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Debunking the myth of hell

Carol Meyer | Feb. 3, 2011 Eco Catholic

I?m writing about hell because it is an unthinkable, horrible, destructive concept that can?t possibly be true. I frankly can?t even imagine how anyone came up with something so horrific. Could any wrong merit the terrible pain of burning in fire, while fully conscious, for a week or a year, much less eternity? What kind of a monster would inflict that on anyone? How could such cruelty and sadism be consistent with a God of love? I don?t buy it for a minute.

I don?t care if scripture mentions hell or Jesus talked about it, if saints had visions of it, or if it?s a time-honored Catholic teaching. It simply can?t be justified on any level. We have no proof of its existence. It doesn?t work as a preventative for wrong. Fear is the lowest form of motivation in moral development, and has probably been more the cause of the terrible crimes of humanity than any deterrent. People laugh and joke about burning in hell and draw cartoons about it, but almost no one takes it seriously.

Believing in hell doesn?t promote righteous living or love of God, but an unhealthy fear for those brainwashed to believe it is true. It is especially cruel to inflict this terror on innocent children and the uneducated and susceptible. Didn?t Jesus go around saying over and over not to be afraid? Moving from fear to love and trust in God is a central message of the New Testament. I can?t imagine how many lives have been ruined or devoid of joy because of all the fire and brimstone hurled at them.

We can readily see the arrogant and callous self-righteousness that a belief in hell engenders. The ?saved? proudly assert that they are going to heaven, with nary a care that everyone else will suffer for eternity. They might even glory in the damnation of others. Come on. Can that kind of attitude, with its smugness and indifference to (or even glee in) the pain of others, possibly have a place in heaven and be pleasing to God? I think belief in a God who sends people to hell, no matter how cloaked in theological sweetness, creates cruel people. And it?s been the justification for terrible atrocities throughout history.

The bottom line in all this is the nature of God. When we look at creation (and thus at God), we see that it is essentially benevolent, kind, and nurturing. Yes, there is some pain and certainly death, but it is part of a beautiful process of life, growth and rebirth, not some never-ending punishment for being imperfect. I?m not sure where we got the idea that the meaning of life is about judgment, that it?s some kind of cosmic test almost impossible to pass. Nature is about harmony, balance, compassion, unity, interdependence, joy, and all life coming to its fullest potential. That is surely what God wants for us, not to toss us into the trash bin of hell because we missed Sunday mass or had sex.

It is an insult of the highest degree to think God could ever be so mean and evil as to create hell. So let?s banish the idea once and for all. And we don?t need the concept to justify the need for Christ. All arguments for hell, however reasonable they once sounded, are debunked by one single truth?God is LOVE. The end of the story.

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