

HEAVEN AND HELL

(PROMISE AND WARNING)

- 1] Note the shift from the earlier to the later Israel.
- 2] These 2 outcomes are future states, not mere “present states of mind.”
- 3] Jesus himself never suggests anything else.
- 4] The epistles too consistently say as much.
- 5] Despite NT passages that might be used to support limited atonement, on balance Script upholds
 - [1] the universality of God’s mercy
 - [2] all may be saved; not all will
 - [3] Christ’s people may “fall away”¹
 - [4] all who are saved are kept by the power of God.

(THE HISTORICAL CONTROVERSY)

Major theologians have upheld universalism. Why?

(Shepherd) Still, [1] the Scriptural texts are undeniable.

[2] God’s pardon, persistence, patience and penetration are ultimately mysterious.

[3] The *creaturely* integrity of the human person won’t be violated. (The spiritual integrity has been devastated.)

[4] All who are saved are saved by grace.

[5] All who are lost are lost on account of themselves; they weren’t foreordained.

[6] In all of this God’s sovereignty remains unimpugned, even as he allows the sinful creature to defy him.

[7] Human rejection of the vastest mercy may be incomprehensible, but a fact nonetheless.

[8] we can’t unravel why/how some respond to God’s invitation and others don’t.

“Historical Considerations” (Shepherd) p 216

LUTHER: [a] predestination is “justification by faith, seen from above”

[b] L. doesn’t harden this predestinarian motif into a scheme, formula or principle.

CALVIN: a much more rigorous approach to double predestination (election *and* reprobation.) Still,

[1] C. agrees with L. that faith has to be gift.

[2] C. thought he had to protect God’s “majesty.”

[3] C. had a bad conscience about the *decretum horribile*.

[4] Having affirmed election, C. thought that “symmetry” required the parallel decree of reprobation.

[5] C.’s predest. theol. lands him in insuperable difficulties re: Holy Spirit, Incarnation, Trinity.

[6] C. wants to blame sinners for their condemnation, but ultimately God is to be “blamed.”

[7] C.’s recourse to a “secret will” in God is indefensible. (*voluntas* and *arbitrium*)

PIETISM: [1] the atonement is universal in scope, and vastly greater in efficacy than we think.

(Does God play “numbers” games?)

KIERKEGAARD: note his comment re: missionaries and urgency.

HODGE: (see comment under PIETISM. Note the position of Clark Pinnock.)

¹ See, e.g., Matt. 24:10-12 Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29f; 1st Cor. 5:3-5; 11:30-32; Gal. 5:4; 6:13; Phil. 3:18f; 1st Tim. 1:19f; 4:1; 6:10; 2nd Tim. 2:26; 4:10; 2nd Peter 2:18ff; 1st John 5:16; Jude 22f; Rev. 3:2

BOETTNER: the condemnation of the non-elect exhibits the justice of God.

[1] this is pure speculation.

[2] the non-elect aren't rejected on account of their sin: therefore no justice is exhibited.

[3] Boettner (like most people) misunderstands the relation of God's judgement to his mercy.

THE NEW CATHOLICISM: Note the presuppositions, implicates and criticisms of Rahner's position.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES: it regards "lost" or "alienated" as humankind's (perversely) self-willed situation rather than as the result of God's judgement on human disobedience.

C.S. LEWIS: [1] it's the loss that's fixed, not conscious torment; [2] "person"

Purgatory p. 219 [1] just'n means acquittal *now*. [2] Christ is our "merit" and "satisfaction." [3] refinement is necessary even for Christ's people.

(UNIVERSALISM AND PARTICULARISM IN KARL BARTH)

Note Barth's protest against both Schleiermacher (liberalism) and "the great ugly scar" of the Reformation.

[1] Barth is *not* a universalist and has stated as much himself.

[2] his notion of faith: *kennen, erkennen, anerkennen*: it does *not* end in one-sided cerebralism.

Note his famous "sin is the impossible possibility": [1] possible because actual [2] impossible in that God didn't create it or the conditions for it (sin isn't a possibility inherent in the creation.)

(Shepherd) -- the foregoing only magnifies sin's enormity, horror, incomprehensibility.

p. 223: "Barth breaks the biblical correlation b. salvation and faith." Yes, it sometimes appears he does. Still,

[1] God alone knows who are his.

[2] Many say they aren't believers, but are held off saying "yes" when in their hearts they are believers.

[3] Note the situation of European Christendom.

[4] WAR

[5] "Hell is ... a self-damnation." (M. Green: "...push past the arms of the crucified.")

(THE TWOFOLD OUTCOME)

Note the subtle truth: "It is not because God's love is limited but because it is unlimited that hell as well as heaven is made necessary." p. 224

p. 225 Universalism and double predestination are the two heresies to be avoided.

p. 227 Both the saved *and* the lost bear witness to the God who is sheer love.

p. 228 There will be no marrying in heaven. Why not? [1] no one will be deprived of the most intimate form of human community; [2] our delight in God will eclipse the most intense human (marital) delight; [3] exclusivity is of the essence of marriage; inclusivity will prevail in heaven.

p. 229 Degrees of beatitude in heaven.

p. 229 The meaning of *aionios*.

Might the lost simply perish? (i.e., be annihilated?) = “Conditional Immortality”

Many biblical scholars look upon the notion of unending torture as inconsistent with the gospel and exegetically questionable. Note the biblical data:

[1] OT: it utilizes approx. 75 figures of speech to speak of the ultimate end of the wicked, and every one suggests total extinction.

[2] NT: The NT contains 264 references to the end of the impenitent. The NT words speak, in their natural sense, of destruction rather than endless torment or misery.

[a] 10 speak of Gehenna -- where fire destroys garbage.

[b] 26 other references to burning, 3 of which refer to the lake of fire in Rev. (fire: destruction)

[c] 59 speak of destruction, perdition, loss, ruin. E.g., Matt. 7:13; Phil. 1:28 John 3:16

[d] 20 speak of separation from God (this of itself doesn't imply endlessness)

[e] 25 refer to death in its finality, sometimes called “the second death.”

[f] 108 refer to unforgiven sin. E.g., Matt. 12: 36,41.

[g] 15 refer to anguish: the outer darkness, the undying worm, etc.

[h] one verse (3/8 of 1% of NT references) -- Rev. 14:11 -- speaks of human beings who have no rest day or night, the smoke of whose torment goes up forever.

Seven passages are adduced for endlessness of punishment E.g., Matt. 25:46. Note the qualitative and quantitative aspects of *aionios*. Can death be everlasting?

Three passages speak of unquenchable fire. (But what fire consumes is consumed, not preserved.)

Note the force of Lazarus in Hades (Lk. 16:19-31) [1] there's no reference to everlastingness of the place of torment; [2] hades itself is to be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14)

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The Future

[1] The future as resurrection.

[2] The future as second coming.

[3] The futures as judgement. (Note the Hebrew understanding of judgement.)

[4] The future as separation.

[5] the future as glorification.

