

"LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN."

[Before our February TOWER had been issued, a reporter representing a Pittsburg journal, and several others east and west, learned something concerning its contents, and applied to us for proof sheets in advance; – proposing to call it to public attention. His report, however, was glaringly incorrect; and this led us to give to the public, through various daily news-papers, a more correct statement of our faith, and of our attitude toward fellow Christians.

Some of the friends hereabouts were quite interested in the article, and suggested that it appear in the WATCH TOWER. We have acceded to the request and reprint the article below.]

A CORRECTION.

NO "CHALLENGE." – NO "RUSSELLISM." – NO NEW SECT. – A FAIR, CANDID REVIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL TORMENT. – ITS CLAIMED, AND ITS REAL EFFECTS SHOWN. – LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS.

I owe it to myself and to my fellow citizens to state publicly that I wholly disclaim the "attack" and "challenge" upon the Christian ministers of this vicinity, attributed to me in the *Dispatch* of Tuesday. I would assure all that I have none but friendly feelings toward fellow Christians, however much I may differ from some of them regarding the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. A *Dispatch* reporter learned that we had on the press a pamphlet entitled, "What Saith the Scripture About Hell?" and, securing an advance copy, inquired whether we would not send a copy to the ministers of Pittsburgh and Allegheny. We concluded that the suggestion was good, and assented. This became the basis of a half column of miserable misrepresentation, and a blatant

challenge, with which I have not the slightest sympathy. [R1501 : page 75]

As for Russellites and Russellism, we know nothing of them and never shall. I have lived in this vicinity for nearly half a century, and have published and circulated millions of tracts and pamphlets without the name of Russell being mentioned in them in any manner whatever – a very different method from that pursued by those who seek their own name's fame. I seek not to add to the number of Christian sects, but on the contrary, I seek to present that one harmonious view of God's word upon which all true Christians might harmonize differences and unite in one Church as at the first – "The Church of the Living God" – whose "names are written in heaven."

True, I hold views differing considerably from those of many. But the last fifteen years have decreased these differences considerably, and the next fifteen will probably bring still greater changes. Our Presbyterian and other Calvinistic friends have approached much nearer to us on the subjects of God's elections and decrees, and a hope for the heathen and the ignorant beyond the present life. And the thinking classes of the entire church, of all denominations, are much nearer to us in our denial that eternal torment is the future for all who are not members of the church – or more than nine-tenths of the human race. Indeed, I am confident that more than one-half of the ministers and intellectual membership of Christendom no longer believe this horrible, God-dishonoring, soul-degrading theory hatched in the dark ages.

But most of those who see the fallacy of this eternal torment theory are afraid to let others see it, lest the influence should be pernicious. I, on the contrary, show from the Scriptures that God has no such plan; that the passages of Scripture supposed to teach it are symbolical and misunderstood, and that God's plan is one of justice and love in Christ, and will embrace, with an opportunity

of everlasting life, every member of the human family, either in the present or in a future life. They hold that, if the fear of eternal torment be taken away, people would hasten to become criminals. I reply that faith in eternal torment is confessed by almost all the criminals executed; and that an examination of the inmates of jails and penitentiaries has often proved that almost all of the inmates confess to faith in some of the so-called orthodox creeds. And the most casual observer of the every-day street profanity must admit that fear of hell and torment seems to have no effect upon the lower classes, who jest about such matters.

The fact is that while some feel a little timorous on the subject, no intelligent person really believes that the great Creator made a lake of fire and brimstone into which to cast nine out of ten, or any other proportion, of his creatures for preservation in torture to all eternity. And I hold that in hiding the truth on this subject, and making a false pretense of believing it, a serious error is unintentionally committed by some of God's people. Such a monstrous doctrine cannot possibly be upheld before the present nineteenth century light and intelligence. And if Christian people persist in upholding it publicly, and in claiming that it is the teaching of the Bible, while denying it privately, they will commit several serious errors.

The bad effects will be:

First – God's name and character will be made odious in proportion as people become intelligent.

Second – The Word of God will lose reverence and respect in proportion as intelligence increases among all who believe that the Bible is the authority for this doctrine.

Third – With the fall of the Bible from the reverence of the intelligent comes the fall of Christianity, real and nominal.

Fourth – With the fall of the Bible and Christianity comes the reign of infidelity – a reign of anarchy – as exhibited in France a century ago.

My teachings, both oral and by the printed page, are in harmony with this, my faith. In harmony with the general intelligence of our favored day, I believe that God is granting, to all who rightly seek it, special light upon His Word – "meat in due season" to the household of faith. I prefer to study, and think it right to interpret, the Bible in the light of its own spirit-illuminated utterances (through the Apostles [R1501 : page 76] and Prophets), rather than in the light of creeds formulated in the dark ages, by fallible though probably well-intentioned men.

All intelligent people who accept the Bible as God's inspired Word must admit that this is the correct principle in Bible study and teaching. And, if so, all true Christians should unite their hearts and heads and hands in finding out and making known that interpretation of the Scripture which harmonizes God's character and plan with the highest development of sanctified common sense.

Since, in view of the misrepresentation set forth in the *Dispatch*, the sending of the pamphlet which examines the entire teaching of the Bible on hell and torment to the ministers of this vicinity might be considered a discourtesy, "an attack" and "a challenge," we conclude not to do so. But we here announce our willingness to send this 10 cent pamphlet free to any minister of any denomination who will drop us a postal card requesting it. And to any one requesting it, we will send free our new 32-page pamphlet entitled, "Thy Word is Truth – A Reply to Robert Ingersoll's Charges against Christianity."

But while I make no "attack" and offer no "challenge," my conviction that the Bible does not teach eternal torment of any sort as the penalty for sin is so strong that if any minister, recognized

as orthodox by the Evangelical Alliance, desires to discuss this subject with me publicly, for the truth's sake, I will take pleasure in endeavoring to set him straight on what saith the Scripture on this subject, or in being set straight by him on the same authority.

Respectfully, a minister (servant) of Christ and the Truth,

C. T. RUSSELL.

CONSEQUENCES OF FALSE TEACHING.

The daily papers of this week mention four cases of violent insanity resulting from misrepresentation of the divine plan – based upon the fallacious doctrine of a hell-of-torment. One is a Mrs. W. Wilbur, of Rowan, Iowa. Of her it is said, "The preacher's description of the torments of the damned made such a vivid impression upon Mrs. Wilbur's mind that it is feared she is hopelessly insane." The other three are Mr. and Mrs. Gleason, and another person whose name we did not learn, at Burg Hill, Ohio. Two of these went ravingly insane the same night, and had to be bound hand and foot, and when, the night following, the third became insane, a "citizens committee" [R1502 : page 76] called upon the "Evangelist" (?) and compelled him to leave the town.

To what extent this blasphemous doctrine is accountable for all the insanity of the world, God only knows; but surely it is responsible to a considerable extent. How many children have received pre-natal mental injury through the attendance of mothers at *such* "revivals!" Many of those made insane are so affected from sympathy – for companions, children or parents who have died out of Christ. One sister in the church at Allegheny told recently how the truth had reached her when her mind had almost given way under the strain of weeks of agony for her husband, who had died a moral man, but without profession of religion.

Surely the gospel of damnation and torment – whether the vulgar theory of literal fire and flame or the more aesthetic theory

of mental anguish which some say is worse – is quite a different gospel from that preached by our Lord and the Apostles. The multitude bare our Lord witness and marveled at the *gracious words* which he spoke. (Luke 4:22.) None of the Apostolic epistles contain one word about eternal torment, but tell of the love and peace of God which pass all understanding, which shall keep the hearts of believers. (Phil. 4:7.) "Being justified by faith [in the real gospel of God's love and favor to us and toward all in Christ], we have *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." – Rom. 5:1.

We whose eyes have been opened to clearer views of our gracious Heavenly Father's plan and words do well to show our love and zeal for him and for our blinded fellows by letting our light so shine as to glorify him and bless them. Whenever you hear of a discourse about to be preached on hell, etc., send for a lot of Tract No. 1, free, and distribute to the congregation after the discourse – keeping a reasonable distance away from the church building.
