

A recent Pew research poll produced interesting results on Americans' beliefs about the afterlife. 72% of Americans say they believe in heaven — defined as a place “where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded,” and 58% of U.S. adults also believe in hell — a place “where people who have led bad lives and die without being sorry are eternally punished.” (See <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/>)

So that's a lot. Nearly three quarters of all Americans believe in a literal heaven and well over half believe in a literal hell. The afterlife is bigtime.

In my book on the afterlife I will not be doing something completely crazy, like claiming I know for sure whether there is a heaven and/or hell. What do I know? I may state my *opinion* on the matter, but since I'm an atheist, it should be pretty clear what I think anyway. Still, it is interesting to know/think where the ideas of heaven and hell came from, and that's what most of the book will be.

The issue returned to the consciousness of the international media last month when it was reported that the Pope himself didn't actually believe in a literal heaven and hell. As it turns out, that may have been a false report (as if we haven't had enough false reports intrude on our lives lately), but it got people's attention. One of the most interesting articles I read on the subject would not have been on the radar screens of most blog members, as it was in an English newspaper, The Guardian. Here's the link.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/02/pope-francis-heaven-hell-eternity?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

The author makes a very interesting point (several actually, but one that I'm particularly taken by), namely, that ...

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