

Hell

I. General Definition of Eschatology

II. The Need for a Recovery of the "Two Worlds" Perspective

"[One of the most striking examples] of secularization in contemporary Christianity is the quiet dropping of belief in a future life. Historically, this belief was the lifeblood of dynamic Christianity. The early Christians thought of themselves as 'aliens and exiles on earth' and as persons whose true citizenship was in heaven. And throughout the Christian centuries, belief in a future life was at the heart of all living faith. Now however, this faith, though rarely denied, is equally rarely affirmed. I myself acquired two degrees in Christian theology and completed all the requirements for ordination to the Anglican ministry without receiving any instruction in this doctrine, or even being exposed to sermons about it." (Paul Badham).

"Everything that is not eternal is eternally out of date."

(C.S.Lewis)

- A. The Creed
- B. The New Testament
- C. The Prayer Book
- D. The Church's Common Life

III. The Specific Challenge of Facing up to Hell

- A. Culturally
- B. Theologically

"I parted company from Macdonald on that point because a higher authority - the Dominical utterances themselves - seemed to me irreconcilable with universalism. The finality of the **Either - Or**, the Sheep and Goats, the Wise and Foolish Virgins - is so emphatic and reiterated in our Lord's teaching that, in my opinion, it simply cannot be evaded. If we do not know that he said that, then we do not know what he said about anything. And this is my sole reason....Need I add that I shd. v. much prefer to follow G.M.

on this point if I could?" (CS Lewis, personal letter, September 6, 1959)

"Some will not be redeemed. There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason." (CS Lewis, The Problem of Pain)

IV. The Biblical Imagery for Hell

A. Old Testament Background:

Sheol, resurrection, the individual, individual justice, sense that next life will show God's righteousness

B. Three Images in the New Testament:

Destruction, Punishment, Exclusion

V. False Teachings about Hell

A. Only a partial general resurrection

B. Universalism

C. Annihilationism or Conditional Immortality

(please note that John Stott said he only held to this tentatively)

D. The New Consensus among SOME Roman Catholic Scholars: Hope for all

VI. The Practical Challenge of Hell to the Church

A. Christology

B. Gravitas-our whole 'tone in life'

'If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it'
(CS Lewis, The problem of Pain)

C. Evangelism