

# Reflections

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## A Certain Current of Ideas



In C.S. Lewis's fictional book, *The Great Divorce*, ghosts living in hell are permitted to visit heaven. In chapter 5, two former acquaintances meet. One, who had been a bishop, is now a ghost living in hell. The other, Dick, now lives in heaven. Listen in on part of their conversation,

'Ah, Dick, I shall never forget some of our talks. I expect you've changed your views a bit since then. You became rather narrow-minded towards the end of your life... Why, my dear boy, you were coming to believe in a literal Heaven and Hell!'

'Excuse me. Where do you imagine you've been?'

'Ah, I see. You mean that the grey town with its continual hope of morning (we must all live by hope, must we not?), with its field for indefinite progress, is, in a sense, Heaven, if only we have eyes to see it?'

That is a beautiful idea.'

'I didn't mean that at all. Is it possible you don't know where you've been?'

'Now that you mention it, I don't think we ever do give it a name. What do you call it?'

'We call it Hell.'...

'Go on, my dear boy, go on. That is so like you. No doubt you'll tell me why, on your view, I was sent there. I'm not angry.'

'But don't you know? You went there because you are an apostate.'...

'This is worse than I expected. Do you really think people are penalised for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken.'

'Do you really think there are no sins of intellect?'

'There are indeed, Dick. There is hidebound prejudice, and intellectual dishonesty, and timidity, and stagnation. But honest opinions fearlessly followed — they are not sins.'

'I know we used to talk that way. I did it too until the end of my life when I became what you call narrow. It all turns on what are honest opinions.'

'Mine certainly were. They were not only honest but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk.'

'What risk? What was at all likely to come of it except what actually came — popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric?'

'Dick, this is unworthy of you. What are you suggesting?'

'Friend, I am not suggesting at all. You see, I *know* now. Let us be frank.

Our opinions were not honestly come by. We simply found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. At College, you know, we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the kind of things that won applause. When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face, in solitude, the one question on which all turned: whether after all the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith?'

**“Excuse me. Where do you think you’ve been?”**



As followers of Jesus Christ, let us carefully evaluate the ideas we come in contact with, and, with God's help, test them in light of the truth of Scripture.



*“O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge,’ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith...”*

1 TIMOTHY 6:20-21 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, pp. 34-37.

