticism now so widely spread; they effect this because they so utterly conflict with any conception we can form of common justice and equity. It is precisely the sense of natural equity which God has planted within us, that the popular belief in endless evil and pain most deeply wounds. And these considerations are in fact a complete answer to some other objections often heard. “Why disturb men’s minds,” it is said, “why unsettle their faith; why not let well alone?” By all means, I reply, let well alone, but never let ill alone. Men’s minds are already disturbed; it is because they are already disturbed that we would calm them, and would restore the doubters to faith by pointing them to a larger hope, to a truer Christianity.

A DAY OF TOLERANCE

Have we been guilty of “letting well alone?” We have. Amazing that any could call “well” a “faith” that lends God the emotional constitution of a medieval torturer. Yet we have lost our purpose in this day of tolerance. Yes, we ourselves have succumbed to a Beatlesque philosophy of: “Let it be.” This philosophy certainly appeals to that part of our nature that hates confrontation and loves to sit down. But what has it done for the spread of truth? For the peace of our fellow-travelers upon this planet? We seem to want to imitate the apostle Paul, but only until the man cinches his belt and boards a ship. Allin continues—

A penalty which to our reason and moral sense seems shocking, and monstrous, loses all force as a threat. It

¹ Paul describes the phenomenon in Romans 1:28, “And according as they do not test God, to have Him in recognition, God gives them over to a disqualified mind, to do that which is not befitting.”

has ever been thus in the case of human punishments. And so in the case of hell. Outwardly believed, it has ceased to touch the conscience, or greatly to influence the life of Christians. To the mass of men it has become a name and little more (not seldom a jest); to the skeptic it has furnished the choicest of his weapons; to the man of science, and to the more thoughtful of all ranks, a mark for loathing and scorn: while, alas, to many a sad and drooping heart, which longs to follow Christ more closely, it is the chief woe and burden of life.

The mode in which the ordinary creed does its hateful work of hardening the skeptic, and saddening the most devout, may be shown by two brief extracts, "All the attempts yet made," says a stern moralist, "to reconcile this doctrine with divine justice and mercy,

“We credit God with attributes which are utterly hateful to the meanest of men.”

are calculated to make us blush, alike for the human heart that can strive to justify such a creed, and for the human intellect that can delude itself into a belief that it has succeeded in such a justification.” “Nothing,” says the late General Gordon, “can be more abject and miserable than the usual concept of God. Imagine to yourself what pleasure it would be to Him to burn us, or to torture us. Can we believe any human being capable of creating us for such a purpose? We credit God with attributes which are utterly hateful to the meanest of men. I say that Christian Pharisees deny Christ. A hard, cruel set they are, from high to low. When one thinks of the real agony one has gone through in consequence of false teaching, it makes human nature angry with the teachers who have added to the bitterness of life.”

CHRISTIAN PHARISEES

The phrase “Christian Pharisees” is an insightful one. It fingers a truth that we ourselves have lost touch of. Because the Pharisees of our Lord’s day rejected Him and endorsed His death, the very word “Pharisee” makes us cringe. The term has become synonymous with “bad person.” In this, we have become thoroughly deceived, and have therefore grown ineffective in our evangelism,

especially in the important aspect of exposure and rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2). The Pharisees were every bit as socially respected as today’s most well-regarded cleric. There was nothing outwardly evil about them. In fact, they were outwardly righteous. (This is why Jesus called them *white-washed* tombs.) But they loved tradition more than truth. (Note how Jesus equated false teaching with death.)

The Pharisees were thoroughly convinced in their own minds that they were the finest sons of Abraham. Few of us can imagine the wide eyes, the open mouths, the flared nostrils that ensued when a poorly-dressed, religious nobody from Nazareth told these people (yes, they were people) that they were not sons of Abraham, they were sons of Satan. It would be the equivalent of you or me telling a congregation of song-singing Christians at the Methodist church this Sunday: “If you people were truly servants of Christ, you would be teaching His doctrines. But you are teaching instead the doctrines of demons. Therefore, in truth, you are servants of Satan.”



Peter was convinced he was serving Christ when he attempted to dissuade his Master from the cross. Jesus, seeing beneath the outward sincerity and righteous exterior, bore to the heart of the matter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan.” Paul, too, possessed this gift of spiritual x-ray, calling some who were naming Christ, “enemies of the cross” (Philippians 3:18). Only by feeling the shock of the Pharisees can we understand that only those thoroughly convinced they are “of God” could be so thoroughly

shocked at being called “of Satan.” The principle is timeless. The only group of people today who could be shocked to the point of flabbergast at being called “enemies of the cross,” are those who are convinced they are champions of the cross. The only people who can fit this description are: Christians.

Christian Pharisees deny Christ. A hard, cruel set they are, from high to low. Adding to the bitterness of life. Such true words. Yet words which even the most zealous of us are loathe to utter. Who will expose the unwitting criminals who have added to the bitterness of life? Who will dare probe behind the whitewashed wall to uncover “a hard, cruel set of Christian Pharisees” who have, effectually, done more than Hitler, Stalin or Castro to drive God from men’s minds? We have studied the consequence of atomic bombs, of Communism, of renegade germs and viruses. Yet we have never subjected to analysis that amazing thing that General Gordon has called the “consequence of false teaching.” Why? *Because the consequences of the false teaching of eternal torment are now the fabric of society. They are the dirty fabric long worn to familiarity, from which we have sought to but flick crumbs. The consequences of the false doctrine of eternal torment are so all-pervasive, so closely connected to the invisible and nearly universal undercurrent of human thinking concerning God, that they are impossible now to separate and calculate.*

THE SOURCE OF SOCIETY’S ILLS

And so we have missed the invisible for the obvious, failing to smell death for the scent of whitewash. Thus, we have failed to pinpoint the source of society’s moral ills, let alone applied the balm needed to alleviate them.

Allin—

You know [eternal torment] has been taught, and yet you actually complain that men are skeptical, and that thoughtful artisans reject such a creed with scorn. R. Sufield writes [of the Middle Ages]: “The dogma of hell, except in the rarest cases, did no moral good. It never affected the right persons. It tortured innocent young women, and virtuous boys. It appealed to the lowest motives, and the lowest characters. It caused unceasing mental and moral difficulties. It always influenced the wrong people, and in a wrong way. It caused infidelity to some, temptations to others, and misery without virtue to most.”

What, I ask, has the dogma of endless pain and sin really effected? Has it checked the growth of heathenism in our cities? Has it kept the artisan in the fold of Christ?

Ineffective always, such teaching is more than ever so in these days, because the intelligent are by it forced into open revolt.

Let us not forget how much the traditional creed has fostered in man a spirit of cruelty. It is sad, but true, to recollect how much of the suffering inflicted by man on his brother man, has been due, directly or indirectly, to the belief in an endless hell. It gave to torture an apparent divine sanction. Not alone have the popular doctrines done all this, but they have greatly influenced for evil the general course of human legislation, and human thought. Many pages might be filled in enumerating the horrors, and anguish added to human life by these doctrines.

Thus it is that by this shocking creed the moral tone is lowered all around, wherever it is accepted. Men are familiarized with the idea of suffering and sin as permanent facts. They have even in some sort learned to consider heaven as dependent upon the belief in an endless hell. The very holiest men believing the popular creed are unconsciously depraved, morally and spiritually.

“By this shocking creed
the moral tone is
lowered all around,
wherever it is accepted.”

Let me speak plainly. Too long—far too long—have the clergy been silent; content to complain of a skepticism, of which a main cause is a doctrine they continue to teach (without, I believe in many cases, more than a languid and merely traditional acceptance of it). I repeat that no thoughtful man can believe a doctrine condemned by the conscience; and so men will seek a refuge in skepticism, when they hear the clergy teaching these evil traditions (for they are no more) as part of the revelation of that God, Whose blessed son tasted death for every man. Yes, the peculiar horror of the popular creed is that it sets up evil as an object of worship, of reverence, of love.

So revolting to our moral nature is the popular creed, that it, more than any other cause, produces the most wide-spread unbelief. “Compared with this,” remarks J.S. Mill, “all objections to Christianity sink into insignificance.”

The intelligent are by [false teaching] forced into open revolt.

Paul's accusation of the Jews rehearses the present phenomenon of a world repelled *from* God by the friends *of* God—

Lo! you are being denominated a Jew, and are resting on law, and are boasting in God, and know the will, and are testing what things are of consequence...You have confidence in yourself to be a guide of the blind, a light of those in darkness, a discipliner of the imprudent, a teacher of minors...You, then, who are teaching another, you are not teaching yourself!...*For because of you the name of God is being blasphemed among the nations* (Romans 2:17-24).

OBLIVIOUS ENEMIES

I cannot emphasize it enough (many of us have forgotten it) that the most dangerous enemies of the cross are completely (and I mean completely) oblivious of their role. So often I am told that exposure and rebuke must not be exercised upon those who are unconsciously deluded, that is, upon those who are at least sincere. But by this we can excuse Charles Manson and Adolph Hitler, both of whom sincerely believed that their actions were righteously motivated. The problem is that we have become deadened by familiarity to the horror of the eternal torment doctrine and its effect on God's name. We cringe at the crimes of Manson and



"But they are nice people!"

Hitler, yet merely roll our eyes when hellfire spews from the pulpit. How can I make you see that today's whitewashed Christian who embraces eternal torment is truly, as the writer testifies, "unconsciously depraved, morally and spiritually."

You say, "But they are nice people!" I say, "So were the Pharisees!" The key word here is "unconsciously." You say, "But they don't really teach it with enthusiasm." I say, "They are guilty by association." As the author notes, even a languid and merely traditional acceptance of eternal torment is sufficient to wreak the direst damage. Face it: We are tired, discouraged and beaten. And we disguise our melancholy by misappropriating "all is of God," lending a false air of spirituality to our own fatalistic bent, and to our personal loathing of confrontation. We have lost our righteous indignation, that brand exhibited by our Lord and by Paul. As Thomas Allin says in another place: "I say, that, however familiar this may be, it is necessary to ponder well the sad facts, for by awakening a righteous horror and indignation, we may often most effectually combat such dogmas."

It is this torch that I and others now carry.

OPEN REVOLT

The intelligent are by [false teaching] forced into open revolt.

What underlies so many, if not all, of our societal woes? Open revolt. The mother who kills her unborn baby is in open revolt. The child pornographer who defies the law is in open revolt. The supreme court justice who bans prayer from the classroom is in open revolt. The filmmaker who glorifies homosexuality is in open revolt. The gunman who kills schoolchildren is in open revolt. The man who leaves his wife is in open revolt. The woman who steals from the department store is in open revolt. The teenager who smokes his first cigarette is in open revolt. Whether in big ways or in small, in public, private, or in the depths of the human soul, humanity is in open revolt.

Now you must ask yourself: against what, or whom, is humanity revolting? Ask them as individuals, and they do not know. The source of their misery is so subtle that they themselves do not know it. But we know. They are revolting against God. Not against God as He is, but against the caricature of God painted through the centuries by the unconsciously depraved;



by the morally and spiritually bankrupt who look, by every outward appearance, to be the whiteness of the world. They are revolting against the god of Christianity.

EVANGELISTIC WAR

Speaking of the “god of Christianity,” he is on the move. I suppose that such efforts are still going on today (I don’t have the nerve to look), but in 1998 Christian organizations were gearing up for what they called “evangelistic war,” devoting millions of dollars and countless man-hours toward the furtherance of their false gospel, an essential element of which is, of course, eternal torment. Dr. James Dobson, then president of Focus on the Family, issued this statement in 1998:—

The changing culture forced a re-examination of this ministry in 1996. Secular humanism, the sexual revolution and the New Age movement had taken their toll. Spiritual confusion was evident everywhere. Thus, we began to ask if we were doing enough to introduce people to the Giver of Life. How should our ministry adapt to the spiritual needs of a society that was rapidly forgetting its Christian underpinnings? In May 1996, our Board of Directors convened for their regular spring meeting. In addition to discussing the “business” of Focus on the Family, the 11 of us struggled to answer this vital question: “What is the role of this Christian ministry in a post-Christian

world?” We deliberated for the better part of a day and then found ourselves on our knees at about 10 p.m. There were tears that evening as we began to understand the Lord’s new direction for the work He had called us to do. In short, we agreed to give greater emphasis to the basics—to infuse a greater spirit of evangelism into each of the 70 ministries that comprise Focus on the Family. Called the “Campaign for Righteousness,” it expresses our passion and *raison d’être*.

Try, if you can, to see past the self-righteous struggle, the bended knees, the tears and the spiritual-sounding platitudes (the Pharisees were identically engaged) and realize the shocking truth: Dr. Dobson and his Board of Directors have absolutely no idea what the real gospel is. Worse, they are so deceived that they have adopted and decided to give “a greater emphasis to” a false gospel (a teaching of demons) in place of the true one. These men’s idea of evangelism is to tell others: *Snap out of your sin long enough to believe in Jesus Christ before you die, or you will be eternally tormented in flames within sight of God Himself; Who will approve of the proceedings. And by the way, you’re saved by grace.*

Peter predicts the coming of such false teachers, writing in 2 Pet. 2:1-2—

Yet there came to be false prophets also among the people, as *among you also* there will be false teachers who will be



smuggling in destructive sects, even disowning the Owner Who buys them, bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many will be following out their wantonness, because of whom the glory of the truth will be calumniated.

What is “disowning the Owner Who buys them,” except the doctrine of Human Free Will, which removes grace from salvation and purchases this boon for those wise enough to barter their “willpower” (Free Will) in exchange for it? What is a “destructive sect” except that which promises eternal destruction for all to whom God has yet to impart faith? And what does the term “smuggling” suggest if not subtlety? “Wantonness” is not the monopoly of Las Vegas prostitutes. In the Greek the word is *aselgeia*. The elements are UN-MOON-LEADING. The literal, Scriptural definition is: “Leading or going away by stealth when the moon is not shining.” Peter uses this term to describe those who lead others astray in the absence of light, which in the context is Scriptural revelation. Wherever “fun, food, fellowship and the traditions of men” usurp Scriptural teaching (the careful and meticulous kind), false and destructive teachings follow. The false teachers of Peter’s context must be Christians, as they are counted among the believers.

ULTIMATE PARADOX

The sad paradox is that these men, in seeking to combat secular humanism, the sexual revolution, the New Age movement and rampant spiritual confusion, are actually poised to spread it. How? They are bent on propagating the very message that caused these societal woes in the first place.

If there has ever been a sadder, more vicious or pathetic circle, I don’t know what it could possibly be. I wrote in a yet-to-be published book called *Martin Zender Solves Evil*:

A fine and proper hope for normal people is for all evil to have deeper purpose. But if most of humanity is tortured for eternity, what is the deeper purpose? How does anyone “solve” evil? How do you “solve” billions of humans writhing in endless misery in front of God, Who is loving and able? How do you “solve” your husband, wife or children forever turning over flame?

If eternal torment is true, then God is insane. If God is insane, nothing is solvable. Let us kill our young children. Let us arm abortionists with government funding and sharper scissors. Those sucked broken and dead from the womb enter sweet bliss. They do, compared with eternal hellfire. Don’t they? Then better to kill the chil-

dren now, before the “age of accountability.” Better this than risk them not finding Jesus and being consciously broken for eternity. For, “narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be who find it.”

James Dobson and others fight evil in this world. They “tsk tsk” people who photograph naked women, gamble, curse the whole day, and kill human fetuses. But the people are photographing, gambling, cursing and killing *inordinately* because the doctrines of Dobson have maddened them. These are not doctrines of Dobsonian invention, but ones that he and others have foisted upon the world.

At Focus on the Family headquarters in Colorado Springs, they plan to reform the bad people of Earth. The bad people say: “Mind your own business.” Such opposition troubles the planners—note the mystification and head scratching. Such is the seduction of self-righteousness, when you can’t see Godzilla in the room. Martin Zender says: Clear away your Emerald City haze there



in Colorado and you will see that all you have left is a “loving” God who loves only the loving. The rest He tortures for eternity. Damn, I wonder if that hurts. Your God is worse than your devil, Mr. Dobson. And you wonder why your programs grind and halt. Religion has removed your eyes, and blindness keeps you from seeing Godzilla in the room. His head—with the fangs and the dripping drool—is sticking out your roof. Yet all you see is the people of the world running from your building. “Why are people running from our building?” you ask. There is

no answer. So you think: “We must need more money. I will write another newsletter.”

Stop writing and listen. Here is what people are saying: You are giving us *God*? No. Your “all-loving” Deity *must* be loved or He loses His mind. If we don’t return His “affections,” He tortures us for eternity, whatever the hell *that* is. LOVE HIM OR ELSE is the “call of grace” from your God houses. It is gift-wrapped in stained glass and *The Feingold Gospel Singers*. You have no idea how this affects our morality, being blind yourselves to your own imperfections. And now we should reward you with right behavior? Your own God does not love His enemies, but rather turns His back on them. Is it our task to outperform Him? If we can, He isn’t God. Many do love your brand of Savior. We call them hypocrites. As for us, we will continue to photograph naked women and shop for calmer deities.

In January of 2000, Dr. Dobson was still lamenting over national immorality with his left hand, while unwittingly resolving to fuel it with his right. In that month’s edition of the Focus on the Family newsletter, Dr. Dobson wrung both hands for three pages over the precarious condition of the traditional family. Then, on page 4, he said a most amazing thing:

Isn’t it interesting that in many countries where Christian influence is minimal, the family continues to be supported overwhelmingly?

Interesting? It’s more than interesting, Dr. Dobson. It’s the answer. If only you realized the truth of your own statement, that where Christian influence (and therefore the false gospel of Eternal Torment) is minimal (such as in third-world countries), there still remains some semblance of morality. Thomas Allin said it over one hundred years ago: “Thus it is that by this shocking creed the moral tone is lowered all round, wherever it is accepted.”

If only you realized the import of your own words, Dr. Dobson. Then you would re-examine the “Christian influence,” to find out what could possibly be so monstrously wrong with it that it would actually inspire immorality and unbelief. An honest Scriptural search would expose to your eyes the anomaly of Eternal Torment, a doctrine so demonic and unscriptural that it makes Satan the victor over Christ, and sinning humanity the arbiter of its own eternal destiny. What a day of revelation this would be!

Armed at last with the true gospel, you would put your many resources to work dispensing it, at last alleviating the pain and despair you are now inadvertently forwarding.

But no. Nothing dawns on the man to date, and Dr. Dobson continues to spread the gospel of salvation by

“The doctrine of
Eternal Torment is
so demonic and
unscriptural that it
makes Satan the victor
over Christ.”

human willpower, whitewashing it as the gospel of grace. But to his credit, he does offer this advice toward the end of his letter:

We must continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will bring to life that which is seemingly dead and to bless us with a sweeping spiritual renewal in the years ahead.

There may well be a sweeping spiritual renewal in the years ahead. And indeed, it would depend (relatively speaking), on life brought to that which is seemingly dead. But what Dr. Dobson would shudder to understand (and no doubt reject forthwith) is this: that the answer to his prayer demands the exposure and possible destruction of the very system of religion that he himself currently and dearly espouses. —MZ

THANK YOU

Thanks to all of you who have supported this work with your prayers, your letters of encouragement, and your gifts. This little note will have to serve as a formal “thank you” to all who have written and contributed. I see everything, and appreciate everything that you do. Not one day in twenty-three years have I ever taken your friendship for granted. I will continue this work as long as God continues to smile upon it and upon me, through you. —Martin