

# **THE HERESY OF SO-CALLED “UNCREATED” HELLFIRE**

**by Avery Simpleton, Ph.D.**

Alongside the Seventh-Day-Adventist heresy of total annihilation of both soul and body in the fires of Gehenna is the heretical, Eastern-Orthodox “River-of-Fire” doctrine which seems to be growing in popularity due to its flesh appeal. The blasphemous treatise on the “River of Fire,” written by Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros and published by St. Nectarios Press expounds some of the key elements of Orthodox error regarding salvation and demonstrates how far the Orthodox Churches have strayed from the Word of God and from the righteous demands of God’s holiness, candy-coating pills of venomous error with their sugary, saccharine portrayal of an unconditional, “divine” love void of the reality of Divine Judgment and Condemnation.

In his fallacious treatise, Dr. Kalomiros claims that more and more people are claiming to be atheists today as a way of retaliating against a God whom they have come to hate because he has been misrepresented by Satan as an egotistical, “cruel judge and a vengeful inquisitor” who is “offended by our insubordination to such a degree that we must pay for it by eternal tortures, created by Him for that purpose.” Dr. Kalomiros claims that all Christians except the Eastern Orthodox have been deceived by the lies of Satan propagated through what he calls “Western theology.” Unaware of the teachings of Dr. Bob W. Dinkins regarding faith’s victory over death, Dr. Kalomiros claims that only the Eastern Orthodox do not see God as the ultimate cause of evil and death, even though Dr. Bob has clearly exposed Satan as the author of death through his exegesis of Scripture (I Cor 15:54; II Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14; I Jn 3:8; I Jn 5:4).

Dr. Kalomiros’ faulty, blanket statement regarding the beliefs of other Christians is excusable given the fact that Dr. Dinkins’ teachings are not as widely known as the teachings of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and others. However, what is inexcusable about the Eastern Orthodox teaching set forth by Dr. Kalomiros is the manner in which he discounts the grandiosity of Jehovah’s sense of offended pride and His vindictive wrath against the insubordination of rebellious sinners (Rom 1:18), born with a totally depraved nature (Ps 51:5; Eph 2:3). He not only makes light of the importance of hell as a way of appeasing the infinite demands of God’s holiness, but also makes light of the importance of Christ’s sacrifice in saving us from the infinite wrath of a Holy God (I Thess 1:10). In addition, he claims that people cannot possibly love or

have faith in such a vindictive God even though we who hold to the Biblical doctrine of hell know by experience that we can love Him.

In stark contrast to the foreign, Eastern-Orthodox disdain for Jehovah's holy sensibilities, is the powerful, Biblical oration set forth by American revivalist Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." This furious expose of the longsuffering of God Who mercifully holds back His just wrath in order to demonstrate the justice of His condemnation of congenitally-depraved humanity stoked the fires of the First Great Awakening and has served as a model for rekindling the fires of revival ever since. The gospel message set forth by Brother Edwards has the effect of knocking people off the fence of complacency regarding their souls so that they land on one of the two sides of the fence—hardening the hell-bent hearts of the un-elect, resulting in the atheism of which Dr. Kalomiros speaks, and terrifying the hell-bent hearts of God's elect into compliance with the irresistible wooing of the Holy Spirit. Countless numbers of saved people can attest to the anointing which rests upon Brother Edward's fiery, Biblical exposition. Where would Christianity in America be today had it not been for anointed men of God like Brother Edwards and the theatric Brother George Whitefield, another faithful preacher of the tortures of God-ordained hellfire.

Dr. Kalomiros, unlike Jonathan Edwards, makes excuses for atheists, depicting them as casualties of Western theology, and even painting atheism in a positive light as the negation of that evil God supposedly constructed by Roman Catholic and Protestant theology. He even goes so far as to claim that atheism did not exist among Eastern Orthodox peoples until they were invaded by western missionaries. Thus, he maliciously perverts the true teachings of the Word of God regarding hell, calling such teachings "falsified and distorted Christianity."

How can such clearly unbiblical views be making such an in-road into the land of the free, founded on Biblical principles and baptized in the fires of the two Great Awakenings and the Pentecostal Restoration and the Charismatic Renewal? What is it about this Eastern Orthodox view that makes it so attractive? How can we explain the popularity of this evil doctrine which makes a mockery of the substitutionary atonement of Christ?

This Orthodox view of hell and salvation appeals to the fleshly appetites by attacking some of the distasteful truths of the Word of God. Dr. Kalomiros puts God's Word under the microscopic scrutiny of natural, human sentiment, but such an approach is myopic, losing sight of the bigger picture of redemption. Criticizing the clear, Biblical teaching that Jehovah's justice operates like a vendetta so that not only Adam must die, but also the whole human family, he then discredits God's decision to save humanity while saving face by sending His Son as a sacrifice to meet His righteous demands (I Jn 4:10), thus restoring

tranquility within the turbulent psychology of God between two warring dispositions—His righteous indignation and His love (Ps 85:10). In so doing, he belittles the just demands of God’s holiness in wielding eternal retribution for the offense of Adam and the consequent evils produced by the inborn depravity of the human race. Furthermore, he completely undermines the importance of a wrathful God killing a merciful God in order to satisfy the just demands of a holy God.

So, how can the Eastern Orthodox mock the clear teachings of the Word? The answer is that they do it by confusing God’s justice with His love. They make the claim that God’s love operates on a different standard of justice from that of humanity because He, in His justice, is good to the evil and impious. They twist the truth by claiming that God’s punishments are a means of discipline for the amendment of one’s ways rather than a vengeful way of appeasing the offended sensibilities of His sense of holy entitlement as delineated in the Word (Num 11:33; Ps 78:21). In their Orthodox minds, death is not a Divine punishment, but rather the natural consequence of departing from the Source of Life, a consequence which God allowed so as to bring a natural end to the disease of mortality and its resultant suffering. In support of their claim, they quote Irenaeus of Lyons, a bishop of the carnal, proto-Orthodox-Catholic church who said that the Light is not the cause of man’s dwelling in darkness (Irenaeus, AGAINST HERESIES 5.27.2).

This Orthodox portrayal of physical and spiritual death as a permitted, natural consequence rather than overtly Divine pay-back emasculates the notion of God’s omnipotent Sovereignty, making death look like something God allows to happen of its own accord rather than something which God’s holiness willfully inflicts upon sinful humanity in vengeful retribution for offending his holy sensibilities. The end result of this doctrine is to represent God as some kind of mamsy-pamsy, effeminate Deity rather than the Almighty Judge with a Two-Edged Sword before whose eyes everything is laid naked and bare (Heb 4:12-13). These Eastern Orthodox heretics claim that God is unchanging in His benevolent disposition toward humanity and never does anything to kill us. But God Himself says, “I kill and I make alive” (Deut 32:39). He torches Nadab and Abihu for stepping out of line (Lev 10:1-6) and slays Ananias and Sapphira for having lied to Him (Acts 5:1-11), simply to uphold the image of His impeccable holiness. Can anyone doubt that Nadab, Abihu, Ananias, and Sapphira are worthy of burning for all eternity in a sulphurous, Devil’s hell for their disobedience to the law of God? The Word of God reveals God to be a Killer: God seeks to kill Moses for evading the Abrahamic covenant requiring him to circumcise his son (Exod 4:24) and His Angel slays 185,000 Assyrians who were encamped against Jerusalem (II Kings 19:35). In saying these things about God, is the Word of

God guilty of the “slander” which Dr. Kalomiros ascribes to Papists, Protestants, and non-denominational, Bible-believing Christians? God cannot go against His Word and He must, of necessity, follow the dictates of His Word for His Word is His Will. Only in this light can we ever hope to understand the clear statements of Holy Writ regarding the vindictive, spiteful nature of the righteous demands of God’s holiness.

Having attacked the character of God presented in Scripture, Dr. Kalomiros gives a twisted, convoluted account of history claiming that Western theology inherits its belief in the immortality of the soul from paganism rather than from the faith of Israel. He denies the Biblical doctrine of the inherently divine nature of the human soul and reduces the immaterial, human soul to the level of the vile fleshly shell of the physical body. In so doing, he denies the enmity between the flesh realm and the realm of the Spirit (Gal 5:17). The Word clearly teaches that God created the human soul as an immortal entity in the image and likeness of God’s own eternal nature (Gen 1:26-27). The immortal soul that sinneth, rather than being left to its own devices without suffering any consequences for its sin, must be punished eternally in a place of torment where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Mk 9:48-49) because it has offended the infinite sensibilities of God’s holiness. God’s holiness will not allow His love to pardon anyone unless His wrath is appeased by a suffering greater than that inflicted by the eternal torments of hell. God’s love is therefore, of necessity, bound to remain aligned with his offended sensibilities until such a time as His righteous indignation is placated by a sacrifice of infinite proportions (Is 53:10). That sacrifice is the limited atonement (Mk 14:24; Jn 6:44) provided by the rift in the godhead which occurred at Calvary when God the Son became sin for us (II Cor 5:21) and God the Father, of necessity, turned His back on God the Son (Hab 1:13), leaving Jesus to suffer in one eternal moment, the pain of separation from God which is the greatest torment of Hell (Mk 15:34). The Divinity of Jesus must, of necessity, have abandoned his humanity on the cross of Calvary for it is impossible for God to endure the presence of sin (Ezra 9:15; Hab 1:13).

Even within the psyche of God, necessity is the mother of invention, and the natural instinct of God requiring unswerving justice was opportunity for the invention of an escape plan wittingly crafted by Divine wisdom so as to meet the infinite demands of the Father’s holiness while evacuating a limited number of chosen ones out from under the condemnation imposed on them by the Father’s holiness. Apart from the Divinity of Jesus abandoning his humanity—a Bible truth rejected by the Eastern Orthodox Churches—mankind cannot be saved from the eternal retribution which God’s holy nature demands regardless of any love He might feel for His creation. In other words, Eastern Orthodox doctrine has effectively rendered inoperative the redeeming satisfaction paid to the Father’s

holy indignation by the self-annihilating compassion of God the Son. If that satisfaction was not paid in order to place the rosy, or rather, crimson-colored glasses of atonement over the eyes of the Father, Divine love could not save anyone, not even the elect whom God foreordained unto salvation from the justice of His eternal retribution. By denying the legal and necessary subordination of the Son's love to the Father's holiness together with the power of the atoning blood, the Orthodox have trampled under foot the Son of God and done despite to the Spirit of Grace and are, therefore worthy of a much sorer punishment than those who disregarded the law of Moses (Heb 10:28-29). That punishment is that eternal place of torment allotted by the righteous judgment of God to those who are, "by nature, children of wrath" (Eph 2:3).

In praise of Dr. Kalomiros and the Eastern Orthodox, we must at least acknowledge that he does not deny the eternal nature of Hell the way that Origen did and the way that the Seventh-Day Adventists do, but, in essence, he equates Hell with God in a manner akin to blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Lk 12:10), in this case, not calling the work of the Holy Spirit the work of Satan, but rather referring to Hell as a particular experience of God resulting from a disposition of hatred toward Him in the heart of the unbeliever. Likewise, he extols the Pelagian illusion of free will, detracting from the sovereign glory of the Almighty God "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph 1:11). In addition, he goes so far as to say that God is not responsible for our pardon, but rather we are responsible for our forgiveness. He presents a false God who is always forgiving in an unchanging sort of way rather than the Biblical God, "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Ex 34:7; Rom 4:5).

Thus, the Eastern Orthodox Churches make man completely responsible for his own salvation or damnation. Man is his own savior rather than the Savior of Calvary who irresistibly draws the elect of God unto himself (Jn 12:32) in order that they might be saved (I Tim 2:4) and that no flesh should glory in his presence (I Cor 1:29). The Orthodox mis-represent God as only doing good and never causing evil or calamity, claiming that Isaiah 45:7 ("I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things") doesn't really mean what it says. But the Scripture is clear: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay" (Rom 12:19) and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 13:31). We must always take the most literal meaning of Scripture except in cases where it is clearly using metaphor (Ps 78:2; Mk 4:34; Heb 5:11; 9:8-9; II Pet 3:15-16). The Word of God is the Word of God, not the Word of man, and it is therefore not proper to see anthropomorphisms in it, as if

man were its author (II Tim 3:16; II Pet 1:20-21), but rather it is mandatory to see the actual Truth in it that we might see things as God sees them and call those things that are not as though they were (Rom 4:17). Therefore, we wholly reject the heresy of Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, who claims that Isaiah 45:7 means that God “creates evil” by re-fashioning it as something good and beneficial. Rather, when the Word says that God creates evil, it means just that: He is the ultimate source of evil and of that greatest of all evils which He prepared primarily for the Devil and his angels and only secondarily for lost and hell-bent humanity (Jer 2:17, 19; Matt 25:41). To the froward God shows Himself froward, but to the pure, that is, to those He has sovereignly chosen to justify and make pure, He shows Himself pure (Ps 18:26).

For lost, depraved humanity, evil is evil, but for those whom God has foreknown and predestined, all things, even evil itself, work together for their good (Rom 8:28). If sickness falls upon them it is that the the supernatural works of God might be made manifest in them as a testimony to all (Jn 9:3). Strangely, when it comes to the subject of temporal evils poured out upon the unrighteous in this life, we stand in agreement with Dr. Kalomiros who says that these evils are wrought by the Devil with the permission of God (Job 2:6; Acts 10:38; I Jn 3:8). And based on our study of the Word, the Christian can give Satan permission to harrass him by giving voice to a negative confession as Job did (Job 1:5; 3:25) and God will not go against the believer’s word, even when it contradicts the prosperity he wishes for his children (III Jn 1:2). We do not agree with Dr. Kalomiros that sometimes temporal evils are allowed by God upon his children for the purpose of instructive chastisement or remedial suffering because God chastens His children with His Word, not with the talons of Satan (Heb 12:4-11). We do agree that sometimes such evils are permitted by God to stop the spread of destructive corruption as in the case of the Sodomites (Gen 19), and of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10), and of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) because the Great Physician, at times, chooses to cut off a hand that He might save the remainder of the Body of Christ, lest all be lost and cast into the fires of hell (Matt 5:30). Strangely, we might even agree with a quotation of Basil of Caesarea which states that when God says, “I kill and I make alive” (Deut 32:39), we can understand God’s killing as remedial by deterring us from harmful things through fear if we qualify it by saying that He kills spiritually with the two-edged sword of His Spirit (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). And surely we agree with Basil that God’s making alive encourages us to come closer to Him who is our Source. We can even agree with him that this verse can be understood to mean that God allows chastisement for the purpose of killing sin in us in order that we might live more fully, again if we identify His chastisement with the discipline of His Word rather than identifying it with the works of the devil (sickness, poverty, death) which he came

to destroy (I Jn 3:8). When understood this way, this statement is in line with the abundant life Jesus promises us in John 10:10.

Despite a few points of agreement between the Eastern Orthodox teaching and the Word, as I read Kalomiros, I struggled with a couple quotes from the Orthodox writer Ephraim the Syrian since it appeared to make good sense, judging by the head-knowledge of the natural mind, but it didn't line up with my understanding of the Word. The first quote from HOMILY 73 says, "He who applies pedagogical punishments in order to give health, is punishing with love, but he who is looking for vengeance, is devoid of love. God punishes with love, not defending Himself—far be it—but He wants to heal His image, and He does not keep His wrath for long." It sounds good, but the Word says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Heb 10:30). So I was left with the choice of whether or not to believe Ephraim, a man, or to remain faithful to the Word of God.

Again I struggled with another quote from HOMILY 84 of Ephraim which states that "those who are suffering in hell, are suffering in being scourged by love.... It is totally false to think that the sinners in hell are deprived of God's love. Love is a child of the knowledge of truth, and is unquestionably given commonly to all. But love's power acts in two ways: it torments sinners, while at the same time it delights those who have lived in accord with it." Again I found myself faced with the choice between believing Ephraim's rational explanation or believing the Word which says that those in hell are shut out from the presence of God (II Thess 1:9) as clearly stated in the New International Version which, in this particular instance, under the direction of the Holy Ghost is closer to the original intent of the Spirit and actual written autographs of the Word even though the words "shut out" do not actually appear in any extant Greek manuscript. (I feel a burning in my spirit-man that the NIV is closer to the Word in this particular case.) "Let God be true and every man a liar." I choose to believe God.

When faced with more of the Orthodox exposition of the Scriptures, I am bound to conclude that their interpretation is according to the stirrings of the flesh and not according to the leadings of the Holy Ghost. Again I choose to follow the leading of the Holy Ghost rather than the lustful traditions of men. In the fleshly, heretical interpretation of Scripture as set forth by Dr. Kalomiros, the river of the water of life proceeding from God's throne (Rev 22:1) for those who love God becomes a tormenting river of fire (Dan 7:10) for those who hate God. Kalomiros claims that the books to be opened on the day of judgment (Dan 7:10; Rev 20:12) are our hearts (I Cor 4:5) and those who have invited the Light within to expose their sin will welcome the complete flood of God's penetrating Light, while the sudden, pervasive flood of Divine Light will cause pain to the eyes of those who have accustomed themselves to dwelling in darkness (Jn 3:19). He claims that

those who have made their heart a peaceful habitation of Love will know the blisses of God's Love while those who have banished Love from their heart will know only darkness, bitterness, strife, and all the torments of hatred.

This way of interpreting the Word sounded good to my fleshly ears and my natural mind, but as I prayed on it and judged this view in the light of Scripture, I found that this Eastern Orthodox view takes the sovereign power of judgment out of the hands of the Almighty and places it in the hands of each individual human being so that each person becomes the determiner of his or her own salvation rather than God. This is tantamount to saying that we can save ourselves by our own choices, but this cannot be the case, because it would allow us to glory in the Presence of God, and no flesh may glory in His presence (I Cor 1:29). Eastern Orthodoxy steals the need for a Savior. In fact, it transforms God from being a Savior into being the very fires of Gehenna.

Dr. Kalomiros takes Hebrews 12:29, which states that "our God is a consuming fire," and argues that only God is Eternal and that the Eternal Fires of Gehenna must be the Divine Energies of God which bring bliss to the righteous as the Water of Life and torment to the wicked as the River of Fire. The Eternal Fires of Gehenna, in his view, are the "Uncreated" Fire of God (Is 30:33). He claims that the same light-giving pillar of fire and overshadowing pillar of cloud to His chosen (Ex 13:21) is also the blinding sulphurous cloud of torment to the unrighteous (Rev 14:11; 21:8). He claims that everyone will be salted with fire (Mk 9:49) and that all will be baptized with the Holy Ghost and Fire (Lk 3:15-16), the Divine Chastisement, whereof all are partakers (Heb 12:8), but that the same fire that brings purification and illumination in the righteous (Dan 12:10) will bring hardness and ashen blackness in the unrighteous. He claims that the Fire of God's Love will be like burning coals upon the head of God's enemies (Rom 12:20). He claims that the Light of God falls upon all, but that God has provided the eye with an eye-lid to provide man with the choice of shutting out His Light. He would even go so far as to identify the crystal sea (Rev 4:6) mingled with fire (Rev 15:2) before the throne upon which the righteous stand as the very same Lake of Fire (Rev 14:10; 21:8) into which the unrighteous are cast based on their own choice. This interpretation sounds appealing, at least to the fleshly nature, but the problem is that it conditions everything on the free choice of man (who we know is not really free, but rather enslaved to corruption and sinful depravity) rather than on the sovereign, truly free will of God. The Word is clear that man cannot save himself. God is the only Savior (Is 43:11).

Dr. Kalomiros almost convinced me of his erroneous interpretation when he said that the elder brother of the prodigal son was tormented in the house of the Father (Lk 15:28-30). Everything belonged to him, but he was not happy. He felt no love and appreciation for his brother or for his Father. He was unable to

participate in the joy of his Father's household because of his own hatred and bitterness. He was surrounded by love, but was in hell, consumed by the hatred in his heart. According to Dr. Kalomiros, this is the condition of those who, by grace, are resurrected and brought into the New Heavens and New Earth with a heart willfully void of the Love of God and that the worst of it is that God will be all in all to every person. God will be immediately present, becoming Himself the answer to every need in that existence, and those who hate Him will be unable to escape the consciousness of His Pervasive Love and will experience the tormenting need for Him Whom they abhor. But those who have love in their hearts behave themselves like their Father in Heaven who showers His blessings upon the just and the unjust alike and has compassion on them and desires the best for them. But where is the place for tough love in such a view of God? It is clearly non-existent, but the Word of God says, "Withhold not correction from a child: for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Prov 23:13-14). That's the kind of hell I'm talking about—not the fantasies of Eastern Orthodoxy.

The flesh appeal of Dr. Kalomiros' interpretation is obvious to the natural mind, but, again, I must stress that this alluring view of Hellfire is simply another trick of the Devil to keep us from being terrified of the Almighty and from realizing our need of Him as a Savior through the alchemical transmutation of the Divine disposition wrought through the Son's placation of the Father's wrath on Mount Calvary. Apart from that salvific atonement and the irresistible compulsion of the Holy Ghost, sinners cannot be saved from the wrath of an angry God. Eastern Orthodoxy leaves man without a Savior or the need of a Savior by substituting God's Love for hell and claiming that man can respond freely to the love of God rather than needing the compulsion of the Holy Ghost to override the pull of his depraved nature away from the love of God. Thus, leaving man without a Savior or the need of a Savior, the doctrine of Uncreated Hellfire is shown to be a heresy of the severest magnitude. So the other day when some atheist pointed out to me that the ancients used sulphur for fumigation or purification and that the Greek word torment, βάσανος, also means a "touchstone" used to test the purity of gold, I looked him straight in the eye and rebuked him in the name of Jesus. 