

Not All Roads Lead To God!

Do all roads lead to God? Does the Bible teach that all men will eventually get to heaven? Judging by much current thinking on the subject you would say so. The silence on everlasting punishment is ear shattering, Missions, we are told, should be no more than a Christian presence among people in great need. We can no longer speak the message of the gospel, we must witness to it only through our deeds. In Protestant theology there is a resurgence of universalism (the belief that all men will ultimately be saved).

The current theological appeal focuses upon the love of God. Nels Ferre sees God's nature as radical love, a love that will pursue man until every man is redeemed. To this optimism Ethelbert Stauffer adds his voice: "God's irresistible grace and will is destined to overcome the most obdurate opposition . . . None is to remain outside." Universalism is very appealing. It suits the spirit of our times. The Russian theologian Berdyaev, feeling the pulse of modern thought, rightly diagnosed the ailment: "It is remarkable how little people think about hell or trouble about it. This is the most striking evidence of human frivolity."

Universalism may be very appealing to the modern man, but it was also very attractive for the ancients. From the times of Origen (185-254 AD) there have been attempts to bypass the judgment of God. The question of eternal retribution may have haunted Hamlet when he said:

*To die; to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause . . .*

The hope of eternal love embracing eventually all of men is well expressed in Tennyson's In Memoriam."

*The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?
I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.*

What does the Bible teach? The answer is clear. There is no larger hope." There is no vestige of foundation in Scripture for the doctrine of universalism. There is also no shadow of a suggestion of any restoration of the lost in the life hereafter. The Bible teaches the utter helplessness of a sinner and the absolute necessity of the free grace

of God. The Bible's diagnosis of man's ailment is harsh but accurate. He is a sinner. And we are lost in sin today, unless we have been saved by God's grace.

Heaven or hell? - these are the alternatives the Bible sets before the human race. The thought of eternal punishment is awesome. The grim description of hell by the poet Milton in Paradise Lost remains sadly true:

*Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes
That comes to all, but torture without end.*

And Cecil puts the matter in a nutshell when he writes: "Hell is the truth seen too late."

The denial of hell has always been considered by the evangelical it is the most dangerous, because it is the most attractive form of unbelief.

As the Bible proclaims the awful reality of eternal punishment, the church must preach fervently and with compassion the gospel. Not all roads lead to God. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

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