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## Some Remarks on the Question of the Salvation of the Heathen

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goes back to Scripture, cannot do otherwise than go back to Luther, whose every theological thought was rooted in, and drawn from, Holy Scripture, in particular the Gospel of Christ. This explains his Christian joyousness and his triumphant assurance of salvation; and this too marks the great difference between Luther and Kierkegaard.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

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### Some Remarks on the Question of the Salvation of the Heathen

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"In order to save universal grace before the forum of the human understanding, some have thought that the Gentiles will be saved for Christ's sake, without faith in the Gospel, on account of their moral aspirations (thus, for example, Hofmann). Others 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" (Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, p. 35). Millions of men have died who never in their life heard the Gospel of Christ, their Savior. Shall we say that they are eternally lost? What, then, becomes of the universality of God's grace? This forms, says the *Lange-Schaff Commentary*, "one of the most bewildering subjects in religion" (on 1 Pet. 3:19 f.). "Christians of all times have been concerned over the fate of those who in this life have never heard the name of Christ." Thus Dr. C. M. Jacobs in *The Faith of the Church*, p. 61. Is there no hope for them? Then what becomes of the universality of God's grace in Christ? "The universality of Christ," says Jacobs (p. 59), "has always been a hard fact for men to grasp and hold."

Is there no way to solve this difficulty, no way to harmonize the truth of universal grace with the fact that many die who never heard the Gospel of grace? Human reason suggests various ways. Some have set up the monstrous thesis that such men may be saved through their moral endeavors. It is not surprising that the theology of Rome operates with this thesis. The Christian, too, is saved through his good works, says Rome. It was, therefore, good Romish theology when Andradius, the defender of the Council of Trent, declared that it is not only Scripture but also man's natural knowledge of God which engenders saving faith, and when, before him, Erasmus, the defender of the Pope, declared that Cicero and other virtuous Gentiles "lead a quiet life above" (*Baier-Walther*, II, p. 10). Speaking for Rome, W. E. Orchard declares: "That the heathen can be saved, without ever having heard of Christ at all, is fortunately a doctrine tenaciously held by the

Catholic Church" (*Foundations of Faith*, IV, p. 125). And these heathen are saved by following the light of nature and leading a good and upright life. Cardinal Manning declared: "God is infinite in His mercy to those who have never heard the words or the name of Jesus Christ. . . . The infinite merits of the Redeemer are before the mercy-seat of our heavenly Father for the salvation of those who follow even the little light which in the order of nature they receive" (*The Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, p. 6. See E. H. Plumptre, *The Spirits in Prison*, pp. 420, 183). Father Richard Felix, in the pamphlet "Why?": "If a man belongs to a religion which in truth is false but which he sincerely believes to be true and if he does what he deems to be the will of God, he will probably be saved in spite of the fact that he follows a false religion. Such a one belongs to the soul of the true Church without knowing it." This monstrous dogma has been tenaciously held by the Catholic Church. Its head, Pius IX, declared in his Encyclical of August 10, 1863: "We and you know that those who lie under invincible ignorance as regards our most Holy Religion, and who, diligently observing the natural law and its precepts, which are engraven by God on the hearts of all, and prepared to obey God, *lead a good and upright life* [our italics], are able by the operation of the power of divine light and grace, to obtain eternal life."

Nor is it surprising that the liberal Protestants teach that the heathen can save themselves, with the help of God. The Liberals are blood brothers of the Catholics, of the race of Pelagius. The Unitarians, for instance, hold that "all truth is God's truth, whether of pagan or Christian origin," that "Christian or pagan, theist or atheist, may follow truth to the uttermost bounds and speak the truth as he finds it—and is responsible only to his own conscience," and that the idolatrous devotion of the savage, flowing from a sincere impulse, is a quest after the infinite good—leading to eternal salvation. (See *Popular Symbolics*, pp. 401 ff.) The liberal Protestants are following the lead of Zwingli, who was sure that Socrates, Aristides, Cato, and other "pious and wise heathen" had entered heaven with David, Paul, and Peter. (See Luther, XX:1767, quoting from Zwingli's treatise *Christianae Fidei Expositio, ad Christianum Regem* etc.) "Zwingli recognized the good works of the heathen as done by the grace of God, and therefore acceptable to Him, and attesting the salvation of the worker. He saw in them—Socrates, Brutus, and others—those whom God had predestined to eternal life. 'Nothing,' he says, 'hinders but that God may choose among the heathen those who shall observe His laws and cleave to Him, for His election is free' (Zwingli, *Op. II*, p. 371)." (Plumptre, *op. cit.*, p. 168.) In line with Zwingli

and the Unitarians Swedenborg says: "I have been taught that the heathen who have led a moral life and have lived in obedience and subordination and mutual charity in accordance with their religion are accepted in the other life" (*Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell*, par. 321). Thus also the Quakers and others. (See *Popular Symbolics*.) James D. Smart: "A consideration which has weighed heavily upon men's minds in recent years is the destruction in eternity of those countless millions who have lived and died in ignorance of the Gospel. . . . What about the earnest, thoughtful, God-fearing man of a non-Christian religion, a man who perhaps puts many Christians to shame with his virtues? Are we to say that such men lose the chance of heaven because they do not happen to have had their lifestream directed into Christian channels? . . . Judgment belongs to God, and we can surely trust His mercy and His justice and His wisdom more than we would trust our own. The man who asserts that God cannot say to a Buddhist or a Confucianist, or even for that matter to a professing atheist, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant,' denies to God the freedom which is His. He can save whom He will" (*What a Man Can Believe*, pp. 242 ff.). The *Christian Advocate* wrote some years ago: "Question: What does the Methodist Episcopal Church hold concerning the fate of the heathen who never heard of Christ? Answer: It holds, what it finds in the Scriptures, that the Spirit of God strives with all men; that simplicity and purity of intention are compatible with great ignorance, even of some important moral distinctions; and that those heathen who live in harmony with the light they receive as nearly as Christians are required to live in harmony with the light that they receive, will be saved. All other heathen who are responsible and have resisted the influence of the Spirit and have not lived in harmony with the light they have received, it holds are condemned."

That is the voice of Pelagius. And echoes of his voice are heard even in—the Lutheran Church. Hofmann taught that the heathen may gain eternal life in virtue of their God-pleasing conduct, flowing from their natural knowledge of God (*Schriftbeweis*, I, p. 568 f.). And Milton Valentine declared that "if the heathen lived according to the light afforded them," they are saved (*Christian Theology*, II, p. 405 f. See Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 223).

This Pelagian error appears in a subtle form in the teaching that while the natural goodness of a heathen does not save him, it prepares and fits him for receiving the Gospel preached to him in Hades. W. A. Wexels (Lutheran): "I am inclined to believe that also many heathen, by their earnest seeking after the truth, by their humble striving after righteousness, have in this manner

been prepared to accept, after death, the Gospel of Christ." (See *Theological Quarterly*, 1908, p. 26.) W. Ziethe: "The preaching of Christ in Hades was a preaching of repentance and salvation also for all those who through no fault of their own never heard of Him here on earth. . . . We are here thinking of those many noble souls in heathendom who had served the unknown God according to their light and ability. Now they, too, behold the salvation of our Lord" (*Das Lamm Gottes*, p. 728 f.). Jacobs: "Christians of all times have been concerned over the fate of those who in this life have never heard the name of Christ. Are they to spend eternity in the outer darkness? Are the purest and noblest of those who lived before the time of Jesus to be excluded from the blessing of eternal life? . . . Christ descended into Hades, the place of the departed, that He might be their Savior too. . . . And may we not also reverently hope, as Justin Martyr did, that His Lordship may have brought a blessing to those outside the line of Israel, to the 'other sheep, who are not of this fold' (John X:16), to Socrates and Plato, and all who have lived pure lives and thought high thoughts, and striven for great and distant goals? That is the hope that lingers in my own mind when we confess this universal Christ, who was not only 'crucified, dead, and buried,' but 'descended into hell'" (*op. cit.*, p. 61 f.). J. Pater-son-Smyth: "If the heathen Socrates, and Plato, and Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus would have fallen at His feet as their Master and Friend—and you know they would—do you think they have not learned to know Him by now, through our Lord's mysterious preaching in the Life after Death?" (*The Gospel of the Hereafter*, p. 150 f.). Kliefoth puts it thus: "Among the heathen who have not heard the Gospel there are some who attend to God's revelation in nature and the conscience and thus strive to suppress the sinful promptings of their Adamic nature; they thereby reach such a condition that they would not reject the salvation, if it were offered them, and are ready for repentance and faith. . . . By heeding the truths of natural religion they are led *ad januam ecclesiae*, so that they, thus prepared, might yet receive in Hades the knowledge of salvation. They have not been called through the Gospel in this life, yet their life on earth produced fruit unto life." *Lehre und Wehre* comments: "That is the familiar Pelagianistic conception of sin which we invariably meet in the writings of the modern 'Lutherans'" (1888, p. 67). There is no essential difference between saying with Pelagius that fallen man retains all his powers for good and saying that he retains some powers for good; no essential difference between the teaching that man can with some little help from God achieve his own salvation, and the teaching that the earnest striving and

virtuous aspirations of the heathen will subserve their eternal salvation.

The teaching that heathen are saved, wholly or in part, through their morality has no place in the Christian Church. It is a heathen doctrine; for the essence of all heathen religions is the idea of salvation through works. Scripture repudiates all such ideas. Scripture teaches most emphatically that "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:11,12). The "morality" of the heathen is a fiction. Scripture, again, teaches that there is no salvation except through Jesus and the means of grace. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). And Scripture plainly states that the Gentiles, as long as they remain Gentiles, "have no hope" (Eph. 2:12). The teaching that men are saved or contribute towards their salvation through their good works and noble aspirations is a denial of Christianity; it denies the *sola gratia*.

Luther: "Zwingli has recently declared that Numa Pompilius, Hector, Scipio, and Hercules will enjoy the eternal bliss in Paradise with Peter and Paul and the other saints. He thereby publicly declares that faith and Christianity mean nothing. For if Scipio and Numa Pompilius, who were idolaters, have been saved, what need was there for Christ to suffer and die? Or why should it be necessary that the Christian should be baptized or that Christ be preached and men directed to go to Him? . . . The Enthusiasts know nothing of the Christian faith and teach and believe exactly what has been taught in popedom, viz.: If a man does what lies in his power, he will thereby be saved" (II:1828). Luther again: "Tell me, you who are a Christian, what need is there of Baptism, the Sacrament, Christ, the Gospel, the Prophets, and Holy Scripture if such wicked heathen, Socrates, Aristides . . . Scipio, the Epicurean, are holy and blessed, are with the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and Apostles in heaven, though they knew nothing of God, Scripture, Gospel, Christ, Baptism, Sacrament, or of the Christian faith? Was kann ein solcher Schreiber, Prediger und Lehrer anders glauben von dem christlichen Glauben, denn dass er sei allerlei Glauben gleich, und koenne ein jeglicher in seinem Glauben selig werden, auch ein Abgoettischer und Epicurer, als Numa und Scipio? . . . Zwingli ist in diesem Buechlein gar zum Heiden worden" (XV:1767). Luther again: "I say that the

heathen cannot be saved in any other way than through the Word of Christ" (II:1830). Once more: "All outside Christianity, whether heathen, Turks, Jews . . . know not what His mind towards them is and cannot expect any love or blessing from Him; therefore they abide in eternal wrath and damnation" (The Large Catechism; *Trigl.*, p. 697). And in the famous letter to Hans von Rechenberg, Luther, in answer to the question: "Ob auch die, so ohne Glauben sterben, Gott moege oder werde selig machen?" says among other things: "And now as to our answer: we have strong passages which declare that God will not and cannot save anyone except through faith. He says Mark 16:16: 'Wer nicht glaubt, der wird verloren': *item*, Hebr. 11:6: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God'; *item*, John 3:6: 'He that is not born again of the Spirit and water, cannot see the Kingdom of God'; *item*, John 3:18: 'He that believeth not is condemned already'" (X:2004).<sup>1</sup> "Kein Heide kann auf andere Weise selig werden;

<sup>1</sup> "Zwingli und die Humanisten sprachen Heiden auf Grund ihrer Weisheit und Tugend, ohne Glauben an Christum, die Seligkeit zu. Sogar auch ueber Luther ging das Geruecht, dass er in diesem Stueck Zwinglis Lehre billige" (Pieper in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1921, p. 354). Luther protested against these insinuations in the words quoted above, II:1828. He shows, on p. 1829, that the rumor is based on a misrepresentation of the statement of his that some of the descendants of Cain were saved. "Yes, surely I said that; but they were saved not as Cainites, but on being incorporated in the congregation of the saints. . . . Zwingli's doctrine, imputed to me, is a most dangerous error, which I can in no way praise or defend." The rumor that Luther was a Zwinglian on this point is still rife. We read in Walter Holsten, *Christentum und nicht-christliche Religion nach der Auffassung Luthers*, p. 98 (1932): "Ganz ueberraschend aber kommt es uns vor, wenn Luther dann wiederholt der Hoffnung Ausdruck gibt, Gott werde dem Cicero angesichts so grosser Verdienste auch ohne die Vermittlung des geordneten Amtes der Suendenvergebung durch Glauben auf ausserordentlichem Wege die Seligkeit schenken." Did Luther ever express such a hope? Well, we read in *Tischreden*, XXII:1563: "Danach erwachte er (Luther) den Cicero, den besten, weisesten und fleissigsten Mann, wie viel er gelitten und getan habe. Ich hoffe, sprach er, unser Herrgott wird ihm und seinesgleichen auch gnaedig sein, obgleich es uns nicht zukommt, das zu sagen und zu bestimmen, sondern [wir] sollen bei dem Geoffenbarten bleiben: 'Wer da glaubt und getauft wird' u. s. w. (Marc. 16:16.) Dass aber Gott nicht bei anderen nachlassen koenne und einen Unterschied machen unter andern Voelkern, davon gebuehrt uns hier nicht Zeit und Weise zu wissen." When somebody attempted to substantiate the rumor that Luther had adopted Zwingli's view and quoted the above passage, Walther reminded him of what Gerhard told Paraeus and other Reformed theologians who had quoted the *Tischreden* passage for the same purpose. "I answer: What Luther thought about this view of Zwingli, all men know. In his treatise *Kurzes Bekenntnis* he declares that Zwingli's opinion is a heathen opinion—'Zwingli ist in diesem Buechlein gar zum Heiden worden'" (Luther XX:1767). Gerhard also quotes the passage II:1828 and concludes with the statement: "These words of Luther constitute a sharp reply to Paraeus, Pelargus, and the Berlin Collocutors, who make the ridiculous statement that Luther shared Zwingli's view. But everybody knows that Luther never saw

denn wer den Sohn nicht hat, der hat auch den Vater nicht. Wuerden die Heiden ohne das Evangelium selig werden koennen, wozu wollte man dann noch Mission treiben? Wenn es wahr ist, dass die Heiden auch ohne Christum selig werden, wozu ist Christus alsdann in die Welt gekommen? Wer da meint, dass auch die Heiden wuerden selig werden, wenn sie nur ein frommes Leben fuehren, ohne an Christum zu glauben, der glaubt selbst nicht von Herzen an Christum" (*Proceedings Northern District*, 1876, p. 29). It follows, says Dr. Pieper, that "no Christian teacher dare arouse hopes of a conversion after death, *much less* teach that heathen are saved on the basis of the *justitia naturalis et civilis*" (Chr. Dogm. III, p. 624. See also I, p. 450, II, p. 477).<sup>2</sup>

nor endorsed the *Tischreden*." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1873, pp. 115 ff.) — Walther calls attention to the following statement of Luther: "The scholastics taught that if a man does what lies in his power God certainly bestows His grace on him. Now Cicero did what lay in his power; however, he did not obtain God's grace; in applying his own power he sank into still greater darkness and even doubted that there is a God" (I:815). (See also IV:1951.) In 1884 Dr. Stoeckhardt gave a similar answer to another rumor-monger: "Im Uebrigen darf man nicht vergessen, dass die *Tischreden* Luthers Apokryphen sind. Verbuergt dagegen ist Luthers Urtheil ueber Zwingli, welcher Hercules, Socrates, Cato, Scipio und andere Heiden neben Propheten und Apostel in den Himmel versetzte, dass Zwingli eben damit selbst zum Heiden geworden und vom christlichen Glauben abgefallen sei (XX:1767)." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1884, p. 23.)

<sup>2</sup> We submit a few additional statements. R. Pieper: "Wenn daher neuere Theologen, aehnlich wie einst Zwingli, behaupten, dass auch ausser Christo und seiner Kirche Heil sei, wenn z. B. Heubner schreibt: 'Den engen Partikularismus, als wenn es ausser dem Christentum keine Besserung und also auch keine Seligkeit statuieren, darf man also dem Christentum nicht andichten' (*Topik*, S. 281), so ist das ein wissenschaftliches Fuendlein, welches sie dem Christentum andichten. Das Christentum der Schrift ist durchaus exclusiv, es kennt nur eine Seligkeit in Christo, und nur eine Verdammnis ohne Christum, denn Apostg. 4:12 heisst es: 'Es ist in keinem andern Heil etc.'" (*Der Kleine Katechismus Luthers erkluert*, II, p. 98.) *Harless' Commentary*, on Eph. 2:12: "Die Willkuehr, mit der man gleich einem Abaelard, Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger, u. a. Ausnahmen einzelner statuirt, wonach solche nicht etwa relative weniger an jenem allgemeinen Unheil heidnischer Gottentfremdung krankten, sondern specifisch verschieden von dem Wesen heidnischer Entwicklung waren, *quos*, wie sich Bucer ausdrueckt, *Deus Christi sui fide et expectatione per spiritum suum donavit, gehoert zu den Traeumen*, die man nicht zu widerlegen braucht, so lange der Beweis dafuer nicht auf *historischem* Wege hergestellt worden ist." Lenski, on Rom. 1:20: "Some insert a reduced condition: 'in order that, if men fail to use what they see, they may be without defense.' The object in this reduction is to make the *revelatio divina naturalis*, the natural *cognitio Dei*, a means of grace, the right use of which would save those who make this use. The idea is widely held — salvation by faith in God and a moral life, without Christ and His atonement for sin. Heaven is opened to noble pagans. This is fiction, and Paul is guilty of no condition in this clause." C. Hodge: "All men being sinners, justly charged with inexcusable impiety and immorality, they cannot be saved by any effort or resource of their own. 1 Cor. 6:9. Eph. 5:5. Heb. 12:14.



Christians of all times have been concerned over the fate of those who never heard the name of Christ. But the theory proposed by Zwingli and other rationalists—that God, who would have all men to be saved, saves these men through their good works—does not solve or ease the difficulty. The Christian consciousness cannot accept this solution. It refuses to save the universality of grace by sacrificing the *sola gratia*, the grace of God in Christ.

Then there are those who reject Zwingli's expedient, who abhor the doctrine of salvation through works and declare with Luther that the heathen cannot be saved in any other way than through the Word of Christ, that God will not save anyone except through faith,<sup>3</sup> but who, in order to harmonize universal grace with the fact that many die without having heard the Gospel, choose to teach that to such the saving Gospel is preached in Hades.

We have treated this matter in the three preceding articles on the Hades gospel. We have examined the teaching that there are two classes of men who are entitled to a second probation—(1) those who “died without a Gospel” and (2) those “to whom the offer of salvation has not been fully and adequately presented in this life.” (See May issue, pp. 295 ff.) The case of the men of this second class presents no great difficulty. They did hear the

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John 3:3. 1 John 4:8. . . . The Wesleyan Arminians and the Friends, admitting the insufficiency of the light of nature, held that God gives sufficient grace or an inward supernatural light, which, if properly cherished and followed, will lead men to salvation. But this is merely an amiable hypothesis” (*Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 29, 31). And in his *Commentary on Romans* Hodge says: “Though the revelation of God in His works is sufficient to render men inexcusable, it does not follow that it is sufficient to lead men, blinded by sin, to a saving knowledge of Himself” (on Rom. 1:20). Stoeckhardt: “Es ist grundverkehrt, wenn neuere Theologen die *revelatio divina naturalis* und die *notitia Dei naturalis* als eine Art Gnadenmittel darstellen, welches wenigstens etliche Menschen zu Gott oder Gott naeher bringe. Das widerspricht dem hier vom Apostel angegebenen Zweck der natuerlichen Gottesoffenbarung” (on Rom. 1:20).

<sup>3</sup> H. M. Luckock, for instance, says: “However much the feeling of charity may dispose us to accept the plausible and attractive principle that God will judge the heathen according to his conscientious fulfillment of his own laws, whatever their nature, there are insurmountable objections to it. It is distinctly condemned moreover by our Confessions of Faith. The 18th of the Thirty-nine Articles teaches decisively that obedience to the natural conscience cannot possibly entitle a man to salvation, yea, it rejects the idea so strongly as to affix an anathema upon those who venture to suggest it. They also are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law and the light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved” (*The Intermediate State*, p. 176).

Gospel before their death.<sup>4</sup> But the case of those who never heard and never had an opportunity to hear the Gospel presents a serious difficulty. For that reason some additional remarks seem to be in place.

The Hades theologians solve the difficulty by having God preach the Gospel to the heathen in Hades. Luckock: "The general statement that man will be judged according to what he has done in the flesh must admit of exceptions; unless at least we would impugn the justice of God. The heathen may fairly be considered as legitimately exempted from the rule. . . . It is not a little remarkable how little is said about the heathen in the Bible. We conclude therefore that there will be some other sphere of probation for the heathen than that in the body in this present world. . . . We shall find, we believe, the only solution to these perplexing difficulties through the vast possibilities of the Intermediate State" (*op. cit.*, p. 182 f.). S. Baring-Gould: "God is just, and would it be just that hundreds of millions should be lost because they never had the chance?" (*The Restitution of All Things*, p. 40.) Rudelbach: "We dare not simply reject as groundless the prophetic hope that in an extraordinary way God's grace will be brought to those who in this life did not hear the Word of Life. Were not the dead evangelized at Christ's descent to Hades? . . . The light of the divine mercy and the light of truth go together." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1859, p. 43.) Martensen: "The Lord's descent into the kingdom of the dead expresses the idea of the universal and cosmic efficacy of Christ's work . . . the idea of the efficacy of the work of atonement for all who had died without the knowledge of salvation. . . . Conversion must still be possible for the unconverted in Hades" (*Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 316, 463). J. A. W. Haas in *The Lutheran* of April 27, 1933: "What is the meaning and value of this truth—'He descended into hell'—for Christians of all times? . . . In it, I hold, there is a guarantee that Jesus is concerned for those who have had no opportunity to hear about Him in this life. Men have often asked the question: What would be the destiny of those who have lived before the time of Jesus? In the same manner, even today, the query is put whether those people to whom the Gospel has not been brought shall be held responsible. Christendom which fails to

<sup>4</sup>This also applies to those who had the opportunity to hear the Gospel but neglected it. A correspondent writes: "If a man lives within a stone's throw of a Christian church and never considers it worth while to go and hear the Word of God, if a man lives for eighty or ninety years in a Christian land where he sees the work of the Church going on, where he experiences good and evil days, fortune and misfortune, and then dies in his sins and is eternally lost, would he have the right to accuse God of injustice?"

herald Christ, and to go into all the world, is responsible for not declaring the message to every creature. But the just God cannot and will not condemn those who have not heard about Jesus and His salvation. For them there will be some final opportunity to hear Christ and to see Him. They will be given a chance and an opportunity in the hereafter." O. Hallesby: "God does not permit a sinner to enter into eternal torment without first having met God face to face" (*Religious or Christian*, p.161).—See the three preceding articles for additional statements.<sup>5</sup>

Now, what does Scripture say concerning those who die without faith, die in their sins? We have noted the statement that "it is not a little remarkable how little is said about the heathen in the Bible." We shall have to point out how much is said in the Bible about them, how emphatically the Bible pronounces the eternal doom against the unrepentant sinner. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. . . . Neither fornicators . . . nor thieves, nor covetous shall inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9f. Eph. 5:6). "More than this," as Hodge points out, "the Bible teaches us that a man may be outwardly righteous in the sight of men and yet be a whitened sepulcher, his heart being the seat of pride, envy, or malice. . . . And more even than this, although a man were free from outward sin and, were it possible, from the sins of the heart, this negative goodness would not suffice. Without holiness 'no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. 12:14" (*op. cit.*, p. 29). Then, there is Rom. 2:6-16: "As many as have sinned without Law shall also perish without Law." "God will judge Jews and Gentiles, all men, on the basis of the Law. The Gentiles too. For though the Gentiles do not have the revealed and written Law, the Law is written in their hearts; that is proved by the witness of the conscience. . . . Those that sin and do evil will be condemned and consigned to eternal wrath and destruction" (Stoek-

<sup>5</sup> A similar expedient is employed when others say that the visible appearance of Christ for the final judgment will bring the last offer of salvation. Kaehler: "Christi Selbstdarstellung in der Parusie wird sie (die den Anteil an dem Versoehnungswerke Christi nicht aus sittlichen Gruenden versaeumt haben) erreichen und den 'ausgefallenen Anteil an der Geschichte ersetzen,' so dass die oben geforderte Beziehung wenigstens fuer jeden einmal hergestellt wird," meaning: At least once a chance to see Christ will be given to every man; men who did not have this opportunity in life will get it on the day of Judgment. (See W. Oelsner, *Die Entwicklung der Eschatologie*, p. 89.) J. C. Blumhardt: "There is no Scripture passage that men will obtain the forgiveness of sins after death if they did not have it before then, but we have Scriptural ground for holding that men may still obtain it on the Last Day" (*Biblische Erfahrung*, p. 58). *The Gospel of the Hereafter*, p. 163e: "We are bound to believe that in the Final Judgment no man will be lost till the Father has, as it were, put His arms around him and looked him in the eyes with His unutterable love and been finally rejected."

hardt, *Commentary on Romans*, p.101). Knowing nothing of Christ and left to bear the consequences of their sins, "they abide in eternal wrath and damnation" (*The Large Catechism, Trigl.*, page 697).

Scripture says further that God does not deal unjustly with the heathen in condemning them for their wickedness. When men declare that the heathen will escape damnation because of their ignorance of God and of His will, Scripture answers that the heathen are not ignorant of God and His holy Law. See Rom. 1:18 ff. "So that they are without excuse!" Stoeckhardt: "Men possess the truth . . . but they suppress it. Their wickedness and unrighteousness is not due to ignorance, but it is inexcusable wickedness; they sin against their own better knowledge and have only themselves to blame when the wrath of God strikes them. . . . On the day of Judgment they cannot plead that they did not know better" (*op. cit.*, pp. 51, 54). Hodge: "Paul does not teach here (Rom. 1:20) that it is the design of God, in revealing Himself to men, to render their opposition inexcusable, but rather, since this revelation is made, they have in fact no apology for their ignorance and neglect of God" (*Commentary on Romans*, 1:20).

Moreover, when men insist that the heathen were given no chance, Scripture tells them that God has revealed Himself to the heathen through nature, the innate knowledge of God, and His providence, in order that they might seek and find Him, and since the heathen refuse to follow these promptings, they are without excuse (Acts 17:27)! Romans 2:4: "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." God puts forth serious efforts to prepare the heathen for the preaching of the Gospel and for true repentance — and they resist these efforts! *Kretzmann's Commentary on Acts 17:27*: "The purpose of God in thus manifesting His almighty power and providence is that men should seek the Lord. . . . It may be a groping as that of a blind man, and with all effort it would result in only partial recognition of the essence of God, but it would lead onward, and should then be supplemented by the knowledge of revelation." Lenski: "It is not God's will to remain unknown, He wants men to seek and find Him and to enter into communion with Him. All God's dealings with men show that this is His great purpose; God's creation of man and His providence place this beyond doubt" (on Acts 17:27). "So that they are without excuse.' Men who suppress the manifest truth which God makes them see so clearly and fully, are without excuse. . . . No man is able to offer the excuse that he could not see, that it is God's fault and not his own that God is hidden from him" (on Romans 1:20). *Ev.-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Febr. 13, 1944: "No man can be found throughout the wide earth

to whom God has not revealed Himself through His works, Rom. 1:19, 20, and through His Law, written in the heart of every man. All, without exception, hear God's voice. He has their salvation in mind. He would have them seek Him. . . . Whoever has died without faith has failed to receive this salvation because he despised the prevenient call of God, in His works and in His Law, and hardened himself against it." The heathen *do* have a chance, and, neglecting it, they are inexcusable.

But does not Scripture say, Luke 12:48: "But he that knew not and did not commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes"? Does that not prove that the heathen will receive another opportunity in Hades? The Hades theologians so apply this passage.<sup>6</sup> The text says nothing of the kind. It preaches the solemn truth that those who knew the Lord's will and had the Gospel light will receive more punishment in *hell* than those who knew less of God's will than they. But it also preaches the solemn truth that the men who, whatever the measure of their ignorance, did evil and died in their sins will suffer eternal damnation. Stoeckhardt: "Indessen tut die Schrift uns auch dies kund und zu wissen, dass der Zorn Gottes dereinst ueber alles gottlose Wesen und alle Ungerechtigkeit der Menschen offenbart werden wird, Roem. 1:18; dass jeder Knecht, welcher Uebel tut, Striche leiden wird, freilich aber der Knecht, der seines Herrn Willen nicht gewusst und nicht getan hat, weniger Streiche leiden wird als der Knecht, der seines Herrn Willen gewusst und doch nicht getan hat, Luk. 12:47 f." (On 1 Peter 3:13, 22; p. 177. See also Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 27.) *The Pulpit Commentary* on Matt. 25: 31-46, p. 498: "The hard and selfish are those who receive the punishment. They will not escape it because of their *ignorance* or their refusal to recognize Christ. It will be unbearably awful."

Finally, where does Scripture state that since the grace of God is universal and the heathen did not hear the Gospel in this life, God will have it preached to them in Hades? Nowhere does Scripture state that. "The just God cannot and will not damn those who have not heard about Jesus. . . . They will be given a chance and an opportunity in the hereafter." Scripture does not say that. "God does not permit a sinner to enter into eternal torment without first having met God face to face." Scripture does not say that. "It is a sweet and comforting thought: Salvation comes in some way to every man, in life or in death" (*The Pulpit Commentary*, on 1 Peter 4:6, p. 178). Scripture does not say that. It does not say it in 1 Peter 3:19, 1 Peter 4:6, 1 John 3:8, Gen. 3:15, Matt. 5:26, Matt. 12:31 f., Matt. 11:20-24, John 12:2, Luke 16:25 ff.,

<sup>6</sup> See for instance, Plumptre, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 60, 163.

2 Peter 3:9 (see June issue, pp. 374 ff.) nor in Luke 12:48 (see above). What Scripture does say is: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16:16.<sup>7</sup> "Scripture declares that he that believeth not is condemned already; *item* everyone will receive according as he had believed and lived" (Luther, IX:1245). Scripture declares further that the day of salvation ends with this life and is not extended into Hades, Heb. 7:27, 2 Cor. 5:10, 2 Cor. 6:2. And so Scripture concludes: "The Gentiles have no hope," Eph. 2:12. What the text directly states is that as long as men live without the Gospel and without faith, they have no hope of salvation. But we certainly may add the thought that if St. Paul had been a Hades theologian, he could not have made such a strong statement. He should have added: Their condition is not absolutely hopeless; the Hades gospel casts a ray of hope over their miserable condition.

Scripture nowhere indicates that those who did not hear the Gospel on earth will hear it beyond the grave. Axel B. Svensson: "But of a mission to the dead or conversion after death Scripture says nothing. There is not a single text that teaches such a doctrine, provided the words are allowed to stand as they stand. If we are to read out of the Bible a doctrine of an opportunity for grace after death, we shall, on the one hand, have to twist and turn a number of texts, forcing them to yield a meaning that we have desired beforehand, and, on the other hand, we shall have to look away from many passages which clearly teach us that 'in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.' This may prove

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<sup>7</sup> The Hades theologians use this text to prove that one who has not heard the Gospel in this life must be given the opportunity to hear it after this life. Dorner: "It is not said that he that hears not shall be damned, but 'he that believes not,' Mark 16:16. Jesus seeks the lost; the lost are to be sought also in the kingdom of the dead. The opposite view leads to an absolute decree of rejection for all who have lived and died as heathen, whereas Christian grace is universal" (quoted in Plumtre, *op. cit.*, p. 253). Luckcock: "No little misunderstanding has arisen from the erroneous translation of Mark 16:16. Our Lord did not say as the Authorized Version implies, 'he that believeth not shall be damned,' but, as it has been corrected in the Revised Version, 'he that disbelieveth shall be condemned,' which is something widely different" (*op. cit.*, p. 190). Th. Traub: "Scripture does not say that he who is ignorant of the Gospel will be judged but only he who rejects Christ and His word. . . . 'No one will be judged before Christianity has been made accessible and brought home to him' (Dorner)" (*Von den Letzten Dingen*, p. 92). Accept the translation "disbelieve" and what do you get? This, that one who hears the Gospel and rejects it will certainly be damned. But you cannot make that statement mean that one who never heard the Gospel here will hear it in Hades. "Nothing is said here of those who never hear the Gospel and thus never get to believe or disbelieve" (Lenski, on Mark 16:16). That case is treated in other passages of Scripture.

shocking, but—it is so.” (Quoted in *Theological Monthly*, 1925, page 199.)

Pieper: “In order to save universal grace before the forum of human understanding, some have assumed that after this life an opportunity to hear the Gospel and to believe will be offered. But *these are human speculations, without any basis in Scripture.*”

And this speculation is not an innocent matter. This fiction is based on wicked considerations. “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.’ 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. Carnal reason assumes the right to sit in judgment on God.” (See further September issue, pp. 605 ff.) And shall the Christian preacher, called to preach the Word of God, utter the sentiments of carnal reason? <sup>8</sup>

The Christian teacher must not arouse hopes of a conversion after death. He dare not proclaim it as a *fact*. Dare he speak of it as a *possibility*? Here Luther uses very cautious language. The question was put to him by Hans von Rechenberg: “ob auch die, so ohne Glauben sterben, Gott moege oder werde selig machen? Whether God may (can) or will save those who die without faith?” Luther first warns against giving way to reason and upbraiding God for damning so many. He then points out “that God will not and cannot save anyone except through faith” (see above), and then he says: “Das waere wohl eine andere Frage: Ob Gott etlichen im Sterben oder nach dem Sterben den Glauben koennte geben und also durch den Glauben koennte selig machen? Wer wollte daran zweifeln, dass er das tun koennte? Aber dass er’s tue, kann man nicht beweisen.” “That would be a question of a different nature whether God could give faith to some in death or after death and thus save them through faith? Who would doubt that God could do that? But that He does it cannot be proved” (X:2005). To be sure, God can preach the Gospel to those who did not hear it on earth. But Scripture nowhere in-

<sup>8</sup> We had Pieper’s statement to that effect above. The full statement reads: “Scripture designates as inheritors of the eternal bliss those, and only those, who believe in Christ in this life. The description of God’s love which embraces the whole world, John 3:16, is followed by the purpose clause: ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ But this refers to faith in *this life*. That is clear from v. 18: ‘He that believeth not is condemned already.’ Beyond that there is no revelation given in Scripture, and *no Christian teacher dare arouse hopes of a conversion after death*” (*op. cit.*, III, p. 623 f.).

dicates that He will or might do it. And if a person is going to preach it as a possibility, he will have to add that he is speaking without Scripture authority.—Those of us who do not believe in Hades as an Intermediate State but believe that the unbeliever is consigned to hell at his death, would have to teach that it is possible for God to revoke His final judgment.<sup>9</sup>

“Christians of all times have been concerned over the fate of those who in this life have never heard the name of Christ.” And things being as they are, our greatest concern is to proclaim the name of Christ to as many of them as we can reach. (See Luther, IX:1086.) We are not to concern ourselves with the question why “God gives His Word at one place and not at another” (*Trigl.*, p.1081). We do not know that. But we do know that God would have all men to be saved; we know, furthermore, that He has, for that purpose, given the Church the commission “to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15); and we know that God will hold us responsible for the perdition of those who did not hear the Gospel through our fault and negligence. Answering the question: “Will a heathen that has never been told, nor heard of Jesus be lost for eternity?” Prof. J. P. Milton says in *The Lutheran Companion* of May 14, 1932, and of March 7, 1931: “To this question I must say, I do not know. I can only surmise and guess,” and then adds: “Our duty is plain: to preach the Gospel to every creature. If the burden of souls

<sup>9</sup> F. Mellows wrote recently: “‘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.’” (See September issue, p. 598.) Before him F. W. Farrar had written: “Even Luther, like almost every great and true-hearted teacher on this subject, while constantly maintaining the doctrine of endless torment in nearly its present form, yet slides unconsciously into more hopeful expressions; ‘God forbid,’ he says, ‘that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life! In the depths of the divine mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future state.’” Letter to Hans von Rechenberg, 1522. (Alger, *Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 421.)” (*Eternal Hope*, p. 219.—Our italics.) Alger, Farrar’s authority, quotes from the letter from which we quoted the words: “Das waere wohl eine andere Frage, etc.” And these are the only words in the letter as it appears in the St. Louis Edition which have any bearing on the matter under discussion. It does not contain the words quoted by Farrar and Alger. The Erlangen Edition has the same wording as the St. Louis—Walch Edition. The Weimar Edition, too, has the very same words—does not contain the Alger-Farrar version. The Weimar Edition (Vol. X, 2, pp. 322 ff.) lists the variant readings in the different printings of the letter—all unimportant—but knows nothing of the Alger variant. And before we discuss the matter further, we would want to see the words quoted by Alger in their context, insisting, of course, on the force of Luther’s statement as given in the Erlangen, St. Louis, and Weimar Editions: “But that He does it cannot be proved.”—By the way, Luther maintains the doctrine of endless torment in the strongest terms in this very writing.



that have not heard about Jesus lies heavy on our heart, let it constrain us to do more that they might hear. I do not know more than this, that God 'would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,' 1 Tim. 2:4. . . . We have our marching orders. We know that Jesus saves. We know also that Jesus wants us to let all men know about His salvation; we know what peace and joy salvation brings in this life: For this we are responsible. . . ." Let us not take the matter lightly. It must deeply concern us. As Walther says in his great mission sermon, "Die Heidenmission, eine Christenschuld": "Though we cannot find fault with God for this, that so many millions have died and are dying today who never heard about their Savior . . . though the heathen are lost because of their sins: yet these heathen, deprived through the fault of the Christians of God's Word and left in utter cheerlessness, in utter hopelessness, appear before God as the accusers of the Christians, and the day is coming when God will require the blood of all these neglected souls at the hand of the Christians" (*Lutherische Brosamen*, p. 41; *Evangelien-Postille*, p. 54).<sup>10</sup> "Someone asked whether heathen could be saved without Christ's Gospel. A Christian answered: 'I am even more concerned about the other question, whether I can be saved if I disregard my Savior's will and make no effort to save others'" (*CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1944, p. 406). Apply that to the present case. Knowing that there is no hope for those who die without the Gospel, without faith, the thing that bothers us and gives us deep concern is the fact that we are derelict in our mission duty.

Do those men who hope that the Gospel will be preached to the heathen in Hades consider missionary work among the heathen unnecessary? Not necessarily. They are not asking the Church to disband the mission societies. They do not ignore Mark 16:15, but see in it an imperative obligation laid upon the Church. Luckock: "We believe, then, that for those who have had no fitting opportunity of knowing God's will here on earth,

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<sup>10</sup> We quote further from this sermon: "Es ist nun zwar freilich wahr, dass trotz aller dieser Anstalten Gottes, auch allen Heiden sein seligmachendes Wort zu schenken, dennoch ungezaehlte Millionen Menschen durch die Schuld ihrer Voreltern des Wortes Gottes beraubt und in die Nacht heidnischer Unwissenheit und Unglaubens zurueckgesunken sind. . . . Gott wird einst aus den Haenden der Christen das Blut aller dieser von ihnen verwahrlosten Seelen fordern. . . . Wie? Koennen also Christen sagen, dass sie die Brueder lieben, wenn sie ruhig zusehen koennen, dass Millionen ihrer Brueder und Schwestern ohne Gott, ohne Licht, ohne Gnade, ohne Trost in Leiden, ohne Hoffnung im Tode, in Sunden, in Blindheit, in Gottes Zorn und Ungnade und in unaussprechlicher aeuusserer und innerer Not dahingehen, endlich in Verzweiflung dahinfahren, das Licht nimmermehr sehen und so nach Leib und Seele immer und ewig verloren gehen? Nimmermehr! . . ."

the truth will be revealed in the Intermediate State. . . . Such a suggestion will at once start some serious objections. If this be so, is it not better to leave the heathen as ignorant as they are, and trust to their being reclaimed hereafter? If we had no revelation of God's will concerning them, we could draw no other conclusion; but there is an imperative obligation laid upon the Church on earth to 'preach the Gospel to every creature,' and to dare to withhold it on these or any other imaginable grounds of man's conception would be an act of culpable neglect. What God has bidden must be best, though with our finite faculties we cannot see it" (*op. cit.*, p. 192).<sup>11</sup> The Hades theologians *do* inculcate the mission duty, and as a result many heathen are saved from eternal damnation. They operate with the command of Jesus, and that command is certainly a strong incentive to mission work and must be stressed to the utmost. But there is another incentive: the absolute need of the heathen to hear the Gospel in this life, and since the Hades theologians ignore this need, they lessen, as far as they are concerned, the force which Scripture puts behind the missionary command.<sup>12</sup> The zeal roused by the command to preach the Gospel to the heathen is inevitably weakened by the conviction that God will take care of the heathen in other ways. Walther would certainly have weakened his powerful appeal if he had somewhere inserted the thought that the case of the heathen is not utterly hopeless. And if any of his hearers really believed the Hades gospel, they would have said: The preacher has no right to speak of utter hopelessness. We do not think that Pastor Harms went too far when, discussing the assertion that those who did not hear the Gospel on earth must be given an opportunity to hear it in Hades, he wrote in his *Hermannsburgger Missionsblatt*:

<sup>11</sup> Similar statements: "What will happen to those in heathen lands who never hear the Gospel of Christ? Will they be saved, since they are not to blame for their ignorance? Answer: There are many dogmatic assertions covering this field. In Paul's Letter to the Romans, the first chapter, the Apostle makes plain, I think, that heathens, so called, will be judged by the light that they possess. Absolutely they will not be charged with the rejection of a Savior whom they have never heard. *But I also know that we who have known Him must make Him known even unto the ends of the earth*" (*Christian Herald*, August, 1940. Our italics). See also the statement of J. A. W. Haas, quoted above: "Christendom which fails to herald Christ and to go into all the world is held responsible for not declaring the message to every creature." Note the context.

<sup>12</sup> Professor Milton, as quoted above, says: "We know what peace and joy that salvation brings in this life" (our italics). We would have added: We know that unless the heathen hear the Gospel in this life, they will not be saved. Does Professor Milton mean to say: "Though the heathen can be saved in Hades, we still ought to bring them the Gospel now, because they would thereby be spared the joylessness that marks the earthly life of the unconverted"?

"This article is most harmful to the cause of missions, for people will be right in saying that, if there is still a chance for the heathen to be converted after death, or, as the article states, that 'in Hades the preaching of the Lord will have *greater success*,' the mission among the heathen is a matter of no great importance." (See *Lutheraner*, 1882, p. 109.) — The Hades gospel, invented for the purpose of saving universal grace, tends to thwart the will of God to save all men, as exhibited in the universality of the mission command.

How, then, we finally ask, shall we harmonize the universality of grace with the fact that so many never hear the Gospel and are lost? We cannot accept the solution of the difficulty offered by the Hades gospel. That is an unscriptural solution. There is only one way out of the difficulty. Scripture asks us to *believe* in the universality of grace in spite of the objections of the rationalizing flesh.

Pieper: "Universal grace is and remains an article of *faith*. And the fact that not all nations on earth and not all individuals in any one nation have had the Gospel should not move us to doubt the *gratia universalis et seria*, which Scripture so clearly teaches. The judgments of God by which He punishes the despisal of the Gospel also in the *descendants* are, as the Formula of Concord points out, *unsearchable*, Rom. 11:33 f.: 'How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.' In order to save universal grace before the forum of human understanding some . . . have assumed that after this life an opportunity to hear the Gospel and to believe will be offered. But these are human speculations, without any basis in Scripture. Accordingly, if we want to stand on Scripture, there is but one thing to do: we must *believe*, because Scripture clearly teaches it, the universality of saving grace. The facts of history *seem* to be in conflict with this. But it does not behoove us to interpret the clear Scriptures according to our dim understanding of the ways of God in history. In the eternal life, when our understanding of God and divine things will no longer be fragmentary (*ἐκ μέρους*, 1 Cor. 13:12), this dark matter, too, will become clear to us" (*op. cit.*, II, p. 37).

Faith does not hesitate to recognize that there are judgments of God which are unsearchable, and it refuses to judge God. It is one of the rudiments of Christian theology that certain difficulties must be left unsolved. The Hades theologians themselves confess that faith must accept the judgments of God which it cannot understand. We heard Luckock's statement concerning the limits of "our finite comprehension" and the need of "exercising implicit faith." (See September issue, p. 607.) Faith must learn, and likes to study, the lesson in Christian theology which the Formula of

Concord thus presents: "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 how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment [for He commands us to consider in those who perish the just judgment of God and the penalties of sins]. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity. . . ." But is not the grace of God universal? "We cannot harmonize it, which, moreover, we have not been commanded to do" (*Trig.*, p. 1081). The Apology of the Book of Concord expounds the lesson further thus: "And, as we have heard Luther say above, we do not want to inquire curiously about our dear Lord in so far as He is hidden and has not revealed Himself. For it is and remains too high for us, and we cannot comprehend it; the more we pry into it, the farther we get away from our dear God and the more will we doubt concerning His gracious will toward us. So also the Book of Concord does not deny that God does not work alike in all men; for at all times there have been many whom He had not called through the public ministry. . . . For it is sufficient that, when this depth of the mysteries of God confronts us, we say with the Apostle (Rom. 11): 'Unsearchable are His judgments.' . . . Was darueber ist, wird uns unser Seligmacher Christus im ewigen Leben selbst offenbaren." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 587.)

It is indeed a lesson that is not easy to learn. "The universality of Christ has always been a hard fact for men to grasp and hold." Reason insists on harmonizing the universality of grace with the facts of history and, as Luther puts it in his letter to Hans von Rechenberg, "rebels at being kept in ignorance." It becomes the business of faith to pluck out the eyes of nature, "Da muss der Natur Auge ganz ausgerissen sein und lauter Glaube da sein." It is easy to solve the difficulty by way of the Hades gospel; that satisfies our reason. But we must go the hard way and pluck out the eyes of reason. May the dear Lord strengthen our faith. "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" (Luther, X:2003).

It is a precious, salutary lesson. Learning it, we are kept from committing a great evil: "Da muss der Natur Auge ganz ausgerissen sein und lauter Glaube da sein; es geht sonst ohne greuliche, gefaehrliche Aergernisse nicht ab." Carnal reason inspires men to say that God must preach the Gospel to the heathen in Hades else He would be "partial, unjust, unrighteous," forgetful of the obligation He "owes" men. The Hades theology in effect

condemns God as not conforming to man's sense of equity. (See September issue, pp. 605 ff.) How shall we escape these "horrible, perilous offenses"? Let faith rule, the faith which abstains from investigating and harmonizing and leaves the matter to God.

And we will desist from these curious, evil investigations the more readily as God has assured us that He will solve the difficulty for us in His own good time (1 Cor. 13:12)! "Was darueber ist, wird uns unser Seligmacher Christus im ewigen Leben selbst offenbaren." We read in the *Proceedings of the Eastern District, 1876*, p. 30: "Why so many do not hear the Gospel and as a result thereof do not believe, is a great, unfathomable mystery. Let the world heap scorn upon us Christians on that account and blaspheme God. The day is coming when all shall see that God, in spite of the perdition of so many souls, still is the eternal love." (See also *Proceedings Northern District, 1876*, p. 29.) Faith can afford to wait. And it is of the nature of faith to wait for the Lord.

Our present discussion may be summed up in the words with which Dr. Stoeckhardt concludes his study of 1 Peter 3:19f.: "Everything now depends on what the sinners do here on earth about Christ. That determines their eternal fate. Here one might ask: But how about those who have heard nothing of Christ? And why is it that all did not hear? Why has God not given His Word at all times at all places? These questions touch upon a domain which is utterly closed and hidden to us. Here begin the mysteries of God, into which we cannot and should not search. Scripture confines our thinking to the state of affairs produced by the Gospel, the offer of salvation through Christ. Our sole business is to carry out Christ's command and preach the Gospel to every creature, to testify to all that without Christ there is no salvation, that he that believes on Christ is saved, but he that believeth not will be damned." The question is not: Has God done His duty toward the heathen? The question is: Are we doing our duty? With that, faith concerns itself. Doing that, it rests content.

TH. ENGELDER

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## The Lord's Prayer, the Pastor's Prayer

### The Conclusion

Matthew 6:13: "Οτι σου εστιν η βασιλεια και η δυναμις και η δόξα εις τους αιωνας. 'Αμήν.

First we treat this conclusion as a doxology. It is numbered among the noteworthy rejected readings. We agree that it is a reading; we acknowledge that it is a noteworthy reading; we