

History and Survey of the Westminster Confession of Faith

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Part 1: History, Context, and Rationale

Class 3: Early Historical Practice in the Church Appendix:

“He descended into hell” in the Apostles’ Creed, Part 1

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Introduction:

Modern-day opposition to this is based
on interpreting it according to one’s own day and understanding
& asks why this should not be taken out
as being a simple corruption of the truth.
As a result, this feeds an overall opinion of creeds and confessions
that they should not be regarded or trusted,
and are not needed in the church
and that they should be put aside altogether.
We will not start with the question: “why not take it out”;
we will start with the question:
“why was this ever put here in the first place?”
and why was it important enough
to be a part of a summary of belief
taught to new believers?
& we will end up with the Reformers
who, with few exceptions, have chosen
to retain this phrase in the Apostles’ Creed.

There are three components to the biblical teaching
regarding Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

Physical (Jesus’ body)

Strong defense of Jesus’ literal death & entombment

Sabellianism (Docetism) -

only the appearance of suffering and death.

Monophysitism (Adoptionism) -

Divine Logos inhabited but then abandoned the man Jesus.

just as there was for Jesus’ literal bodily change and resurrection.

Spiritual (Jesus' soul)

Jesus experienced true death -

the unnatural separation of body and spirit

as part of the curse of God upon man (cf. Gen. 3:19b)

So, the question is raised:

where was Jesus' soul between death & resurrection?

Lk. 23:46 - "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

What does Scripture teach on the subject of death?

Old Testament - *Sheol* - the place of the dead, the power of death

The Septuagint translates *Sheol* as *Hades* 61 out of 65 times

(cf. Ps. 16:9-10 and Acts 2:31)

Lk. 16:19-30 - The rich man and Lazarus

"That souls are even now susceptible of torment and of blessing
in Hades ...is proved by the case of Lazarus."

Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*

Lk. 23:43 - Jesus' words to the thief on the cross

"Paradise" is left undefined.

It is only used once prior to the resurrection of Christ

and only twice after.

None are clearly understood as to the location to which they are
being referred.