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## The Evil of the Hades Gospel

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## The Evil of the Hades Gospel

Men are asking and imploring the Church to accept the teaching that some of those who have died in unbelief will get another opportunity to hear the Gospel in Hades. E. H. Plumptre tells us that it is our sacred duty to restore this "lost article," this "priceless, but forgotten truth," this "truth of wider, happier thoughts," and charges those who refuse to do it with having a "narrow, unloving" mind. (*The Spirits in Prison*, pp. 4, 17, 25, 28.) J. Paterson-Smyth "regrets that the indignant Reformers, in sweeping away the falsehood and the absurdities connected with the Roman purgatory swept away also the underlying truth, and demands that the 'lost article of the Creed' be given back to the Church." (*The Gospel of the Hereafter*, p. 65.) Great evils will result, declares Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, if we fail to do so. "Nothing will more imperil in devout and tender souls the entire system of Reformed theology than this omission to state in its fullness the Gospel of Hope." (*Eternal Hope*, p. 173.) But we cannot accept the Hades gospel. It is an evil and perilous doctrine. In our discussion of the twenty-one arguments advanced by the Hades theologians we have already noted that. Let us now discuss it more in detail, under five heads.

1. To accept the Hades gospel means to deny a clear teaching of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches that man is judged not according to what his soul does after death but according to "the things done in the body," 2 Cor. 5:10. Scripture clearly teaches that at death man is judged and that that judgment is final and irrevocable, Heb. 9:27. In the moment of his death the rich man was consigned by the judgment of God to hell, Luke 16:23; and when Lazarus died, his soul was received into heaven, Luke 16:22. Man's death puts an end to the period of grace. "When the wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish," Prov. 11:7. (Cp. May issue, p. 300.) When the Hades theologians declare with Archdeacon Farrar: "The path of repentance may never be closed to us" (op. cit., p. 153), they brush aside plain statements of Scripture. And when Luther states that "at death the Christian immediately enters into eternal bliss but the wicked is cast into the abyss of hell" (VII:1629), he sticks to the clear meaning of Scripture.

Is that indeed the clear teaching of Scripture? The Hades theologians deny this. When we set against their twenty-one arguments Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Luke 16:22, 23; Prov. 11:7, and the related passages; when they, for instance, operate with 1 Pet. 3:19 and we answer with Prof. J. P. Milton: "What forbids us to draw such an implication—that Christ's preaching (1 Pet. 3:19) implies the possibility of salvation after death—is the clear teaching elsewhere that now is the day of grace and salvation. One



passage of dubious interpretation cannot safely be used to contradict other passages whose teaching is unmistakable" (*The Lutheran Companion*, May 14, 1932), they insist that these passages do not teach that death ends the period of grace, and charge us with misinterpreting Scripture.

Their chief argument is that our interpretation of these passages leaves no room for the Last Judgment. If at death men enter either into heaven or into hell, the Judgment of the Last Day would be superfluous. *The Gospel of the Hereafter* states: "With educated people it should not be necessary to combat the foolish popular notion that at death men pass into their final destiny—heaven or hell—and then perhaps thousands of years afterwards come back to be judged as to their final destiny! To state such a belief should be enough to refute it. Those who hold it 'do err not knowing the Scriptures.' For the Scriptures have no such teaching." (P. 33.) S. Baring-Gould indulges in the same kind of ridicule: "The ordinary idea that Christian people form as to what is in store for them is something to this effect: That after death their souls pass into heaven, and that at the end of all things they are turned out of heaven to go back to earth and dress themselves up in the old cast clothes of their bodies and, thus appareled, to stand up for judgment and hear their sentence. Whether on that occasion certain of these souls learn with infinite surprise and dismay that during some thousand or thousands of years they have been where they had no right to be and have then to join the ranks of the lost, I cannot say; but this is obvious, that if their final lot were determined at the moment of death, a Last Judgment would be superfluous." (*The Restitution of All Things*, p. 9.) Plumptre: "The fact that the day of Judgment, when the books shall be opened and men shall be judged according to their works, is thought of as in the near or distant future (Matt. 25:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12) seems to preclude the thought that an irrevocable sentence is passed at the moment of death, leaving nothing for the Judge to do but to proclaim what had been already, as it were, registered in the book of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 123.) Lange-Schaff Commentary: "Holy Scripture intimates in many passages that forgiveness may be possible beyond the grave and refers the final decision not to death, but to the day of Christ. Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8; 1 John 4:17. But in our passage (1 Pet. 4:6) Peter by divine illumination clearly affirms that the ways of God's salvation do not terminate with the earthly life and that the Gospel is preached beyond the grave." Dörner: "When the Epistle to the Hebrews says: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,' we must not with the old dogmatists take this to mean that the eternal salvation or woe of every one is decided



immediately after death. It is not called *the* judgment." (Quoted in Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 253 f.) H. M. Luckcock also operates with the fact that the "judgment" of Heb. 9:27 is not called *the* judgment; he even attempts to make Heb. 9:27 a *locus classicus* for the Hades gospel. "There is a passage which seems at first sight to support the view of those who deny the intermediate state: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.' In the original Greek the definite article is wanting, and the absence of it is very significant, for it is invariably prefixed to the noun in all the passages where that judgment is clearly spoken of which is to decide finally the eternal destiny. What the author of the Epistle teaches is that death is immediately followed by a judgment or crisis; but it can only be *that by which the place of the soul is determined in Hades*" (our italics) "or the intermediate state." (*The Intermediate State*, p. 22.)<sup>1)</sup>

The argument that because the Lord will judge all men on the Last Day, Scripture cannot teach that an irrevocable judgment will be pronounced on man at his death has no weight. We cannot see why God should not pass judgment on the individual twice. We know, of course, that Scripture cannot teach that at death an irrevocable judgment is passed and that at the Last Judgment this judgment might be reversed. But what Scripture teaches is that the two judgments, the particular judgment and the general judgment, are identical as to their effect. But that does not, as

1) Of the additional argument offered by the Hades theologians we should like to list these: The believers do not at death enter paradise, heaven, for, says *The Gospel of the Hereafter*, "It is clear that when Christ promised the dying thief, 'Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise,' He did not mean the final heaven; for He says, 'No man hath ascended into heaven only the Son of Man who is in heaven.' Even He Himself did not go to heaven when He died, for this is His statement after the Resurrection: 'I have not yet ascended unto My Father.'" — St. Paul did not expect to go to heaven at his death, "for he says, 2 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' After death St. Paul desired to be with Christ, that is, to be in Christ's keeping. He did not expect to receive his reward for his labors till the end of all things." (S. Baring-Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 119.) — "It is not said even of the foolish virgins or of the man that had not on a wedding garment that the door which was shut upon them *would never again be opened*" (our italics) "and that they were to be left forever in the outer darkness. We may admit that the drift of the whole teaching is to lead men to contemplate the exclusion as something infinitely terrible, but the glimpses given elsewhere of the miracles of the divine mercy lead us to think it at least possible that the sentence may not be irrevocable." (Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 62.) — We might also list Th. Traub's remark: "The Lutheran Confessions do not absolutely reject an intermediate state; see Augsburg Confession, Art. XVII, where the entrance into the eternal life or into hell for eternal punishment is made to depend on the decision of the Last Judgment after the general resurrection." (*Von den letzten Dingen*, p. 37.)



Plumptre and the others contend, make the second judgment superfluous. The general judgment is the solemn and the public confirmation of the particular judgment. It is, furthermore, a *general* judgment, including the bodies of the raised dead and those living at the Last Day. And, finally, it is the full revelation of the wickedness of the unbelievers and the glory of the believers.<sup>2)</sup>

What of the fact that the judgment of Heb. 9:27 "is not called the judgment"? The idea seems to be that since it is not called the judgment, the final Judgment, its sentence cannot be a decisive, final, irrevocable judgment.<sup>3)</sup> In the first place, we are agreed that Heb. 9:27 does not directly speak of the Judgment of the Last Day. However, in the second place, the context shows that it speaks of a judgment which is final and irrevocable. "So Christ," v. 28. Man's death and Christ's death are parallelized as to their finality in a certain respect. Christ's death settled the matter; with man's death the matter is settled. "Death at once places his soul either into heaven or into hell; the verdict is at once executed. To think of anything else ruins the correspondence with Christ's death; for He (Christ) does not wait until the Last Day to learn God's judgment on His sacrifice." (Lenski.) The judgment passed at man's death is final and irrevocable. The lack of the definite article ("After this cometh judgment," R. V.) has no bearing on the case. It is a judgment which is identical with that of the Last Day. "Fuer die Menschen gilt die durch vereinzelte Ausnahmen

2) This last point is brought out by John Gerhard thus: The influence for good or for evil of a man's life does not end with his death. Many are still blessing humanity because of what they did during their lifetime. On the other hand, a wicked and godless life may still be corrupting men long after the instigator of that chain of evil influence has closed his eyes in death. With the end of the world the good and the evil deeds of each individual will also have come to an end; then it is proper that before angels and all humanity the ultimate sentence should be spoken. (See *Lutheran Standard*, Jan. 3, 1942.) — Joseph Stump: "The preliminary judgment which God passes upon men at death is absolutely accurate and infallible. When at death God admits the believers to eternal life and condemns the unbeliever to eternal death, their destiny is fixed forever. The final judgment will be a public vindication of the righteousness of God as exhibited in the preliminary judgment which assigned men to eternal life or to eternal death." (*The Christian Faith*, p. 406.) *The Living Church*, Dec. 17, 1944: "There is a 'particular judgment,' that takes place at once following death. It marks the end of our probation and at that 'moment' the soul will learn its eternal destiny. There will be a 'general judgment' in which 'before Him shall be gathered all nations.' At this the verdict of the particular judgment upon the individual soul will be sealed. Mankind as a whole will be judged."

3) Just by the way: Luckock should not say that the definite article is invariably prefixed to the noun *κρίσις* in all the passages where the final Judgment is clearly spoken of. See Heb. 6:2! Dörner is more careful. He says: "Commonly the definite article is used in the New Testament when the Last Judgment is intended." (See Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 254.)



(cf. Heb. 11:5, 35) nicht in Frage gestellte Regel, dass nach ihrem einmaligen Ableben ihnen nichts anderes mehr bevorsteht als ein Gericht, das den Ertrag ihres nunmehr abgeschlossenen Lebens bewertet und die entsprechenden Konsequenzen daraus zieht." (Riggenbach, in *Zahn's Commentary*.)<sup>4)</sup>

Plumptre remarks: "There is no repentance in the grave' has been accepted as though it were an oracle from God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 11.) Yes indeed, we preach it as an oracle of God. We say with E. W. Klotzsche: "Scripture leaves no room for an intermediate state of development in moral or spiritual progress." (*Christian Symbolics*, p. 191.) It is not a "foolish popular notion that at death men pass into their final destiny," but "God's Word teaches that the period of grace absolutely ends for all men at death" (W. Rohmert, *Die Dogmatik der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, p. 580). Because it is an oracle of God, we teach it even to our children, as the *Senior Catechism* of the American Lutheran Church does, p. 129: "At death each individual is judged and assigned to one of two places: heaven or hell. On the last day those souls will be reunited with their resurrected body, and the general judgment will take place." It is an oracle of God; dare we suppress it? "No Christian teacher dare take it upon himself to arouse hopes of a conversion after death in his hearers." (F. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, III: 624.)

It would be an evil day on which the Church decided to give tolerance to a doctrine which goes against a clear teaching of Scripture. It would be a disaster if she tolerated (a) such sentiments as these: "Among illustrious prelates of our own Church, Archbishop Tillotson saw reason to believe that God might restore the lost by the superabundance of His mercy, *though he considered that the letter of Scripture pointed the other way.*" (Our italics.) Farrar does not censure the Archbishop. (*Op. cit.*, p. 175.) But (b) also those Hades theologians who do not realize that they are in conflict with Scripture are bringing disaster upon the Church. They are, in reality, suppressing a truth which God has revealed and which He has given the Church for her profit.

We have no right to preach the Hades gospel, and certainly the fact that a great number of the early Fathers preached it does not give us the right. The Hades theologians make much of that fact. Their books abound in quotations from the Fathers. And

4) Need we discuss Luckcock's interpretation that the judgment pronounced at death determines man's place in Hades, determines whether the soul goes to the Hades paradise or the Hades *phylake*, where it will get another chance? Lenski disposes of such interpretations thus: "There is no probation after death, although some would insert it here: 'to die but once and (after a probation when necessary) after that judgment.' Such eisegesis and insertions are arbitrary expositions of the Scriptures."



they are quoted as authorities. Luckcock says that this "doctrine has come down from Catholic and primitive antiquity and may therefore be held with perfect loyalty to fundamental truth. . . . There is evidence that that act of our blessed Lord in preaching 'to the spirits in prison' was so interpreted in the primitive Church, which is generally to be trusted as the best exponent of the teaching of Scripture. Clement of Alexandria asserted that 'the Apostles following the example of their Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades.' The belief of these early Fathers lends distinct countenance to the thought, etc." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 86, 101.) And *The Gospel of the Hereafter* goes so far as to make the early Fathers authoritative sources of the Christian doctrine. "The knowledge of it [of Christ's preaching the Gospel in Hades] was so widespread in the early Church because Jesus told it in the 'forty days.' Some people seem to think that there are only some obscure verses of St. Peter and a few references of St. Paul in favor of such teaching. Not at all. St. Peter and St. Paul were only two in a crowd of teachers of early days who proclaimed triumphantly the visit of the Lord into the world of the dead. I read the writings of the ancient bishops and teachers of the Church, the very men to whom we refer for information as to Baptism and Holy Communion, and there I find prominently in their preaching the Gospel of our Lord's visit to the world of the departed. The earliest is known as Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr wrote: 'Those who hold that when men die their souls are at once taken to heaven are not to be accounted Christians or even Jews.' (*Dialog with Trypho.*) Etc., etc." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 36, 56 ff.) Submitting quotations from Gregory of Nyssa, Farrar states: "The writings of this great Father are most important as proving the permissibility of these views. Let those, at least, who impugn the Gospel of Eternal Hope remember that it was openly preached by the 'Father of Fathers.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 160 f.)

It is a fact that many Church Fathers taught the possibility of conversion after death.<sup>5)</sup> But the Church would be in a bad way if she made the teachings of the Fathers authoritative. For the Fathers often erred.<sup>6)</sup> And it would be an evil day for the Church if she set up other authorities alongside of Scripture. The Christian conscience is bound by God's Word, not by the writings of the Fathers. It cannot bear the denial of the *sola Scriptura*.

5) Many Church Fathers denied it. See Wohlenberg, in *Zahn's Commentary*, on 1 Pet. 3:19 f.

6) See the article on "Christ's Descent Into Hell and the Possibility of Conversion After Death," by Dr. Th. Graebner (*Theological Quarterly*, 1908, p. 28), on "the danger of attaching exaggerated importance to patristic opinion. Not all of the Fathers were sound dogmatists, and they sometimes erred in exegesis. As everyone knows, the very earliest of the Fathers had not always the clearest conception of apostolic doctrine." Some of them taught gross synergism, others rank chiliasm, etc.



The Christian conscience is also outraged by the attempt to justify the Hades gospel by pointing to the great number of eminent theologians who have embraced it. Farrar has compiled a long list of such men. "Among those who in recent days have inclined to some form of the hope for which in these sermons I have been led to plead are many illustrious names, of which none is more illustrious than that of the great and saintly Bengel. Others who may be mentioned are Bishop Edmund Law, etc., etc., Rothe, the eminent Lutheran divine, Neander, Oberlin, Tholuck, and Bishop Martensen of Seeland. Were I at liberty to mention the names of those high dignitaries and eminent theologians whose view is identical with my own, the position which I have defended would be infinitely strengthened." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 174, 178.) Since Farrar's days the list has grown considerably. In fact, "modern theology (with but a few exceptions) has swept away the limitations set by the old Protestant teaching which restricts the preaching of salvation to man's life on earth." (P. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, p. 181.) But in settling doctrinal questions majorities do not count. We should not feel that "it strengthens our position" to have the majority on our side. May God give us grace to maintain, in spite of the mighty opposition, the important, solemn truth that there is no repentance after death.

2. The Hades gospel is of an evil parentage; it is the product of human speculation; it is engendered by rationalistic considerations. The twenty-first argument of the Hades theologians proves that. They rely on reason to prove that men have a second chance and to disprove that there is no conversion after death. Read again Plumptre's statement "Reason rose in rebellion against a dogma that clashed with men's sense of equity." (*Op. cit.*, p. 167.) Read Farrar's statement: The doctrine that "He who is the Lord both of the dead and living may save sinful souls even after the death of the body is not only in better accord with *man's instinctive belief in the justice and mercy of God*, but also far more Scriptural than these later and darker beliefs." Hear his further statements: "The voice of reason and conscience rose in revolt against a doctrine which they found irreconcilable with the love of God. Restore the ancient belief in an intermediate state; that a doom is passed irreversibly at the moment of death, at the very thought of that the heart faints and is sick with horror. No argument adduced on the other side will ever silence the remonstrance of outraged reason."... (*Op. cit.*, pp. XXXII ff., LXIII, 172.) Men are preaching the Hades gospel because their carnal reason insists that since God's mercy is universal and He is just and impartial, He must give men a second chance. Prof. A. Hoenecke says: "The doctrine of the intermediate state is a product of the endeavor to put the teach-



ings of Scripture into a logical system, to harmonize the statement that God would have all men to be saved with the fact that the saving Gospel did not reach all. If eternity immediately followed upon time, say the systematizers (*Systemkuenstler*), there would be an intolerable gap. And they are happy to fill this gap by introducing between time and eternity an intermediate state which begins with the ending of temporal life, a state in which in the life beyond the grave the preaching of the Gospel is continued for the conversion of those who were not converted in this life." (*Proceedings, Synodical Conference, 1894*, p. 52.) Does this correctly present the position of the Hades theologians? Dr. Pieper says: "In order to save universal grace before the forum of the human understanding some have assumed that after this life an opportunity to hear the Gospel and to believe will be offered (Martensen, Kliefoth, etc.). But these are human speculations, without any basis in Scripture." (*Op. cit.*, II:35.) Is this a correct presentation of the methods of the Hades theologians? They will hardly call these statements misrepresentations of their position. They clearly say there would be a contradiction in Scripture, which teaches that God would save all, if those passages of Scripture which declare that the period of grace ends at death would be permitted to stand in their full force; they must be modified. They explicitly say that reason has the right to charge God with being merciless and unjust if He did not provide for salvation in Hades. Read their twenty-first argument once more. Reason must not be outraged.

They employ other rationalistic arguments. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*: "Christ appeared in Hades in His own special character of Redeemer. *The analogy of this world* leads us to expect that He was there the savor of life unto life to some and of death unto death unto others." (*S. v. Hades*.) F. Mellows: "Will there be a second chance? Is the destiny of the heathen and of the wicked fixed at death, or will they have opportunities of hearing the Gospel and of responding to it? Scripture neither affirms nor denies. It tells us that 'now is the day of salvation,' but it also says that 'in Christ shall all be made alive.' . . . Bishop Talbot of Pretoria has said: 'That there will be beyond death further opportunities of being fully won by and given to God is a truth which accords with life as we know it' [our italics], affording, as it does, such imperfect chances to so many of God's children to achieve their true destiny. 'God forbid,' wrote Luther, 'that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depths of Divine Mercy there may be opportunities to win it in the future state.'"<sup>7)</sup> (*What Happens When I Die?* p. 13.) P. Althaus: "Wenn Gottes Erwaehlen den

7) We shall examine this alleged statement of Luther in a later article.



Glauben wirkt, wie sollte unsere Demut uns nicht gewiss machen, dass Gott sich jedes andern ebenso annehmen wird wie unser!" And so he concludes that "we may well hope that beyond the limits of our history Christ will yet meet all whom He did not reach in time." (*Die letzten Dinge*, pp. 181, 186, 218. See CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1940, p. 659.)

When the Hades theologians appeal to the Christian consciousness: "Such damnatory preaching of Jesus in the realms of the dead is derogatory to the character of the Redeemer; Christian consciousness revolts from the thought that the holy Jesus, etc." (*Lange-Schaff Commentary*), they are appealing to reason. The "Christian" consciousness which denies a clear teaching of Scripture and demands a second probation is speaking the sentiments of carnal reason. When, therefore, Farrar says: "The voice of reason and conscience rose in revolt against a doctrine, etc.," he is really identifying reason and conscience, reason and Christian consciousness. And it is simply rationalism, pure rationalism, when these men make human thoughts and sentiments the source of doctrine. Farrar does not hesitate to say: "What the Bible teaches as a whole — what the Bibles also teach as a whole, for *History, Conscience, and Nature, and Experience, these, too, are sacred books* [our italics] — that, and that only, is the immutable law of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 206.) Conscience has equal authority with the Bible.<sup>8)</sup>

"What the Bible teaches as a whole" — there we have another rationalistic device. *Das Schriftganze!* The Hades theologians construct the "whole of the Bible" out of their own notions and by authority of this "whole of the Bible" cancel plain teachings of the Bible. Farrar amplifies his idea concerning the "Bible as a whole" when he states: "Though texts may be quoted which give *prima-facie* plausibility to such modes of teaching . . . these texts are alien to the broad unifying principles of Scripture. . . . Much of the popular teaching about the awful subject of retribution . . . its irreversible finality at the instant of death . . . gives us an utterly false picture of the God of love, which finds no warrant either in the general tone of Scripture or in God's no less sacred teachings to our individual souls." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 74, 93.) L. Dahle (Norway)

8) *Theological Quarterly*, 1919, p. 207: "Many of the advocates of the theory of a probation after death confess that they find only too little support for their beliefs in the New Testament, and that they must base their teaching rather on general philosophical grounds or their own subjective feeling as to what the truth of the matter may be. Thus the great English preacher Farrar, in his eloquent sermons on 'Eternal Hope,' appeals in reality more to the Holy Spirit within his own heart than to the inspired Scriptures, and believes that his own divinely trained 'Christian consciousness' and feeling as to what is good and right is to be relied upon fully as much as the written Word."



operates in this way: He does not aver that the doctrine of a possible conversion after death is a clear doctrine of Scripture. Yet he maintains that if we "go back to the fundamental principles of Scriptural teachings," we are forced to some such conclusion. (See *Theological Quarterly*, 1908, p. 25.)

The Hades gospel, spawned by rationalistic thinking, is an evil thing. The Hades theology sets the verdict of reason and feeling above the declaration of God's Word. God wants His children to accept the teaching of Scripture in simple faith, to believe that God's ways are just and right even if they cannot understand them, but reason, "the archwhore and Satan's bride" (Luther, XX:232), would seduce God's children from implicit faith and asks them to say to God: We cannot accept statements of Scripture which outrage our reason. The evil of the Hades gospel consists in this, that it weans the Christians away from the allegiance to their Lord.

Another evil is that it deals not in divine certainties, but in vague speculations. Reason and feeling have no certain knowledge of the divine mysteries; consequently the Hades theology offers nothing but surmises, guesses, dreams. Augustus H. Strong says: "Dorner deals in speculation rather than in Scripture." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 566.) Pieper says: "But these are human speculations, without any basis in Scripture." And the Hades theologian Luckock himself declares that his book, *The Intermediate State*, "is in part speculative." He is glad to print what Canon Liddon wrote to him: "We are clearly of one mind about the intermediate state; as I cannot deprecate very natural speculations so long as they profess themselves speculations resting on whatever basis of theological probability; and you are opposed to making anything *de fide* which is not clearly revealed as being so." (*Op. cit.*, IX, XIII.) And on page 161 he says of a certain point in the Hades gospel: "It can only be a matter of conjecture." However, since it "rests on the almost continuous teaching of all the Christian centuries, we accept it in confidence." Plumptre speaks in the same manner: "That larger hope — call it, if you will, that glorious dream — has never been without its witnesses." (*Op. cit.*, p. 13.) So also *The Gospel of the Hereafter*: "Is it allowable here to make a venture of faith and speculate on a matter of which we cannot give definite proof?" The answer is yes. It tells of a man who "believed he was going through the veil to preach to men" (in Hades). "I believe it too, though I cannot prove it." Again: "If I draw some conclusions which I cannot definitely prove from Scripture, they are only such as seem to me reasonable and probable." (Pp. 52, 149, 154.)

The Hades gospel has no place in the Christian Church. God's children come to church to hear what God has to say to them, and here they are forced to listen to what puny men have to say to



them. God's children want to hear the oracles of God, not the speculations, dreams, and oracles of men.

And these speculations are not worth listening to because they are speculations, unsubstantial dreams, unreliable uncertainties. It is remarkable how often the Hades theologians are compelled to make use of the terms "perhaps," "if," "probably." Specimens already quoted in the preceding articles: "The Gospel was preached to the dead, perhaps to all the vast population of the underworld." "May we not dare to hope?" "Conjecture is vain." (*Pulpit Commentary*.) "Almost certain reference." (Luckock.) "The ancient Church supposed." (Dorner.) "Lead us to think it at least possible that the sentence may not be irrevocable." (Plumptre.) "Probability. . . . This probability is strengthened. . . . Provided that. . ." (Timothy Dwight.) "May save sinful souls even after death." (Farrar.) "What we surmise is. . ." (Edwin Lewis.)

Some additional confessions of uncertainty. From a letter of Plumptre to Farrar: "Are there no prison doors to open, no lambs to gather in the fold? *We know not; but if. . .*" (Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 189.) *The Gospel of the Hereafter*, p. 64: "I am not laying down this as a statement of Scripture, but I think it is a fair conjecture." Luckock: "There is certainly nothing to forbid us from supposing that the antediluvians were brought to repentance when the Flood actually came. . . . There is a strong presumption that they had been pardoned (before their death)." (*Op. cit.*, p. 143.) "Grundtvig: 'Nothing prevents us from supposing that the martyrs continue the preaching of Christ in Hades' for the purpose of converting those who were not witnesses of Christ's descent. . . . L. Dahle is ever careful to emphasize the *hypothetic* character of his main thesis—conversion possible after death." (*Theol. Quarterly*, 1908, pp. 26, 31.) C. M. Jacobs: "If Christ is 'God's only Son, our Lord,' as we believe, then His presence in the world of the departed cannot have been without effect upon that world. The nature of that effect can only be a matter of reverent conjecture; it is beyond the reach of actual knowledge. Nevertheless," etc. (*The Faith of the Church*, p. 59.) H. C. Sheldon: "The principal considerations which may be urged in favor of the supposition that progressive sanctification and distinct moral transitions *may* have place in the intermediate state are the following: . . . (3) Peter's reference to the preaching of Christ, though somewhat *obscure and enigmatic*, is *most naturally* interpreted as implying a presentation of the Gospel message to some *portion of the dead*." (*System of Christian Doctrine*, p. 555. Our italics.) — *The Christian Century* likes this kind of theology as little as we do. "Nowhere else in the Scriptures save in this *doubtful* text (1 Pet. 3:19) is the idea of the Master's evangelistic visit to the dead even hinted. Yet volumes of *imaginative* theology have



been devoted to the subject, and it is much in use by the sects who preach the doctrine of the 'second chance.' Whatever may be the value of that theory, this *uncertain* utterance is a weak foundation on which to construct it." (Our italics.)<sup>9)</sup>

9) While we are at it, we might point out that the Hades theology, besides dealing throughout in uncertainties, is a mass of confusion and contradictions. The Hades theologians have been unable to construct a uniform system. Naturally not, for since all of it is based on speculation, each man has the right to speculate after his own heart's desire. On most Hadean questions there is disagreement. — Lenski on Rev. 5:3: "The moment we get 'beneath the earth' look out! At once you will hear about the *Totenreich*, this fiction, popular at present, of a place between heaven and hell, where all the dead are supposed to go — see at length under 'hades' in 1:18." Look out, or you too will get hopelessly confused. When you study the Hades theology, you hear contradictory teachings and have to deal with confused thinking.

A few examples: According to the majority of the Hades theologians Hades has two compartments, the lower being the antechamber of hell, where those are kept who died in unbelief, kept for probation, and the upper being the lower paradise, where the souls of believers are kept for further purification. Luckock: "The spirits of men who had died impenitent were in a place of torment in that part of Hades which is separated from the abode of the blest and designated Paradise. . . . The souls of the righteous and unrighteous detained in Hades, but not in the same place. . . . The division of Hades into two localities, the higher and the lower." (Op. cit., pp. 24, 32, 140.) According to others, however, Hades contains only one compartment, the temporary abode of the unbelievers. For, says Traub, "Those who die in the faith, at once enter heaven." (Op. cit., p. 31.) The Luthardt-Jelke Compendium, p. 431: "Since Christ's descent to Hades the believers no longer go to Hades but to heaven." According to the *Brecklumer Sonntagsblatt* Hades has only one compartment, which, however, contains only those unbelievers who did not hear the Gospel in their earthly life, the other unbelievers being consigned at once to hell. (See *Lutheraner*, 1882, p. 109.) Or it may be that Hades has three compartments. Dr. P. Madsen: "First — the dwelling place of the believers prior to the final bliss called 'Paradise,' that is, 'Hades-Paradise.' Second — the dwelling place of the unbelievers, which in Luke 16:23 is described as a suffering; however so that not yet every human feeling in them has been destroyed (v. 27). Third — the state of those whose condition is not yet determined, having had no choice extended them here on earth." (See M. O. Wee, *Shall I Live Forever?* p. 34.) Just what does Kahn teach on this point? He says: "Sonach wuerden in jener Welt drei Orte und mit ihnen drei Zustaende zu unterscheiden sein: der Strafort (φυλακή), der mittlere Ort der Entscheidung und Laeuterung, und der Freudenort (παράδεισος)." (*Luth. Dogm.*, III:555.) H. W. Frost on the Hades geography: "In the Old Testament times the spirits of men went into Sheol, or Hades, which was in the center of the earth. This place of departed spirits was divided into three compartments: first, Tartarus, where many of the fallen angels were and are; second, the place of torment, to which the wicked went and to which they still go; and, third, the place of comforting, named Paradise, to which the righteous went (Luke 16:25; 23:43). . . . When Christ ascended, the saints were taken from the lower earthly Paradise to a place of greater comforting, heaven (Eph. 4:8, 9). This heaven was the third or topmost one, and to it God gave — as He had formerly done to the compartment in the earth which contained the righteous dead — the name Paradise (Eph. 1:20, 21; 4:10; 2 Cor. 12:1-4). It is to this beatific place that, since Christ's ascension, the spirits of the saints at death have gone." (*The Second Coming of Christ*, p. 68.) One of the fundamental tenets of the Hades theology is that Hades is a place or state distinct from heaven



and hell. However, P. J. Gerberding holds that the lower part of Hades is hell (*When Christ Comes*, see *Lutheraner*, Vol. 77, p.63), and a theologian who is quoted in *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, Aug. 2, 1924, states: "Whether the paradise of Luke 23:43 is heaven or only an antechamber to heaven, need not bother us. Whether the Hades of Luke 16:23 is hell is hard to decide; but it is the place of the departed damned souls." (*Kirchenzeitung* refutes the teaching that there is besides heaven and hell a third place beyond the grave. We quote one of its statements: "Abraham spricht zu dem reichen Mann nicht: Du wirst gereinigt werden, sondern: Du wirst gepeinigt.") And L. Dahle informs us that hell (Gehenna, Tartarus) does not exist before Judgment Day. (See *Theol. Quarterly*, 1908, p. 25.) — What about these two paradises, the lower Hades paradise and the upper heaven paradise? First, we have here some contradictory teaching. The *Lange-Schaff Commentary* (on 1 Pet. 3:18 f.) states that "there are in Hades two provinces, the one a place of repose, comfort, and refreshing, Luke 16:22, probably that paradise to which Jesus went with the thief, the lower paradise, as contrasted with the upper, to which Paul was transported, 2 Cor. 12:24; Rev. 2:7"; and the majority of the Hades theologians teach that the believers remain there till the day of Judgment for further growth in spirituality, while Traub and others insist that this paradise no longer exists. See Frost above. And R. A. Torrey: "At His ascension Christ emptied the Paradise of Hades and took it up with Him to heaven. Before Christ ascended, Paradise was down, now it is up. No blessed dead are now left in Hades." (*The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, p. 288 f.) Second, the Scripture proof offered for the distinction between the two paradises reveals confused thinking. The proof offered by *The Gospel of the Hereafter* for the thesis that Christ and the thief must have gone to the Hades paradise is Christ's statement that He had not yet ascended to the Father. (See footnote 1.) This same writer finds it possible to take the words: "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, there shall no torment touch them," and "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," as a description not of "the final heaven" but of the lower Paradise. Third, if this dogma is true, Christ used confusing language. He should have said: "Today thou shalt be with Me in the lower paradise." — Is it easier or more difficult for men to be converted in Hades than here? The Hades authorities differ. Some say it is easier. Luckock: In view of "the conditions of the other world and especially of the absence of all carnal temptations . . . we cannot but go on and say that it may be, yea, it must be, easier in the spiritual sphere to yield the obedience which the Almighty Sovereign claims: the influences in favor of accepting His will more winning and powerful: the inducements to resist it proportionately weaker." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 192, 195, 204.) Plumptre quotes, with approval, from early writers: "The punishments of God in Hades are remedial and reformatory, and lead to repentance, and his work is easier for those who are no longer hampered by the temptation of the flesh. . . . Souls, when released from the burden of the flesh, are likely to see spiritual things with a greater clearness than in the days of their life on earth." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 147, 165.) *Brecklumer Sonntagsblatt*: "Die Predigt des Herrn kann dann (im Hadesgefaengnis) noch schneller vorwaertsgehen in ihrer Wirkung." That is pure speculation. And when we then begin to speculate on our part and say that it would be better for the Lord to defer this work on the souls of men to Hades, where conversion is easier, that it would not be fair for the Lord to condemn those who here, under more difficult circumstances, resisted, while He makes it easier for others, Cremer, Splittgerber, and others decree that conversion in yonder world is harder to bring about than here. (See H. Ebeling, *Der Menschheit Zukunft*, p. 31.) We might quote R. Rothe's statement in this connection: "Den unbekehrt Gestorbenen wird das Heil in der Totenwelt noch einmal dringend angeboten. . . . Bei der Verderbnis seines sittlichen Seins (die doch seine Natur ausmacht) hat der Abgeschiedene einen viel langwierigeren Prozess bis zur Wieder-



geburt durchzumachen als der Bekehrte, der im Hades nur noch Schlacken abstreift." (See W. Oelsner, *Die Entwicklung der Eschatologie*, p. 32.) Which of the two schools is right? We need not investigate, for the general thesis of both is wrong.—Here are some curiosities. Swedenborg tells us: "There are three states that man passes through after death before he enters either heaven or hell. . . . The first state of man after death continues with some for days, with some for months, and with some for years; but seldom with any beyond a year; for a shorter or longer time with each one according to the agreement or disagreement of his interiors with his exteriors. In the second state the separation of evil spirits from good spirits takes place. . . . The third state is the state of their preparation for heaven by means of instruction. . . . Some are taken up into heaven by another way—some immediately after death, some after a short stay with good spirits, where the grosser things of their thoughts and affections are removed." (*Heaven and Hell*, paragraphs 491, 498, 511 ff.) C. J. Soedergren has this: "Scripture teaches clearly . . . (4) a final resurrection of the dead in Hades—possibly a resurrection at the end of each dispensation—for judgment." "This," remarks CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1945, p. 157, "leaves us reaching into thin air for meaning." We read in *The Pulpit Commentary* on 1 Pet. 3:18-20, p. 161: "Jesus heralded love and mercy and hope. Dean Alford says, 'This throws a blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas of Divine justice.' Yet mark, there is no light view of sin here." (Our italics.) "It is awful for spirits to be in prison, and in prison for twenty-four centuries."—It is rather confusing that the Luthardt-Jelke *Kompendium*, after stating that since Christ's descent to Hades the believers no longer go to Hades but to heaven, criticizes the teaching of the Lutheran dogmatists that "at death the believers enter heaven and the wicked hell." (P. 432.—See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 292.) It is most confusing when J. Stump says on p. 413 of *The Christian Faith* that "hell as the place of eternal punishment must be distinguished from Sheol and Hades, which in reality mean the place of departed spirits" and on p. 392: "Since Christ's resurrection the departed believers no longer enter Hades." Hades sometimes means the state or place of departed spirits. But we cannot understand how one can say in the same breath that Hades is the place of departed spirits and that the spirits of the believers do not enter Hades, the place of departed spirits. Stump repudiates the Hades heresy. "There will be no preaching of the Gospel in the other world. . . . There will be no opportunity for repentance on the part of those who have refused to repent here; for the day of salvation is now." (Pp. 173, 393.) But his other statements on Hades are certainly confusing. "The moment we get 'beneath the earth' look out!"—If Hades is made up of paradise and of the prison, Jesus did not use clear language when He said: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18. He should have said: The gates of the evil part of Hades shall not prevail against the Church.—If Hades means a place where conversion is still possible, Matt. 11:23: "Thou, Capernaum, shalt be brought down to Hades," does not mean much.—One who has to prepare a sermon for Hades Sunday is in a bad predicament. He does not know which of the Hades authorities he should follow.

The simple teaching of Scripture on Hades is thus expressed by Dr. Dau: "Sheol and Hades are used in a few places to denote the state of those having departed this life and having entered the state of death. . . . In a majority of all available texts Sheol and Hades mean hell pure and simple." (Lectures on Dr. Graebner's Outlines, II, p. 166 f.) Similarly Dr. Stoeckhardt, on 1 Pet. 3:13-22, p. 153 f. *Zahn's Commentary*, on Matt. 16:18: "Der Hades ist das Haus des Todes und dessen, der Suende und Tod in die Menschenwelt gebracht hat. Dieses Haus ist auch der Abgrund, von wo Satan, die bösen Geister und all Mächte des Verderbens ausgehen, um im Lande der Lebendigen Schaden zu stiften." Pieper: "πύλαι ᾧδου . . . Christ keeps the Church against the assault of the might of hell." (Op. cit., I:615.)



We conclude this section with the verdict of the Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia*: "All speculations on the future state beyond the limits of revelation are *docta ignorantia*." (*S. v. Hades*.) He commits a crime against the Church of God who asks her to listen not to the oracles of God, but to his vain speculations. "We have no right to construct a doctrine only on speculations." (M. O. Wee, *op. cit.*, p. 61.) It does not help the matter if these men insist that they are not offering these speculations as being the sure Word of God, but as pure speculations on things of which they are really ignorant. For they are offering their teachings as "*glorious dreams*"; they want people to accept them and glory in them. Their mouths should be stopped. They are engaged in a bad business. "*Es ist die Hadeslehre der neueren Theologen eine muessige und ueberfluessige Spekulation. . . . Wir erkennen hieraus, auf welche unbiblische und gefaehrliche Abwege der Aberwitz des Menschen geraet, wenn er ausser der Schrift Dinge ergruebeln will, die seinen Kaptus uebersteigen, und sich dabei von einer regen Phantasie und von den Wuenschen seines natuerlichen Herzens leiten laesst.*" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1874, p. 81.)

3. One particularly loathsome and wicked feature of rationalism is its arrogant assumption of the right to sit in judgment on God. Carnal reason considers itself as wise as God, does not hesitate to judge God's ethics by its own ethical concepts, and dares to condemn God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. It wants a God of its own making. We have already discussed this in our examination of the twenty-first argument for the Hades gospel. But it needs to be emphasized. We call attention to three points.

a) The Hades theology actually says that if God does not preach the Gospel to men in Hades, His judgment of the Last Day would be "partial, unjust, unrighteous"; that if God does not give certain men a second chance, His dealings would "clash with men's sense of equity"; that God "owes" it to men and must keep His obligation. (See June issue, p. 382.) It actually says that God would not be the God of mercy and love if death ended the period of grace; that what the Bible says of the universality of grace would be a lie unless those who did not hear the Gospel or did not hear enough of the Gospel in this life, were taken care of in Hades. But since God has revealed Himself as the God who judges men according to what they have done in this life, the Hades theology is in effect condemning God. Carnal reason declares that it does not want a God who does not conform to man's sense of equity.<sup>10)</sup>

10) When men say: "To believe that all heathen are lost would compel us to accept the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation" (see *Theol. Quarterly*, 1908, p. 25), they too are permitting their carnal reason to judge and condemn God. They argue that if God did not give the heathen a second chance in Hades, He did not seriously want to save them, His grace would not be universal.



It is an evil, abominable thing. "In an effort to save God's honor and defend His justice and to make the gracious God still more gracious, men have made this statement: He preached the Gospel to those who had no opportunity of hearing it in their lifetime." (CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1932, p. 835.) But this effort to save God's honor, this effort to save universal grace before the forum of carnal reason, is virtually a condemnation of God as He has revealed Himself.

Suppress these evil thoughts, says Luther; do not dare to say with Origen that it would not be in conformity with divine goodness and mercy if God consigned the devils and so many men to eternal damnation. Beware lest you make God a liar! God is true in all His words. He would have all men to be saved, and do not deny this because of the fact that so many are lost. It is the arrogance of our corrupt human nature which dares to sit in judgment on God and to charge Him with committing "*Frevel, Gewalt und Unrecht*." (X:2002.)

b) Carnal reason claims that it can provide for the welfare and spread of the Church better than God. Farrar: "Restore the ancient belief in an Intermediate State . . . and you have removed the greatest of all stumbling blocks from the path of faith. . . . I have pleaded for the Eternal Hope in order to save many souls from rebellion. . . . This doctrine alone can stem the spread of infidelity." (Op. cit., XV, XXXIII, XXXV, LXV.) Farrar is convinced, of course, that the doctrine of salvation after death is the teaching of the Bible. But since the Bible in reality teaches the contrary, he is pleading for the suppression of a Bible truth; and he wants it suppressed for the good of the Church. To be sure, the teaching of the Bible on this point is offensive to the flesh. But should it therefore be changed? Carnal reason proposes that. It presumes to know better than God what is good for the Church.

c) It is wicked presumption to pry into the mysteries of God. One of these deep mysteries is the fact that God, who would have all men to be saved, gives His Word at one place and not at another. How shall we harmonize these two truths? God forbids us even to try it. It is our wicked flesh, which claims to be as wise as God, that is ready to cope with these questions. But God tells us: "His ways are past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor?" (Rom. 11:33, 34.) Let us heed the admonition and warning of the Formula of Concord: "Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place but not at another . . . in these and similar questions Paul (Rom. 11:22 ff.) fixes a certain limit to us. . . . God has reserved it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not investigate, nor should we indulge our thoughts in this matter, nor draw con-



clusions, nor inquire curiously, but should adhere [entirely] to the revealed Word [of God]." (*Triglot*, p.1081.) The business of the Christian is to believe in the universality of grace, because Scripture teaches it, even though we cannot harmonize it with the fact that many have never heard the Gospel. "There is only one thing left for us to do: we must believe that God's grace is universal, even though historical facts seem to show the contrary. It does not behoove us to interpret clear Scripture on the basis of our all too fragmentary understanding of the ways of God in history." It is not for us to attempt "to save universal grace before the forum of human understanding," "to save" it by "assuming that after this life an opportunity to hear the Gospel will be offered." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, II:35.) And it is the business of the Christian to suppress his wicked flesh, which demands full information on these deep questions and, as Luther says, "rebels at being kept in ignorance. . . . And Satan makes it his business to stir up this dissatisfaction of the flesh, for he knows that this is faith's most noble and precious quality that in this case it closes its eyes, willingly abstains from these investigations and gladly leaves it to God; it does not want to know why God acts thus; it knows that God is the highest goodness and justice, even though to all appearance, according to reason, sense, and experience, there is nothing but wrath and injustice. Da muss der Natur Auge ganz ausgerissen sein und lauter Glaube da sein; es geht sonst ohne greuliche, gefaehrliche Aergernisse nicht ab. . . . Derhalben ihnen zu raten ist, dass sie mit Gottes Gerichten unverworren bleiben." (X:3003.)

Discussing a certain difficulty that the Hades theory presents, Luckock says: "It may be so; at least it may appear so to our finite comprehension; but it only adds one more to the many perplexities which abound in the world; for it is impossible to overlook the fact that this principle of inequality is found to run through all God's dispensations. . . . It demands the exercise of implicit faith in the ultimate triumph of justice. . . ." (*Op. cit.*, p.193.) If the Hades theologians had applied this principle consistently, they would not have attempted to solve the perplexity concerning the universality of grace by inventing the Hades-gospel fiction. They should exercise here, as in other cases, implicit faith and let God remove the perplexity in the light of glory.<sup>11)</sup>

11) The difficulty to which Luckock refers is his teaching that men are more easily converted in Hades than here. Concerning this teaching he says: "It will naturally be objected that such a theory places those who have not accepted Christianity in this life in an advantageous and unfair position. It may be so; at least it may appear so to our finite comprehension, etc." We have alluded to this matter above. (See footnote 9.) We will add here that the Hades theologians have not gained anything by attempting to save God's justice through the invention of the Hades gospel. Solving one difficulty, they involve themselves in other difficulties.



Dealing with those who in investigating the related mystery of the *Cur alii prae aliis?* spoke of God being "a respecter of persons, *cum non aequalibus aequalia dividat*," the old Lutheran theologian P. Piscator said this: "These dolts deserve a sound thrashing for presuming to charge God with unfairness because His unsearchable judgments do not agree with their foolish reason." (Quoted in F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, p. 67 f.)

4. The Hades gospel prepares the way for the apocatastasis gospel. — The Hades theologians do not teach that all will finally be saved. They teach that for those who in this life have hardened themselves against the Gospel there is no hope. See May issue, p. 295. They distinctly disavow the teaching of Origen that the inmates of hell, including the devil, will at last be delivered out of hell. Farrar declares: "I have not pleaded for Universalism. . . . I am unable to adopt the universalist opinion." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 184, 227.) Universalism denies too brazenly the clear and positive teachings of Scripture on *eternal* damnation; it creates carnal security and produces other evils. Gerlach therefore, while preaching the Hades gospel, warns men against the apocatastasis gospel. "One perversion of the Scripture teaching is the doctrine of Purgatory. . . . Another and worse perversion is the doctrine of the Restitution of all things, of the ultimate deliverance of the devils and the wicked from hell; Scripture everywhere rejects such a doctrine. . . . Woe unto him who delays his repentance! It is folly, and it is wickedness, to hope for a chance for repentance in yonder life." (*Commentary on 1 Pet.*, p. 565.)

But in spite of their declaration of war against Universalism, the Hades theologians are its secret allies. Whether they want to do it or not — and they do not want to do it — they are furthering the cause of Universalism. If their arguments for the Hades gospel are valid, they prove the apocatastasis; and the men who are thereby won for the Hades gospel are in reality won for the apocatastasis; it is only by the grace of God that they do not take the final step.

The *sedes doctrinae* of the Hades gospel is the notion that God's love and justice call for a second probation. See June issue, p. 393. "It cannot be that the most merciful Savior," etc. "The justice and love of God now appear to us in glorious light." But that very same notion is the *sedes doctrinae* of the apocatastasis. Theodore Parker, for instance, declares that the theology which includes the idea of endless punishment "sneers at common sense, spits upon reason, and makes God a devil." (See A. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 599. — A later article will bring more references.) And so the Hades theologians cannot be relied on to protect the Church against the apocatastasis heresy. They are unable to refute the chief argument of the



Origenists, for it is their own chief argument. The Origenists have reason on their side when they tell the Hades theologians: If the mercy and justice of God calls for a second probation in Hades, it must also call for a third probation in hell. And how can the Hades theologians keep their own people from embracing Universalism? One who is won for the Hades gospel through the mercy-and-justice argument, will fall an easy prey to the gospel of Origen.

Again, when the Hades theologians operate with the passages that teach the universality of redemption and the universality of God's gracious will — *The Gospel of the Hereafter*: "The whole gospel harmony of the early church told of the universality of His atonement" (see June issue, p. 391) — they are playing into the hands of the Universalism theologians, who will say to them: These passages, as you apply them, do not prove that there will be a second probation for *some* men, but for *all* men; and they prove not merely a second probation for all, but the ultimate *salvation* of all. The argument based on the universality passages tends to make of the adherents of the Hades theology full-grown Origenists. The same applies to the argument employed by Mellows: "Will there be a second chance? Scripture says that 'in Christ shall all be made alive' " (see above), and to the argument based on 1 John 3:8: "Surely, if eight ninths of the men and women born into this world were to perish everlastingly, then Satan would have triumphed; Christ will have failed to destroy his works." (See June issue, p. 388.)

Once again, one who believes that "the punishments of God in Hades are remedial and reformatory" (Plumptre, see above), that "God's purpose in punishment is not to torture, but to redeem" (Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 119), is ready to believe what the apocatastasis men teach, namely, that the sufferings of hell too are not punitive, but remedial. And he will ask, further, why, if "the flames of Hades" (Plumptre's phrase, *op. cit.*, p. 414) are beneficial, the flames of hell should not also have a good effect on man. *The Pulpit Commentary* does think along these lines: "If they will yet receive the gospel, if they will read its blessed writing in the lurid light of the very flames of hell, they may yet be trophies of His unspeakable grace. Their life in the spirit may, after the purgings of those terrific fires, and through the influence of the Gospel of our blessed Lord, yet become a life unto God." (On 1 Peter, p. 196.) — In every way the Hades gospel makes for the apocatastasis gospel.<sup>12)</sup>

12) In the article "Is There a Conversion after Death? Some Reflections Elicited by an Article of Prof. O. Hallesby" Axel B. Svensson writes: "Professor Hallesby does not deny eternal punishment. He ex-



Some of the Hades theologians even have kind words for the Origenists and their teaching. Plumptre: "The noblest, loftiest, most loving of the teachers of the ancient church (I am not afraid to speak thus of Origen) embraced it—that larger hope—almost as the anchor of his soul. . . . He found refuge in the belief that sooner or later, after, it may be, the lapse of ages numbered beyond human ken, all souls will rest, purified and renewed, in the bosom of the universal Father, that the Divine Purpose of love, which hateth nothing that it has made, and will have all men to be saved, will not always be frustrated by man's resistance." (*Op. cit.*, p. 13.) Farrar: "These particular views of Origen—that Satan will cease to be an enemy and that the final reconciliation will be universal—have never been condemned by any decree of the Universal Church." "Gregory of Nyssa taught that all evil will ultimately disappear . . . that all punishment is educational, purgatorial, remedial in its object. The writings of this great father are most important as proving the permissibility of these views." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 158—161.) These men certainly are more than *secret* allies of the Origenists. Their disciples will hardly view the apocatastasis with disfavor. Add to this that these Hades theologians look upon the apocatastasis with such favor that they sometimes espouse it! We cannot understand how Farrar, who declared that he "is unable to adopt the Universalist opinion," could say: "Yes, my brethren, 'say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with them. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him.' But say also, as Christ's own apostle said, that there shall be 'a restitution of all things' (Acts 3:21) . . . that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22)." (*Op. cit.*, p. 89.) But there

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presses his astonishment that among the Christians in Norway there are some who would saddle on him the doctrine that ultimately all will be saved. One can well understand his resentment over these accusations, which, it cannot be denied, are unjustified from his point of view. But if he had kept his eyes open to the consequences resulting from his own teaching, he would have understood quite well those whom he now regards as slanderers. For if there is a possibility of conversion after death for some, commonest justice demands that all shall have that possibility, because between grace offered within the limits of time and grace offered within the limits of eternity we cannot place the sign of equality. No comparison is possible at this point. The standpoint occupied by Hallesby is logically untenable." (See *Theological Monthly*, 1925, p. 196. The closing statement of Svensson on this point is: "But the doctrine of conversion after death is unbiblical, and that settles the matter.") A friend asked Dr. Plumptre by letter: "Will it be possible to extend the period of probation of any man beyond his life without extending it to all?" From Plumptre's answer we quote this one sentence: "The righteous award will be bestowed on each according to the tenor of his life during the *whole*" (italics in the original) "period of his existence, and not only during the short years or months or days of his earthly being." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 345, 349.)



it is: He is against Universalism, and he is for it. And will his disciples look upon Universalism with disfavor?<sup>13)</sup>

Note, finally, that some would use the Hades gospel as a safeguard against Universalism. The *Lange-Schaff Commentary* says: "Those who here on earth did not hear at all, or not in the right way, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, shall hear it there. If this truth had always been sufficiently recognized, the anti-Scriptural opinion of universal recovery would hardly have found such extensive circulation." But it is a fatal mistake to use the Hades gospel as an antidote against the apocatastasis gospel. It prepares the way for it!—Every theological compromise has disastrous consequences. The only way to combat any false teaching is to show that it is anti-Scriptural. Operating with man-made contrivances will only weaken your case; sometimes, as in the present instance, it will cause you to lose your case.<sup>14)</sup>

5. The Hades gospel engenders carnal security.—The Presbyterian General Assembly called the teaching of Professor Briggs that certain unbelievers will be given another opportunity in Hades "a dangerous hypothesis." (See May issue, p. 293.) *Lehre und Wehre* spoke of "the dangerous aberrations of the Hades gospel" (see above). The Hades theology is engaged in a dangerous business. As we have seen, it permits men to sit in judgment on God. It prepares the way for the apocatastasis heresy. And it induces carnal security. The Hades theologians charge the apocatastasis

13) *Theological Quarterly*, 1919, p. 231: "All the passages that are made use of [to prove the doctrine of a probation after death] prove upon examination either to give it no support or else to lead to Universalist conclusions. It is instructing to note how men like Farrar, e.g., are led by their interpretation of the passages concerned to the very verge of Universalism, only to draw back with a 'God forbid' from the bottomless abyss of dangerous conclusions which they find in that doctrine."—Plumptre too rejects the apocatastasis: "There is the sin that hath never forgiveness" (*op. cit.*, p. 414), but teaches at the same time that probation goes on forever (see footnote 12).—It is not hard to understand why the Hades-Gospel men have a secret liking for the apocatastasis men. They are blood brothers. They feel alike. The only difference is that the apocatastasis has achieved a sturdier growth.

14) Luckock's appeasement proposal is equally foolish and futile. "The belief that 'endless punishment is incurred by the vast mass of mankind' can no longer be thrown in our teeth by those who claim to be the heralds of a wider hope." (*Op. cit.*, p. 196.) The heralds of Universalism will not be satisfied with the Hades gospel. They will not be satisfied with such halfway measures. They will demand that the Hades theologians go all the way and teach the ultimate salvation of all men. Nor will this half-way measure of the Hades theologians satisfy their own people. If you grant that their offense at the teaching that most men are lost is justified, you can remove the offense only by teaching that all men will be saved. And so we say again: You will either have to reject the Hades gospel as anti-Scriptural, or you will have to exchange it for the apocatastasis gospel.



theologians with raising false hopes in men. But they are doing the same thing.

The Hades gospel offers salvation in Hades not only to those who never heard the Gospel. It teaches, in addition, that among those who heard the Gospel and died without accepting it there are men who will get another opportunity in Hades. Those who have "wholly hardened" themselves against the Gospel have no hope. But those who for one reason or another could not come to a full decision in this life will be given another chance. Luckcock and Julius Mueller declare that no man will be finally judged "till those gracious influences which God exerts have been brought into full and complete operation." (See May issue, pp. 295—297.) Men who are actually rejecting the Gospel are being told that the reason for that may be that the Gospel is not fully operating in their case and, if so, there is hope for them after death. Such teaching cannot but lull men into a false sense of security. *Herzogs Real-Encyclopaedie*, third edition, puts it mildly when it says that the Hades gospel is "hardly" in agreement with 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27; etc., and then adds: "Sie bringt aber zudem die positive Gefahr, dass das Gewicht der diesseitigen Willensentscheidung abgeschwaecht wird." (*S. v. Hoellenfahrt.*) Let us use stronger language: "The teaching of modern rationalistic Protestantism that in the intermediate state souls are still being saved denies the plain teaching of Scripture, dulls the earnest admonitions to make use of the present, the only season of grace, and, inducing carnal security, causes men to perish eternally." (*Popular Symbolics*, p. 130.) It is psychologically impossible for a man who is led to believe that the period of grace extends beyond the grave to make the right use of the opportunities that come to him in this life, and only in this life. And if he, neglecting the day of salvation, is eternally lost, the Hades gospel is, in part, to be blamed for the awful disaster.

Is the danger a real one? Why, the Hades theologians themselves feel that it is necessary to warn their people against carnal security. Gerlach's warning "Woe unto him who delays his repentance" is addressed not only to those who derive consolation from the apocatastasis gospel. He is addressing also his own people. "Jedem ist zuzurufen: Eile und errette deine Seele, wenn du nicht ewig verloren gehen willst!" (*Loc. cit.*) The *Lange-Schaff Commentary* warns: "Let nobody die with the false consolation of hearing the Gospel hereafter in the world of death." In the German original: "Troeste sich doch niemand mit dem falschen Troste zu Tode, dass er spaeter das Evangelium in der Totenwelt wird hoeren." Sich zu Tode troesten! This carnal sense of security leads to eternal death! Mellows: "Bishop Talbot adds, however, this note of warning: 'To neglect present chances and opportunities



is self-deception. The second chance may find us less ready to close with it, owing to our refusal to close with the first." (*Op. cit.*, p. 13 f.) Farrar: "If any hardened sinner, shamefully loving his sin, and despising the long-suffering of his Savior, *trifle*" (italics in original) "with that doctrine" (of salvation in Hades), "it is at his own just and awful peril." (*Op. cit.*, p. 88.) And A. Schlatter's warning is couched in these strong terms: "We no longer believe with the Reformers that death ends the period of grace. However, for those men who because of the fact that conversion is possible beyond the grave delay their repentance in carnal indifference, there is no hope beyond the grave." (See Oelsner, *op. cit.*, p. 91.)

The Hades theologians themselves thus bear witness that the Hades gospel tends to induce carnal security. But their warnings against carnal security have no force as long as they preach that which produces the sense of security. The carnal mind of man is so constituted that it refuses to be greatly alarmed about the future when this future holds the prospect that all may turn out well for him. Farrar warns against "trifling with that doctrine" but blunts the edge of his warning when on the next page he preaches the "restitution of all things." F. Holmstroem impresses upon men the necessity of accepting the Gospel invitation "*now*," "*jetzt*," since "the period of grace is followed by the judgment." But when he adds: "Wann und wie es Gott gefaellt, der Gnadenzeit eine Grenze zu setzen, ob waehrend des irdischen Lebens, ob im Augenblicke des Todes oder in einer moeglichen Existenz nach dem Tode, darueber wissen wir nichts" (*Das eschatologische Denken der Gegenwart*, p. 207), the carnal mind feels greatly relieved. Let salvation in Hades be only a *possibility*—the carnal mind is willing to take the risk. And men cannot be expected to take the admonitions and warnings of Scripture seriously if they are told by E. Lewis: "It is frequently supposed that Christianity teaches that every man's eternal destiny is fixed at the moment of his death. But . . . that is not the uniform Christian tradition. When Scripture is quoted in support of the teaching, it is usually some highly metaphorical passages which may have a quite different significance." (See *Christian Beacon*, Aug. 19, 1943.)

We call particular attention to that point of the Hades theology which insists that those hearers of the Gospel are entitled to a second probation to whom the offer of salvation has not been "fully and adequately presented in this life." Thus Luckock, *op. cit.*, p. 198. (See May issue, p. 297.) But, says Luckock, "no human being can tell exactly what constitutes an adequate presentment of the truth to any man; God alone will be the Judge of that" (p. 208). Luckock is right: God will be the Judge of that. But if we know anything about the workings of the carnal mind, we know that



it is going to make itself the judge of that. It is going to insist that it has never had the Gospel adequately presented to itself, and it will claim a second and better probation as its right, and Luckock's words come true: "The theory which has been propounded above" (Hades gospel) "may, through the perversion of Satan, create hopes that are utterly unsafe and foster a spirit of carelessness as to the absolute necessity of seizing present opportunities and turning them to best account." (P. 196.) "Through the perversion of Satan" — through his employment of the Hades gospel! In the same manner W. Ziethe makes his warning of no effect. He warns: "Hueten wir uns um Gottes willen, dass wir seine Gnade nicht auf Mutwillen ziehen zu unserm eigenen Schaden und Verderben! . . . Fuer uns ist keine Predigt nach dem Tode mehr zu erwarten. Fuer uns gilt nur immer wieder das ernste, das bittende Wort: 'Heute, so ihr seine Stimme hoeren werdet, so verstocket eure Herzen nicht.'" But on the same page he says: "We believe that even to this day the Gospel is preached to those spirits in the prison who have not heard it here at all or not in the adequate manner." (*Das Lamm Gottes*, p. 734.) How could Ziethe keep some of his hearers from turning a deaf ear to his warning and saying: We may hope to hear the Gospel in Hades, for here it has not been adequately presented to us? The same applies to the warnings found in *The Gospel of the Hereafter*. "A man who presumes recklessly on chances in the future is taking terrible risks. The Bible gives no encouragement to hope that one who with full knowledge of Christ keeps on willfully rejecting Him all through his life will be able to turn to Him in any other life. . . . Here is no question of encouraging careless, godless men with the hope of a new probation." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 139, 147.) Here we have again the fatal "full knowledge." Men steeped in the Hades theology are ready to plead before the Judge: We have not had a full knowledge of the Gospel and are entitled to another opportunity. But their plea will not be heard.

Dr. Pieper says: "The 'merciful theologians' (misericordes theologi) — Quenstedt gives that name to those who criticize and deny the Scripture of eternal damnation — are in reality the most merciless men. Instead of warning against hell and thus saving men from hell, they actually, as far as they are concerned, plunge mankind into eternal perdition." (*Op. cit.*, III, p. 618.) Apply that to the Hades theologians. They claim that their teaching is based on considerations of mercy and kindness. But their theology is in effect one of cruelty. It lulls men into a false sense of security. It may cause men to be eternally lost.

The Hades gospel has no place in the Christian Church. God would have His ministers preach in this wise: "Heut' lebst du, heut'



bekehre dich; Eh' morgen kommt, kann's aendern sich. So du nun stirbest ohne Buss', Dein Leib und Seel' dort brennen muss." The Church would be in a bad state if its ministers refused to preach that stern message and deluded their hearers with the message of a possible conversion after death."<sup>15)</sup>

The Hades gospel is an evil thing. "This teaching that men may obtain salvation after this life in Hades is not of God but of Satan. Satan invented it in order to get men to put off their repentance—till death overtakes them, and then it is too late. Let us take heed! 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' 'Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!'" (W. Hoenecke, in *Ev.-Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt*, Feb. 13, 1944.)

"It is a damnable heresy to speak of Hades as modern theologians do, where man will have another chance to be converted. Incalculable harm is done by this doctrine. May God keep you from embracing it!" (Walther, in *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, p. 319.)

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15) Louis Harms: "Unsere Kirche von Luther an und mit ihr all' die frommen Vaeter sagen: Jesus hat den Geistern nicht das Evangelium, sondern er hat ihnen das Gericht gepredigt . . . ein frommer Mensch kommt in das Paradies, und ein Gottloser kommt in die Hoelle, und daselbst bleiben sie ewiglich. . . . So ist diese Lehre unangetastet geblieben bis in die neueste Zeit, in welcher ja alles auf den Kopf gestellt wird. Man meint jetzt, dass man sich noch in der Hoelle bekehren koenne. Damit zeigen die Leute an, dass sie abgefallen sind von dem Glauben ihrer Vaeter und ihrer Kirche. Ja sie sagen, Busse tun und bekehren sei hier nicht noetig, dazu sei dort noch Zeit genug. Die lutherische Kirche und unsere lutherischen Vaeter lehren die Wahrheit, denn in der ganzen Bibel wird kein Wort von einer jenseitigen Bekehrung gesagt. Es heisst auch so im Gesang: 'Heut' lebst du, heut' bekehre dich" usw. (*Auslegung der Ersten Epistel St. Petri*, p. 143.).