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## HEATHENS IN HEAVEN.

AT Chester Heights camp meeting Dr. Johnson [Methodist, of Philadelphia] on Thursday preached a notable sermon, in which he said: "There will be all denominations and kinds of people in heaven – even the heathen! All that is necessary to be done is to follow the true light."

We call the attention of our esteemed contemporaries to the fact that the above is true Pauline doctrine, readily provable by his epistle to the Romans. If that was sound doctrine for the Jews and converts at Rome it ought to be good, practical doctrine for us Americans of the present time. If the heathen has within himself a law of righteousness, revealed from the Creator, whereby they accuse and excuse one another, and so [R3398 : page 216] living up to their truest light are admissible to heaven, why may not a man of this age, living up to the light of the gospel revealed in the life of Jesus have an equal chance for salvation and eternal life?

– *Atlanta Constitution.*

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It is remarkable that so many people of ordinary mental discernment so completely misunderstand the Apostle Paul's argument above referred to. – Romans 2:15.

What is the gist of the Apostle's logic? He was arguing with Jews who claimed that because God made a Law Covenant with their nation only, *therefore* they were acceptable to God and other peoples were not. The Apostle seeks to break up all such self-assurance, and to convince them that a Jew needs God's mercy in Christ the same as other nationalities. His argument is that their being the recipients of the Law Covenant could bring them no blessing (no hope for

everlasting life) unless they could keep that Law Covenant perfectly. This they did not claim to be able to do. As the Apostle again declares, "By the deeds of the Law (Covenant) shall no flesh be justified before God."

The Apostle pursues the argument, and supposes that they would claim that, while none could keep the Law perfectly, they kept it much more nearly, much more fully than the heathen.

The Apostle challenges that claim, and argues that some heathen people could properly claim to be doing the best they knew how and a Jew could claim no more. He shows that this is the case by saying that the heathen sometimes try to *excuse* themselves (thus acknowledging wrong-doing) and sometimes to *accuse* themselves (again acknowledging wrong-doing). What does this prove? asks the Apostle. It proves that while the Jew had considerable light of conscience and the written Law, the heathen, though not having the latter, had the former.

The Apostle nowhere in the argument claims that the Jews were *justified* by the Law, nor that the heathen were *justified* by their light of conscience. All were *imperfect*, and hence unworthy of everlasting life under the divine arrangement. The heathen, with his *light of conscience* ONLY, could not dispute this. The Jew, with his additional light from the written Law, having all the more enlightenment should all the more realize his condemnation.

The Apostle's argument with the Jews then resolves itself into this statement: You are not justified to life because God gave you the Law any more than are the heathen to whom he never gave any special favors. Mark the continuation of the argument (Rom. 3:9), "What then, Are we [Jews] better than they [the heathen]? No; in no wise: for we have *before proved* both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one," etc.

After quoting the Scriptural summing up of the general depravity of mankind down to verse 18, the Apostle adds: –

"Now we know that what things soever the Law saith it saith to them that are under the Law: that EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED and all the world may become [or realize that they are] GUILTY before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." – Vss. 19,20.

Thus the Apostle proves to his Jewish hearers that all are sinners (Jews and Gentiles), and that all need salvation, which can be procured only through Jesus, – "through faith in his blood" – faith in his atonement sacrifice. Where, then, is the argument for the fitness of the heathen for heaven? Where does the logical Apostle Paul so teach? When we remember that the Apostle Peter declared that David the prophet, one of the most prominent Jews, did not go to heaven (Acts 2:34), it would, indeed, have astonished us if we had found the Apostle Paul teaching that the heathen had passports. We have only to remember our Lord's words to the effect that up to his time "no man hath ascended up to heaven." – John 3:13.

What a peculiar place some people must fancy heaven to be, anyway: full of infants, idiots and heathens, with an occasional "saint" from civilized lands. Thank God for the light upon his Word which frees us from such absurdities.

Well, where are the heathen, idiots, etc., if not in heaven? Should they be in torment because ignorant or *non compos mentis*? By no means. They are under the curse or sentence of death, – they are dead, in the great prison-house, the *tomb*, – in *sheol*, – in **[R3399 : page 216] *hades*** – the very place in which Peter declared David to be. But Christ has died for all of Adam's race, and the blessing of an opportunity or trial for life shall yet be granted to all – by Jesus as King on account of his redemptive work, his death for our sins.

The present work, the work of this Gospel age, is to gather from among men "a Royal Priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a purpose." This offer went first to *natural* Israel, but after a time was thrown open to Gentiles as well, – "the middle wall of partition being broken down." It was this that the Jews denied – that after God's favors had been to their nation only for over 1600 years outsiders were granted just the same privilege as they to become "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29.) [R3399 : page 217] It was this that the Apostle combated, and showed that Jew and Gentile could become sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ – not by the Law Covenant, nor by heathen ignorance, but by faith in the only name given under heaven and among men whereby we must be saved. – Acts 4:12.

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