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The Blessing of the Work of Christ.

(Translated from Dr. Ed. Preuss's *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung*, Part I, chap. 2.)

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When the Scriptures say that Christ redeemed us, it means the freeing from sin and all its consequences, but chiefly the freeing from *guilt*. Heb. 9, 14; Eph. 1, 7; Col. 1, 14; Rom. 3, 24. This redemption is described as a *purchase*. Rev. 5, 9 the four and twenty elders sing: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." The purchase-money is "not corruptible silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19; in fact, His entire obedience, 1 Tim. 2, 6. This ransom was paid to God, not to the devil. Eph. 5, 2; Heb. 9, 14.

At the same time Christ appeased the wrath of God. St. Paul says that God set Him forth to be a propitiation in His blood. Rom. 3, 25. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2, 2. The Greek verb which is the root of "propitiation" and "reconciliation" means "to appease wrath," "to dispose to grace or favor." The heathen used it of their gods; the Seventy [Septuagint], of God. Ps. 78, 38. It is peculiar that the Holy Scriptures in this connection do not make God the object of the verb (*ἱλάσκομαι*), but rather sin, respecting which the wrath of God is appeased. Thus it is said of Christ, Heb. 2, 17, that He became a faithful High Priest before God "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"; according to the original Greek, "to propitiate" (*i. e.*, to expiate) "the sins of the people." Col. 1, 20 says the same, although in other words: "He made peace through the blood of His cross, by Himself." In the first place, He made peace on the one hand, by making satisfaction to the wrath of the Father. In this manner the love of the Son had to force its way by means of His blood through the anger of the divine majesty. But we are saved from wrath. Rom. 5, 8, 9.

Out of the wrath of God flow God's punishments, as out of a fountain. Now, if the Lord stopped up the fountainhead, then the stream will not drown us. For He "redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." Gal. 3, 13. Thus He fulfilled what He had promised through the prophet Hosea: "I will redeem them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea 13, 14. For the redeemed of God do not see death in all eternity. John 8, 51.

So, then, we are reconciled, 2 Cor. 5, 18; however, not only we, but also Hindus, and Hottentots and Kafirs, yes, the world. 2 Cor. 5, 19. "Reconciled," says our translation; the Greek original says: "placed in the right relation to God." Because before the Fall we, together with the whole creation, were in the right relation to God, therefore Scripture teaches that Christ, through His death, restored all things to the former right relation to God.

We, then, are redeemed from the guilt of sin; the wrath of God is appeased; all creation is again under the bright rays of Mercy, as in the beginning; yea, in Christ we were justified before we were even born. For do not the Scriptures say: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"? 2 Cor. 5, 19. This is not the justification which we receive by faith, but the one which took place before all faith. — And Rom. 5, 18: "As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." That is the great absolution which took place in the resurrection of Christ. For as the Father, for our sake, condemned His dear Son as the greatest of all sinners by causing Him to suffer the punishment of the transgressors, even so did He publicly absolve Him from the sins of the world when He raised Him up from the dead. And us in Him. Therefore Scripture says that Christ "was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4, 25. And 1 Cor. 15, 17 declares that, if Christ be not raised up, then we are yet in our sins, we are not yet absolved. That is why the apostle wishes to be found in Christ and to know Him and the power of His resurrection, this victorious power, which takes away all sins as the sun dispels the fog. Phil. 3, 9. 10. That is why St. Peter says that our regeneration is effected through the resurrection of Christ, 1 Pet. 1, 3, that Baptism itself derives its saving power from it. 1 Pet. 3, 21. And lastly, that is why St. Paul declares: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in

thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10, 9.

This is the work of Christ and its blessing. We have such an High Priest, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. 7, 26; "who by His own blood entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. 9, 12. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10, 14.
