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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

Doors of Utterance

I

In his letter to the Colossians the Apostle Paul pleads fervently that the brethren pray for him that God grant him a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, Col. 4:3, 4. The same poignant appeal goes out today to all the Christian Church.

By doors of utterance the Apostle obviously means a legitimate opportunity to preach the Gospel. There must be no proselytizing. We will remember Luther's classic remark that if he could convert the whole world with one sermon but have no call, then he should refrain from trying that. We, then, need doors of utterance, a legitimate opportunity.

But in the final analysis it is you who must decide, upon your conscience, before God, whether any particular place offers you a door of utterance. No one else can make up your mind for you on such a question. Keeping in mind all that the Bible says about not breaking into another man's bishopric and not indulging in sheepstealing, nevertheless it is up to you in the end to decide whether this or that place offers to you a proper door of utterance.

However, there are so many doors of utterance inviting us just now, the danger is rather in our failure to see these doors and in our lack of courage resolutely to enter by the doors that are invitingly thrown open. May the Lord who teaches us to pray for reapers also supply to us the blazing courage and the spirit of sacrifice and consecration which will launch a determined attack upon the missionary possibilities presented to us at this time!

Doors of utterance are provided by the very combination of circumstances which obtain on the foreign field today. Think of China, a nation in travail and turmoil, ravaged by years and decades of war and fratricidal strife, impoverished and drained of resources, her people shaken in their security, stirred up out of the somnolence of centuries, stumbling out of the dimly lit caverns of the past into the blinding sunlight of today, blinking their eyes and looking about for something that would offer them a hope and expectation! Think of the collapse of much of their ancient civilization, the ruthless manner in which their philosophies have been upset and their expectations of life shattered! Think of the wreck and decay of their heathen systems of philosophy and religion, the bankruptcy of their religious thinking as made so apparent by the war's holocaust, and the extreme suffering through which they have been driven! Is it not a striking corollary to Chinese perplexity and uncertain weaving about and groping blindly for security that our Church has the one message calculated to bring peace and security to the human heart and to open up vistas of expectation and hope for their lives? The very situation

in China, therefore, speaks eloquently of doors of utterance for the Gospel of peace.

To be sure, many difficulties are inherent in the present situation in China. Politically there is much uncertainty. One never knows from one day to the next what the conditions are under which you may live or pursue evangelistic or educational endeavors. There is a rising tide of nationalism, one of the manifestations of which is the chauvinistic demand that all foreigners be driven out. It is a sign of the immaturity of the present regime that there are vacillating policies as to education: one year you are permitted to conduct a Christian school, the next year this may be prohibited. The fantastic financial situation makes missionary work almost ruinously expensive or subjects the missionaries to many privations and hardships. The appalling inadequacy of means of transportation and communication makes mission travel very cumbersome and expensive. The moral disintegration which is an inevitable concomitant of any time of monetary inflation results in a growing recklessness and a feeling of irresponsibility which makes it increasingly difficult to pin people down to the earnest consideration of the issues of life and death, of sin and grace. With economic values fluctuating so wildly, much of the stability, the diligence, the careful husbandry, and the saving habits of a nation are undermined and wiped out, and in their place you have an abandonment to the spirit of speculation and spending, all of which has a very deleterious effect upon the moral fabric of the nation, and this again makes missionary work difficult. With selfishness in high places and greed all around in this appalling fashion, it becomes increasingly difficult to inculcate the principles of altruism and selflessness which are inherent in the Christian religion. Where the uncertainty of any time of inflation and reconstruction such as the present in China lead people to a spirit of crass materialism and a desire to enjoy the day, not knowing what the future will bring, it becomes particularly difficult to fix their eye upon an eternity with God. Their whole thinking revolves about enjoying the present with a reckless disregard for the future. But, surely, these difficulties will not stop us from trying to carry forward a vigorous mission program, to be a light to the Gentiles and to make for salvation to the ends of the earth.

There are doors of utterance in China. We have our former mission stations, such as Hankow, Shasi and Ichang, from which we were driven during the war but where groups of loyal Christians clung together and carried on the work as best they could and where we are now gathering our scattered forces and building up again what had been devastated. And in each of these old stations there are innumerable new leads which we might follow and new opportunities for us to serve.

Thus in Hankow our fine seminary compound was found to be practically intact when our missionaries came back there after the war, although all the equipment was gone. We are again occupy-

ing our homes there, are conducting a language school there for our future missionaries, and have again taken up the training of Chinese men for evangelistic and pastoral work, even if such training is on a modest scale for the first. Furthermore, our missionaries have gathered what they could find of our former membership, have restored the chapel in the old international cemetery, and are conducting services there in Chinese every Sunday, a Chinese pastor named Wei Nien Tien being in charge, while English services are conducted there every Sunday evening by our men. At three other places in Hankow, mission work is being carried on by Missionary E. H. Thode and two Chinese evangelists. One of these places was started by the missionary efforts of a young woman in our employ at the mission compound. No building was available, but a roof was simply constructed, and under this roof open air services are held every night, Evangelist Pi being in charge. Open doors in Hankow? There are a million people in Hankow, and we are serving just a few hundred of them, and other Christian missions are reaching but a comparatively small number. And we are a well-established community in Hankow, known to practically every coolie in the city. It is apparently no trick to go to a dozen places in Hankow and rent a building, and you would have no difficulty in gathering groups of people night after night to whom you could preach the Gospel of Christ without infringing in the slightest degree upon any other Christian mission endeavor and where you would have every legitimate conviction that this is an open door.

Across the Han River from Hankow is Hanyang. There a group of Christians were gathered by our missionaries in times gone by. During the war what was left of them was served by their Chinese pastor Sen. Now, with a loan of \$2,000 from us, they have contrived to build a neat little chapel, and they are also developing plans for a Christian day school of four teachers for about one hundred and twenty children.

Across the Yangtze River from Hankow is Wuchang, really the educational and government center of the Province. In that city we now also have a foothold. On Christmas Day a chapel was dedicated, the writer being one of the officiating clergymen. Evangelist Yin is in charge of this chapel, which is right in the heart of the native city of Wuchang.—Not far from Hankow, in several directions, there are doors open to us. Our men have already begun to do some work, but it is only scratching the surface, and we need much more manpower in order to follow up the many openings that are presented.

Up the Yangtze River, two hundred miles from Hankow, you come to the very busy city of Shasi. Here our mission has been active for some time. We had two churches, but both of them were destroyed during the war. The fine residence of our missionaries was also totally destroyed by bombing. The congregation at Shasi is carrying on, in very poor quarters, with a native

evangelist holding the fort until we can do more thoroughgoing work. They have a private school of some forty children, self-supporting. We have a well-located lot right on the main street but now need to put up a suitable chapel, a school, and a dwelling for our foreign missionary or missionaries. Shasi is the heart of a rich, very productive, thickly populated agricultural section. There are four large counties surrounding Shasi. In two of them the Swedish people are active. In the other two large counties there is no Christian work except that of our Synod, and our work is a drop in the bucket. We have promising beginnings in some eight or nine places, with a number of other larger villages and thriving communities within easy reach. Open doors? You should have been with us in Mitussu on a weekday evening when we arrived there almost unheralded and had over one hundred people in services that evening. This town of over five thousand people has no other Christian work, and the people are very favorably inclined towards our work.

Or go to Ichang, another once thriving city, one hundred miles farther up the Yangtze River. This marked the farthest advance of the Japanese in the late war, with continuous fighting in or near Ichang for years. At the close of the war there were only about six thousand people left in Ichang, one half of them children with apparently no one to care for them. A faithful layman had held our small group of Christians together during the war. Now the members were drifting back, but they are poor, they have no home, they have no job, they have no money. They must look to us to help them buy a piece of ground and to put up a modest chapel and a dwelling for their pastor or evangelist. Here, too, there are open doors, and there appears to be almost no end to what could be done by our Church.

As a sample of the manner in which work can be done we should like to recount our experience going out with Miss Gertrude Simon for a trip into the country, such as she makes every week. A dozen times over Miss Simon would stop to talk to some elderly women and then be invited into their home. When younger women and girls would drift in, Miss Simon would give them a Bible lesson and then teach the children some simple song. At the close of the session she might inquire as to their physical well-being and would exercise her talents as a nurse. We had a modest lunch of *baudze* (biscuits filled with ground and spiced meat, eaten hot). While visiting in the home of a very poor family (a blind man, his wife somewhat crippled but supporting the family by conducting a small shop, also two nice boys in the family), some men from the village came. They told how a few weeks earlier after a disastrous fire Miss Simon had helped them get some relief. Now these people wanted to put up a simple building if our missionary would come out and preach to them. Is that an open door?

Ichang deserves our attention also because of the projected dam for the Yangtze River in this vicinity. I saw the place where

this dam is to be constructed. Preliminary soundings are now being made. Should this project go through, Ichang will gain tremendously in importance.

Open doors? A map of China with names of mission stations will indicate certain sections that appear to be rather untouched. Years ago the depredations of robber bands and the lack of communication may have offered reasons why foreigners did not penetrate into these areas. But surely the fact that such areas exist constitutes a direct challenge to the Christian churches. Our mission touches one of these regions where we are already established, namely in Enshih. Or is it not an open door when the congregation at Enshih, self-supporting for some years, comes to us with the plan for building a Christian day school and asks for a loan for the construction of a school building? Or is it not an open door when the magistrate, the president of the Merchants' Association, and a half dozen high officials confer with our missionaries with a view of locating our hospital in a better location in the heart of the city, and when you remember that there is no other hospital within a radius of over a hundred miles in any direction?

Open doors? Think of Wanhsien, a city on the Yangtze River of several hundred thousand inhabitants. We have a primary school there of three hundred twenty-five children. There is also a high school there with over four hundred young people, the great majority of these pupils coming from heathen homes, but every student in these schools is given the opportunity, in most cases three times a week, of hearing the Christian teachings set forth. What more could one ask in the line of an open door, a door of utterance, than thus to have a chance to bring the Word of God day by day before receptive, intelligent, well-behaved children and young people? One should also remember that forty per cent of the young people in our high school come from distant places. Thus whatever is done for them at Wanhsien could result in bringing the Gospel to many other places not yet touched by our missionary efforts.

Chungking was the capital of China during the war years. In the early years of the war it was bombed mercilessly. But today Chungking is practically rebuilt, with improvements. Three years ago we came to Chungking just as our pastor Luther Li was being installed there. At that time we had some twenty-five or thirty members, almost all of them young men in the employ of the government. Now the seat of government has been moved from Chungking to Nanking, and practically all of the members of three years ago have left Chungking. But in the meantime Pastor Luther Li has found and gathered another group of some twenty-five to thirty members. And they are good material, intelligent, progressive, members such as we are glad to see in our churches. But in Chungking we need to help provide a chapel and must find a dwelling for our pastor.

Open doors? Finally, we are represented also in Shanghai. Our missionary there is preaching regularly in English and in Chinese. There are thousands of Europeans and Americans in Shanghai who need spiritual attention, and there are thousands of young Chinese who could be reached through the English language, and millions of Chinese to be reached through the medium of their own language. Although some Christian groups are working in Shanghai, they are only a few amid those teeming millions. Surely, there is room for us in that great metropolitan center.

Many other localities might be mentioned where investigation on our part might indicate an open door. But when we speak of open doors, it may be a pertinent thought to remember that doors open today may not always remain open. While in Calcutta recently, we had occasion to hear an address by Miss Mildred Cable, formerly an active missionary on the Mongolian frontier but now of the British Bible Society Office in London. Miss Cable spoke most earnestly of the need to enter by doors that are still open and called attention to the fact that at many places doors formerly open are now closed. The rising tide of nationalism, the spreading of anti-Christian ideologies, the ruthless usurpation of power by elements inimical to the Christian Gospel—all of this could quite easily close doors now open.

It is therefore highly important that we enter doors now open; that we develop a program of systematic expansion; that we make a bold leap into strategic centers and from there work out in concentric circles, employing a policy of penetration and consolidation. We must plan for a steady stream of new blood for our foreign fields, and these men should be very carefully chosen and should be equipped as well as we can equip them.

We need, then, to develop an indigenous Church, a Church that is at home in that country, that is not like an exotic plant, artificially and arbitrarily inserted into strange soil and kept alive by artificial means. We need to build up the spirit of responsibility on the part of our native members and workers, and we need systematically to draw them into the administration until these churches are able to become thoroughly self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting bodies. When we speak of entering open doors we need also to train our whole Church at home in the concept that they are a mission agency, and that they need to find the manpower and the financial resources for a comprehensive mission program. Courageously we must set aside sufficient percentages of our new manpower and of the financial income of our churches for mission projects of this nature. Withal, there should be a certain reasonableness about this program, with carefully considered and courageously executed plans rather than mere enthusiasm and planless activity.

O. H. SCHMIDT

(To be continued)

The New Testament Concerning the Old Testament *

By HUGO ODEBERG

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There exists in Sweden today a strong movement back to the Bible. One of the forces behind this movement is EREVNA, a society of pastors, professors, students of theology, and schoolteachers, under the leadership of the professor of New Testament interpretation at the University of Lund, Hugo Odeberg, Ph. D. This society is dedicated to the study of the New Testament. In what spirit that study is conducted one can judge from the following translation of a textbook which is used in one of the courses of study which the society carries on. — WALTER C. DAIR.

If you wish to discover how the New Testament looks upon the Old Testament, you can proceed from any chapter of the New Testament you wish, for the viewpoint of the New Testament concerning the Old can be read everywhere.

Here we want to proceed from that chapter of a Gospel which presents a particularly plain and sharp picture of the viewpoint which Jesus Himself, as well as the original Christian congregation, had concerning the Old Testament. The chapter concerned is Luke 24. There the story is told of two disciples who several days after Jesus' death, on the way to Emmaus, were in conversation with each other about the events which had occurred to Jesus. They were puzzled and concerned, for they understood nothing of what had happened and could find no explanation. Then it happened, so the story relates, that the Risen One Himself came and joined them on the way. Upon their request He began to explain what had happened to Him. There is something very significant to be found here. The Savior Himself, the Risen One, is the center of the Gospel story. Consequently, He could very well Himself have given the information requested. Nevertheless, He gave no other explanation of these events than to point to the Old Testament. He did not say: "Here am I, and now I shall give you the explanation of the mystery concerning the events which happened to Me." Nor did He point to that which He had Himself foretold and taught while He was wandering on the earth. We can say that He had no word of His own, independent of the Old Testament. He whom the Gospels view as the absolute Truth and the Lord of all knowledge, in a situation which seemingly called for an explanation in His own words, does not use His own word, but goes to the Old Testament.

The manner in which He begins His explanation of what happened is certainly significant. He begins by reproaching His disciples for being "fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken," i. e., in what we call the Old Testament. He therefore reproaches them for not setting a high enough value on the Old Testament. Now, we know that Jesus' first disciples were much better acquainted with the Old Testament than Christians are nowadays. Throughout their youth they had heard the Old Testament read in the services of the synagog. They had

* *Nya Testamentet om det Gamla*. Jönköping: Svenska Allians-Missionens Förlag. Lund, 1945. Carl Bloms Boktryckeri.

learned it by heart in childhood. They read daily from David's Psalter and from the writings of the Prophets. Besides that, they had also been together with Christ, who Himself constantly referred them to the Old Testament. . . .

The Master thereupon began to explain the great event which had happened to Him. "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." He began, then, with the very beginning of the Old Testament, the first chapter of Genesis, and showed that all Scriptures speak of Him. Here we must note something unusual. Jesus did not claim that only a few selected passages perchance, especially from the Prophets, referred to Him. The expression "He began with Moses" shows that all of the Old Testament writings, Genesis included, speak of Him. The Apostles and Evangelists were informed that Christ's presence until the Day of Judgment is already foretold in the account of creation in Genesis 1. This becomes evident, e. g., from the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, which plainly combines the Gospel concerning Christ, the Word, with the account of creation. This likewise becomes evident from such statements of Paul as Col. 1:15-16; 2:2.

When Jesus makes a selection of passages from the Old Testament, that does not mean that He chooses merely the small number of those which speak of Him or refer to Him. It does mean that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, all of which from beginning to end speak of Him, were the source from which He chose certain examples. Luke's report about the Emmaus disciples is in this respect a rich and telling illustration of Jesus' method of considering, evaluating, and applying the Old Testament. But we have in this account also a fine illuminating example of the viewpoint which the first Christians learned to adopt toward the Old Testament. In Luke 24:32 we read that when Jesus left these two disciples, they turned to each other with the words: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked to us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

But there is another factor to be emphasized, namely, that the Old Testament was familiar to them from the beginning. Yet Christ was compelled to reproach them for their sluggishness of heart and foolishness in their attitude toward the Old Testament. But now they were no longer slow of heart. Now their hearts were burning. What had happened? By what means had their hearts been set afire? Why, to be sure, through this that "He explained Scriptures to them." Something had happened to make Scriptures the interesting and captivating writings that made their hearts burn. It was Christ's explanation of Scripture through which He gave them access to the Scriptures. Paul has expressed this same thought in several instances. . . . This becomes evident particularly in 2 Cor. 3:14, where we read concerning those who do not accept Christ, but reject Him: "But their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away

in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." You will find, then, in Holy Scriptures a depth which can be more or less understood only when "opened." But so long as you do not permit Christ to open the way to the Old Testament, so long the veil hangs before it. The original Christian readers of the Old Testament found this confirmed in the Old Testament itself. When Christ had opened their eyes, they discovered that Christ had not read something into the Old Testament which was not to be found there before. This same truth is found in the Old Testament itself, in Psalm 119:18, where we read: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law." It is a pious man, a reader of the "Law," i. e., of the Pentateuch and the Prophets, who prays these words. He knows that unless the Lord takes it away, there is, so to say, a veil before his eyes. This verse, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in Thy Law," corresponds to the actual experience of the first Christians. They experienced the taking away of the veil from their eyes through Christ, and then they beheld wondrous things in God's Law. "Wondrous things" are such as one beholds when Christ teaches one to read the Bible.

The story told in Luke 24 is from the close of the Gospel, from the time after Christ's resurrection, when His work was completed and He showed Himself to His disciples. Then He explained Himself by pointing to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, says the Savior of the world, you will find the full explanation of all these events.

It was not the first time that Jesus had acted thus. On the contrary, it was the attitude He took from the beginning. The words of the Sermon on the Mount are well known (Matt 5:17): "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." And then He gives utterance to this radical statement: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot [the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet] or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled," i. e., in its innermost depth. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Himself shows how one penetrates deeper and deeper into Scriptures. The explanation there given of the Commandments is not by itself the most radical feature, since such explanations had been given previously. The Pharisees were not the last to understand and apply the self-evident truth that Scripture had a wealth of content. But the most radical feature was His use of the expression "But I say unto you" when He expounded Scripture. That expression ought to be emphasized and compared with the statement that not a letter, nor an iota, not even a tittle, shall pass away. Does He set Himself in opposition to Scriptures as though He were the Lord over Scriptures, which shall not pass away, but which He, as the Son of God, had the right to correct? No, it

would be falsifying Jesus' word. "But I say unto you" sets Jesus up as an authority not over Scripture, but in Scripture. It is He who explains what is written in Scripture. And who is it that can say "I" in the way in which this expression "But I say unto you" is used? It is no one else but the One who speaks in Scripture. Consequently, He does not speak as someone who is Lord over Scripture or replaces it, but as One who Himself speaks in Scripture. Therewith He claims that He is the "I" of Scripture. When He therefore says: "But I say unto you," that is the same as if we read: "Scripture says." He does not thereby dissolve Scripture, for it is the same Person who speaks in both instances.

In John 5:39 we find the following words of Jesus: "Search [ye search] the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." When He says: "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," Jesus does not mean to imply: "You are wrong about this" or "That is a wrong conception of the value of Scripture," but its meaning is plainly this: "You are right about this." The idea is certainly correct that eternal life is found in the Scriptures. But He continues: "But ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" and indicates therewith that seeking in the Scriptures with the intention of finding eternal life therein and coming to Jesus and having eternal life in Him should be considered as one and the same thing. Opponents of the Bible make the mistake that when they read the Scriptures, they do not see that the Christ, whom they have before themselves, is in these same Scriptures. To read the Scriptures and to come to Christ is the same thing, and it implies eternal life. *This is the Scripture which witnesses concerning Him, and He is the One who speaks in it.* That is the radical thought which the New Testament expresses through Christ's own mouth concerning the Old Testament. First and foremost that the Old Testament Scriptures were accepted by Christ, not only as to their meaning and purpose, but He accepted them as to their literal wording. There is, then, not only a kind of general purpose in Scriptures which Jesus acknowledges, but the Scriptures themselves, as you find them, He recommends and states concerning them that down to the smallest letter they are eternal.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Notes on Christ's Descent into Hell

By JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

In the *Lutheran Standard* (May 10, 1947) a reader submits the following request: "Please, explain the article of the Apostles' Creed: 'He descended into hell.'" In his answer William N. Emch, editor of the "Question Box," summarizes the teaching of the Lutheran Confessions when he states: "This is the way I understand the words: 'He descended into hell.' Jesus did not descend into hell on Good Friday. In death He commended

His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father. To the penitent thief He said: 'Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' Thus Jesus' spirit did not go to the abode of the lost when it left the body. It was on Easter morning, after life had again been restored, but before He appeared on earth as the risen One, that Christ descended into hell to show Himself to Satan and all the evil spirits as their conqueror and to triumph mightily over them. On Good Friday it appeared as though Jesus were the defeated one, and Satan the mighty victor. But, on the contrary, by the death of Jesus Satan only brought his own defeat (see 1 Pet. 3:18, 19 and Colossians 2:15)." This answer is fully in accord with the doctrine as presented in our former synodical Catechism.

Our synodical Catechism is fully in accord with the position taught by the Formula of Concord (Epitome, IX, *Trigl.*, p. 827). In the brief preamble of Article IX we read: "It has also been disputed among some theologians who have subscribed to the Augsburg Confession concerning this article: When and in what manner the Lord Christ, according to our simple Christian faith, descended to hell: whether this was done before or after His death; also, whether it occurred according to the soul alone, or according to the divinity alone, or with body and soul, spiritually or bodily; also, whether this article belongs to the passion or to the glorious victory and triumph of Christ." To end all uncertainties and terminate all controversies on this point, Article IX prescribes that the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell "should be believed and taught only in the simplest manner; according as Dr. Luther, of blessed memory, in his sermon at Torgau in the year 1533 has explained this article in an altogether Christian manner, separated from it all useless, unnecessary questions, and admonished all godly Christians to Christian simplicity of faith." Then it proceeds to say: "For it is sufficient that we know that Christ descended into hell, destroyed hell for all believers, and delivered them from the power of death and of the devil, from eternal condemnation and the jaws of hell. But how this occurred we should [not curiously investigate, but] reserve until the other world, where not only this point [mystery], but also still others will be revealed, which we here simply believe, and cannot comprehend with our blind reason." We have every reason to be grateful to the writers of the Formula of Concord for having reached a Scriptural agreement on this doctrine.

This presentation is challenged by George Drach in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* (April, 1947, p. 199 sqq.). The article is based on *Der Artikel ueber die Hoellenfahrt Christi* by C. Reinhold Tappert (Meriden, Conn., 1901) and suggests the very erroneous or misleading teachings which the Formula of Concord by adopting Article IX meant to repudiate. We find the following statements in the article which manifestly are at variance with the teaching of Luther and our Lutheran Confession: (1) Christ descended into hades, the abode of all departed souls, good and bad; (2) The passage 1 Pet. 4:6 treats of the preaching of Christ

in hades; (3) The Formula does not include Luther's phrase that Christ descended 'in body and soul,' which must be regarded as a *testimonium e silentio* and therefore as a repudiation of Luther on this point; (4) Christ descended in spirit or soul while his body rested lifeless in the grave; (5) The use of the phrase "the entire person, God and man" is in defense of the twofold nature in one person rather than an assertion of the descent "in body and soul"; (6) Christ not only opened the gates of hades for the souls of those in the Old Testament who in hope had awaited His coming as the true Messiah, but also led their transfer to the happy condition of Paradise; (7) There are passages which admit the implication that conversion after death is possible; (8) Peter's first passage [1 Pet. 3:18 ff.] implies a *praedicatio legalis et damnatoria*, but his second passage [1 Pet. 4:6] implies a *praedicatio evangelica*; (9) Luther's final word was a comment on Hosea 6:21 [2?] written in 1545, a year before his death, in which he expresses the opinion that in His descent Christ not only liberated the souls of Old Testament patriarchs and saints, but also preached to those who had not believed when the patience of God waited, so that they might know "that their sins may be forgiven on account of the sacrifice of Christ." (10) In Luther's exposition of the seventh chapter of Genesis he expresses a similar opinion; (11) If in His descent into hades Christ proclaimed also the Gospel unto forgiveness, then in some way He must still be continuing His prophetic ministry to departed souls who never on this earth were given an opportunity to know Him and His saving grace; (12) Christ's descent into hades holds out the hope of some provision after death for their possible repentance and faith to make up for the missionary deficiency of Christ's disciples [who neglected their duty to preach the Gospel to every creature].

The reader perceives at once what a multitude of erroneous teachings are unleashed as soon as the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell as taught in the Formula of Concord is abandoned. It is true, none of the teachings enumerated destroys the *sola fide* and therefore is necessarily destructive of a person's salvation. But what terrifying confusion follows upon the repudiation of the Lutheran doctrine as stated in our Confession! And, consistently applied, will not the erroneous statements definitely lead to indifference in doctrine and Christian life? But perhaps, after all, the Formula of Concord was wrong, while the contentions of the article are Scriptural. Let us see.

In the first place, the writer contends that Christ did not descend into hell, but into *hades*, the abode of all departed souls, good and bad. Now, the term *hades*, translating the Hebrew *sheol*, may in certain places of Scripture be translated with "the state or condition of death." But when the writer declares that poor Lazarus and his rich neighbor descended into the same *hades*, the one into the department of *hades* called "Abraham's bosom," and the other into the department of *hades* marked by

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"anguish in this flame," which otherwise in the New Testament is called *Gehenna*, he is going beyond Scripture and devising an eschatological scheme for which there is no Scripture proof. As a matter of fact, Luke 16:19 ff. does not at all tell us that Lazarus entered into hades, but states expressly that he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." It is said only of the rich man that "in hell he lifted up his eyes." Both men indeed died, but, as teachers commonly express it in very simple terms in their catechetical instruction, "Lazarus went to heaven, while the rich man went to hell," which indeed is the very truth which St. Luke here teaches. Without going into detail in the matter, let it be added that the term *hades* is used also in other places in the New Testament in the sense of *hell*, as, for example, in the passage in which Christ speaks of the "gates of hades" (Matt. 16:18). Evidently the term is here used as a personification of the hellish powers. But the passage 1 Pet. 3:19 does not at all say that Christ went into "hades, the abode of the good and bad after death," but simply that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." The term "prison" manifestly is a synonym of "hell," for it denotes the abode of stubborn sinners who during their lifetime had rejected the Gospel of Christ. Not one word is said here of Christ's preaching to any other group of dead people. Our Confession therefore rightly speaks of Christ's descent into "hell," and not of His descent into "hades."

2. But the writer does not mean to prove Christ's preaching to both the good and the bad in hades from 1 Pet. 3:19. His Scripture proof is built on 1 Pet. 4:6, which in his opinion declares that Christ preached the Gospel to lost souls in hades, so that they had a chance to repent and be saved. But 1 Pet. 4:6 does not treat of Christ's descent into hell or of any Gospel preaching on His part in hades. According to the context, St. Peter here is speaking of persons who were then dead, but to whom the Gospel had been preached while they were alive, so that during their lifetime they were brought to faith and thus saved. The Apostle clearly means to say: Believers must indeed suffer if they flee the wickedness of the ungodly, since for this act they are spoken evil of (v. 4). But this should not trouble them, for God will surely judge the ungodly (v. 5). But while believers, too, must die and so are judged in the flesh after the fashion of men in general (for death is indeed a judgment), they live according to God in the spirit; that is, they enter through death into eternal life, receiving a great reward of grace (Matt. 5:11-12).

3. The writer, moreover, says that the Formula does not include Luther's phrase that Christ descended "in body and soul," which must be regarded as a *testimonium e silentio* and therefore as a repudiation of Luther's teaching on this point. We hardly regard this argument as fair. When the Formula says that "Christ descended into hell, destroyed hell for all believers, and delivered them from the power of death and of the devil, from eternal

condemnation and the jaws of hell" (*Trigl.* p. 827), it is speaking of the whole Christ, that is, of Christ *in body and soul*. That this is the viewpoint of the Formula is demonstrated by the words in the *Solida Declaratio*: "The entire person, God and man, after the burial descended into hell," etc. (*Trigl.* p. 1,051). If the entire Christ descended into hell, He certainly descended into hell "in body and soul." The article is historically not accurate when it states: "The Formula raises a series of questions: When and in what manner the Lord Christ, according to our simple Christian faith, descended to hell, whether this was done before or after His death? Also whether it occurred according to the soul alone, or according to the divinity alone, or in body and soul, spiritually or bodily? Also whether this article belongs to the passion or to the glorious victory and triumph of Christ?" The purpose of formulating these questions was not a "caution not to engage in unnecessary disputation concerning such matters," but merely to present the *status controversiae*. These questions were not raised by the Formula of Concord, but by some theologians of the Augsburg Confession, and the Formula of Concord hoped to answer these in a God-pleasing manner.

4. Again, the writer in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* maintains that "Christ descended in spirit or soul while His body rested lifeless in the grave." At least the writer is "inclined to give preference to [this] Dr. Tappert's conclusion." But this doctrine is opposed to 1 Pet. 3:18-19, which says that Christ in His quickened state or, as Luther explains this in his exposition of the passage, in His glorified existence (cf. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, p. 378 f), that is, in His state of exaltation, descended into hell. After all, however, the writer in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* is interested not so much in the manner in which Christ descended into hell as rather in the purpose of the descent.

5. We believe therefore that the fifth point of the writer—that "the use of the phrase 'the entire person, God and man' is in defense of the twofold nature in one person rather than an assertion of the descent 'in body and soul'—requires no further consideration, outside the mere mention that this declaration seems extremely naive; for why should the Formula here stress the two natures of Christ when the entire scope of Article IX is the settling of the question concerning Christ's descent into hell? The doctrine of Christ's two natures does not really come into consideration in this matter, and the argument therefore is beside the question.

6. The writer, moreover, declares that "Christ not only opened the gates of hades for the souls of those in the Old Testament who in hope had awaited His coming as the true Messiah, but also led their transfer to the happy condition of Paradise." This is a figment of reason, pure and simple, and, besides, an adoption of the Roman Catholic doctrine of a *limbus patrum*, which has no place in a creed that is based solely on Scripture. The Scrip-

tures of the Old Testament do not leave us in doubt about the blessedness of those ancient saints who died believing in the promised Messiah. Of Abraham, St. Paul says that he was justified by faith (cf. Rom. 4:1 ff.), and Christ says of the believing patriarch that he saw His day and was glad (John 8:56). This certainly leaves no room for his having waited in a *limbus patrum* until Christ had actually performed His atoning work. We could of course review exegetically all the passages in the Bible which ascribe salvation also to the believers in the Old Testament, but that is hardly necessary in view of the simple Scriptural truth that he who is justified by faith has forgiveness of sins and, with this supreme gift, also life and salvation (cf. Rom. 5:1 ff.).

7. The writer says that "there are passages which admit the implication that conversion after death is possible." Let the writer adduce such passages and show by clear and convincing *sedes doctrinae* that this is the case. Then let him study all those passages that tell us in unmistakable language that he that believeth not is condemned already (John 3:18), that it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27), and the like. It is these clear and unmistakable passages that we are to use as *dicta probantia*, not the obscure passages of Scripture.

8. The writer goes on to say that "Peter's first passage [1 Pet. 3:18 ff.] implies a *praedicatio legalis et damnatoria*, but his second passage [1 Pet. 4:6] implies a *praedicatio evangelica*. The first part of the statement is true; the second part is not true, as we have shown above, since 1 Pet. 4:6 does not treat of Christ's descent into hell nor of any Gospel preaching to lost souls in hades.

9. The writer says: "Luther's final word was a comment on Hosea 6:21 [v. 2?] written in 1545, a year before his death, in which he expresses the opinion that in His descent Christ not only liberated the souls of Old Testament patriarchs and saints, but also preached to those who had not believed when the patience of God waited, so that they might know 'that their sins may be forgiven on account of the sacrifice of Christ.'" In his commentary on Hosea 6:2, Luther has a note which is similar to the statement of the writer, but which in reality has an entirely different meaning when viewed in its entirety. Luther writes: "Here [1 Pet. 3:18 ff.] Peter says clearly that Christ appeared not only to the dead fathers and patriarchs, of whom Christ in His resurrection no doubt raised with Himself to eternal life, but that He preached to some who at the time of Noah did not believe, but trusted in the patience of God, that is, who hoped God would not deal so severely with all flesh, in order that they might know that their sins were forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ. At this place [Hos. 6:2] the Prophet therefore embraces the Church of all times, that is, not only the one which was under the Law and according to the Law, but also the one which existed before the Deluge" (St. L. ed., VI: 1224). But let the reader bear in mind that this commentary

was written in 1530, while his final word on the subject was spoken in his sermon delivered at Torgau in 1533. The author's remark that Luther's final comment on Hos. 6:2 was written in 1545, a year before his death, is therefore not true.

10. The writer says: "In Luther's exposition of the seventh chapter of Genesis he expresses a similar opinion." Actually Luther there says: "For Peter shows with these very words that it was an unbelieving world to which the dead Christ after His death preached. But if that is true, we cannot doubt that Christ may have brought to these prisoners in person also Moses and the Prophets, in order that He might make of the unbelieving world a new and believing one. This seems to be the sense of the words of Peter, *though I do not mean to say anything definite on this point*" (St. L. ed. I: 535). But while it is true that Luther's commentary on Genesis was begun in 1535, two years after his sermon in Torgau was preached, and while, upon the whole, it sets forth much valuable doctrine, it contains also many conjectures, which Luther did not wish to state as definite teachings. On the contrary, he emphatically deprecates any attempt to make this conjecture on Christ's Gospel preaching in hell a definite doctrine. Hence Luther's remark at this place must not be regarded as contradicting his Torgau sermon.

11. The writer argues: "If in His descent into hades Christ proclaimed also the Gospel unto forgiveness, then in some way He must still be continuing His prophetic ministry to departed souls who never on this earth were given an opportunity to know Him and His saving grace." This possibility is ruled out by such passages as Heb. 9:27; John 3:18, and others. Of those who do not believe in Christ, St. Paul says that they have no hope and are without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). In other words, they are eternally lost. With that falls also the last contention of the writer:

12. "Christ's descent into hades holds out the hope of some provision after death for their possible repentance and faith to make up for the missionary deficiency of Christ's disciples" [who neglected their duty to preach the Gospel to every creature]. This, too, is a vain figment or speculation for which there is no Scripture proof. It is indeed a pity that the Church did not do its full missionary duty, but to comfort men with the thought that God will make provision for the salvation, after death, of those who had no chance to hear the Gospel during their life on earth is to offer a hope that is not rooted in any promise of Scripture.

The doctrine of Christ's descent into hell is in itself a non-fundamental doctrine. But to err in non-fundamentals may result in much confusion and deviation from the truth in fundamentals. What the Lutheran Church today needs, above all, is a deep appreciation not only of the Holy Scriptures themselves, but also of its glorious Confessions. Dr. F. Bente is very right when he

says: "Wherever the Lutheran Church ignored her symbols or rejected all or some of them, there she always fell an easy prey to her enemies. But wherever she held fast to her God-given crown, esteemed and studied her Confessions, and actually made them a norm and standard of her entire life and practice, there the Lutheran Church flourished and confounded her enemies." (Preface to the *Concordia Triglossa*, p. IV.)

The Revised Standard Version

By JOHN A. SCOTT *)

A real and vital defect in the R. S. V. is the total failure to grasp the meaning of the Greek tenses, especially the perfect and the pluperfect. Goodwin's *Greek Grammar*, 735: "The Greek perfect, unlike the Latin and the English perfect, is not properly a past tense, but expresses a fixed condition in the present." Gildersleeve's *Greek Syntax*, 228: "The perfect in Greek is largely used for the maintenance of the result." No one who had any feeling for the Greek perfect would have changed in the Lord's Prayer: "as we forgive our debtors," to: "as we have forgiven our debtors," or would have changed Paul's words in Eph. 2:5: "By grace you are saved," to: "By grace you have been saved." This is a perfect example of the "maintenance of the result." No one who had grasped the rule in Gildersleeve's *Syntax*, 237: "When the perfect is used as a present, the pluperfect is used as an imperfect," would have made the mistake of changing the words of Acts 7:18: "Another king arose who knew not Joseph," to: "Another king who had not known Joseph." The perfect means "I know," hence the pluperfect must mean "I knew." It hardly seems too much to ask of those who take the hard task of improving the King James Version that they have some knowledge of the works of such men as Goodwin and Gildersleeve.

The same erudition that found a long epsilon in Phylgelus, and a "had known" in Acts 7:18, is everywhere evident in the translation. I select from a vast number of illustrations only these few: Mark 4:19. Here the King James Version has: "the deceitfulness of riches," this Version has: "delight in riches." The Greek word is ἀπάτη, which, of course, means "deceit," and that was exactly what Jesus meant. If He had intended "delight," He had at hand a word for it, but He did not care to use it, He meant and said "deceit." This is the cardinal sin in translation, to put into the mouths of speakers words they never used.

Luke 1:3. This Version has "it seemed good to me also,

*) Dr. Scott, the well-known classical Greek scholar, kindly consented to have his review of the R. S. V. which appeared in the *Classical Weekly*, Jan. 6, 1947, reprinted in C. T. M. We are bringing that section of the review which we considered of primary importance though the editorial committee does not share all the views. A defense of the R. S. V. is to appear in the *Classical Weekly* some time this fall.

having followed closely for some time past." To translate the fine Greek word meaning "from the beginning" with the tame "for some time past," seems irony, not an intended translation.

Luke 1:34. When the angel told Mary that she was to bear a son, this Version makes her reply: "How can this be, since I have no husband?" Mary gave no such reply; she said: "How can this be since I know not a man?" Many an unmarried girl or woman has become a mother. Mary knew this.

Luke 2:49. This is the story of the youthful Jesus when sought by His parents in the Temple. This Version has: "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" It would be a waste of time to discuss the meaning of a Greek phrase with one who translates ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου "in My Father's house." It can mean only "in the affairs of My Father," or "things of My Father." Exactly parallel is Luke 20:25: "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

Luke 12:25. This Version has: "And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life?" If Jesus said this, it is the only foolish thing He ever said, for millions have prolonged their lives by taking anxious thought, and thus the race has almost banished smallpox, hydrophobia, and rapidly is conquering tuberculosis. Everyone knows of people who, recognizing that they are killing themselves by certain methods of life, have changed and greatly prolonged their days. The Greek word ἡλικία means "stature" as well as "length of days." There are many examples of this in later Greek, but here is one compelling example found in a scholium to *Odyssey* XI, 588. The *Odyssey* here tells how fruit hung over the head of Tantalus and how as he tried to reach it the fruit eluded his grasp. Here the scholium says: "It is necessary to suppose that the trunks of the trees were higher than the stature, ἡλικία, of Tantalus, so that the branches could hang over his head." Here the word ἡλικία can refer only to height and has nothing to do with age or years. This scholium must have originated not far from the place of origin of the Gospels and at about the same time. Lucian, also, a late-Greek writer, abounds in this word with the sense of "stature." This makes sense, and frees Jesus from the absurd statement that men cannot prolong their lives by taking care. The Greek and the sense combine in making this mean: "Add a cubit to his stature."

Luke 23:47. The words of the Roman officer at the Cross after the Crucifixion. This Version has him say: "Certainly this man was innocent"; but that is not what he said. He said: "This man was δίκαιος, 'just.'" Being "just" gives the presumption that he was innocent, but that is an inference, an interpretation, not a translation.

John 1:5. This Version has: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not put it out." The word here is

καταλαμβάνω, a word frequently used by Greek philosophers in the sense of "to grasp," "to comprehend," or "to understand." John here, by this very reasoning about the "word," is indulging in Greek philosophy and would naturally use the Greek philosophic vocabulary, hence the probable translation: "The darkness did not comprehend." Professor David M. Robinson, who has lived much in Greece, has written me that "The word καταλαμβάνω, still is the word in Modern Greek for 'comprehend' or 'understand.'"

John 1:42. Here are the first words spoken by Jesus to Peter. This Version has: "So you are Simon, son of John?" There is in the original no "so," no interrogative word, and no mark of interrogation. This is not translation, it is trifling with the original.

Acts 17:22. This Version has: "I perceive that you are very religious." The word thus translated, δεισιδαιμονεστέρους is not a superlative, but a comparative adjective; hence cannot mean "very," but "too." This word, then, means "too much afraid of demons"; and that is just what "superstitious" means. This disgust with Athenian superstition agrees with Paul's feelings as revealed just six verses earlier in the same chapter. "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." This Version ignores the fact that the word is an adjective in the comparative degree, the evident implications of the word, and Paul's feelings toward idolatry in Athens. This "too superstitious" voices his sentiments of six verses earlier. Paul was no hypocrite.

Rom. 12:1. Paul urged the Roman Christians: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This Version has "Spiritual worship" for "reasonable service." The word which it renders "spiritual" is λογικήν, a word from the same root from which we get the words "logic" and "logical." To translate this as "spiritual" is to ignore the plain meaning of the original and to put in its place a word of most dissimilar meaning, while the word translated "worship" is the usual word for "service." This seems to me the ultimate in mistranslation.

1 Cor. 10:26. This Version has: "For the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." The Greek has the superb word πλήρωμα, "fulness," and to cast it out and then put in its place "everything in it" is to show shocking disregard for clear and beautiful language.

1 Tim. 5:23. This Version makes Paul write: "No longer drink only water." This is rather rapping Paul over the knuckles and giving a hint of what he should have said. There is no "only" in the Greek, and Paul said: "No longer drink water."

Paul, in his letter to Titus 1:6, describes the men who are to be chosen as elders. This Version makes him say: "Elders

who are blameless, married only once." This would exclude from eldership a man who had become a widower and had later remarried; but Paul said nothing of the sort; he said: "a husband of one wife," thus excluding bigamists and polygamists, but not remarried widowers. The same error is found in 1 Tim. 3:2, where a like rule is given for bishops.

Rev. 10:6. The thrilling and poetic: "Time shall be no more," *χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται*, becomes in this Version the flat and prosaic: "There shall be no more delay."

In some places this Version is superior to the King James Version. Matt. 16:25: "Who do men say that I am?" is better than "Whom do men say that I am?" Phil. 2:3: "Count others better than themselves," is better than: "Let each esteem other better than themselves." Luke 7:25: "What did you go out to see?" is better than: "What went ye out for to see?" Luke 5:38: "New wine must be put into fresh wine skins," is more easily understood than: "New wine must be put into new bottles." Luke 2:3: "A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled," explains itself, while: "that all the world should be taxed," does not. In 1 Cor. 9:27, this Version correctly has "disqualified," while the authors of the King James Version, with all their acute knowledge of the Greek language, knew little of athletics, and thus ignorantly used "castaway." Then, most important of all, this Version has the huge advantage of access to older and better manuscripts than any known until the last one hundred years. These improvements are real, and they are very welcome; yet the King James Version is immeasurably superior in the knowledge of Greek, in the mastery of English, and, above all, in the honest and docile fidelity to the Greek text.

The thing in this Version which distresses me most is the irreverent disregard for the simple meaning of the original, and while reading it I feel as Hamlet felt, when he chanced upon the jovial grave-digger: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?"

