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## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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While it is true that the affections and lusts of the old Adam enter largely into the life of every individual, it cannot be denied that conscience, operating on sound moral principles, develops a moral character and produces a moral life. Its influence enters into the various ramifications of human conduct, and, subjecting man to the judgment of God, it reaches out into eternity.

We are counselors of conscience to our people. What a responsibility! Let us see to it that in all matters of moral conduct we give them sound counsel and instruction from the Word of God. But at the same time, let us address ourselves not merely to their intellect, but follow the advice Dr. F. Pieper gave his students: "Suchen Sie das Gewissen zu treffen." If the things we teach our people become a matter of conscience with them, then their conscience will urge them to observe in life what we have taught them. In our pastoral practice we have to deal with all sorts of consciences, and it requires wisdom and tact to treat them properly. Professionally, therefore, it is of importance to us to give some thought and study to the functions and the treatment of conscience.

River Forest, Ill.

E. W. A. KOEHLER

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## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

### Fourth Sunday after Easter

#### 1 Thess. 2:9-13

Work, work, work! Each and all, severally and jointly, as individuals, as congregation — work! Some complain that they are overtaxed by legalistic compulsion or overworked by overorganization. Before a congregation can work at all, work must have been done upon it; if it should continue working, work upon it must keep it in working condition. Today, then, we shift from work rendered by the congregation to work done upon the congregation for its welfare.

#### The Welfare of the Congregation Requires Work

1. *God's work*
2. *The pastor's work*
3. *The Word's work*

#### 1

The Gospel of God is mentioned v. 9, and v. 13 we find the word ἐνεργεῖται, energize, exert energy. Paul preached the Gospel of God to the congregation. He preached that Christ died for them and that He arose again. Justification. Christ worked to obtain it for man; He labored to redeem, Is. 43:24, 25; 53; Eph. 5:2, 25-27. Active and passive obedience. — Christ justified the Thessalonians by His travail and triumph before they knew of it. Rom. 5:8, 10. He worked for the congregation before it existed by working that it

might exist and enjoy all spiritual privileges. His work is its foundation.—Then the Holy Spirit did His work upon the Thessalonians, v. 12. What was the result? The same as Eph. 2:1-10. Sanctification. Third Article. Complete salvation wrought by divine labor and operation.

We read of no complaint made by the Thessalonians of being overtired, but rather: 1:3, and later: 2 Thess. 1:3, 4; 3:13. Have any among us lost zeal in the spiritual work assigned to us? Are we becoming weak, while the Thessalonians were strong under the pain of persecution? Is there any indication of Laodicean lethargy? Let us evaluate what *God* has wrought upon us from eternity, in time, now, and will work for eternity. His work upon us is truly undeserved work of love. The Gospel of God tells us that. 2 Cor. 5:15.

## 2

The text reads like a faithful pastor's official report to his congregation. Paul labored and travailed at the birth and for the life of the congregation—exhorting, comforting, charging, preaching. (And all this, waiving his right to an adequate salary, v. 6, which at best would be insufficient in comparison with his invaluable service, 1 Cor. 9:11, offering for his privileged disregard of the divine order, Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6, 7; 1 Tim. 5:17, the excuse of Christian pastoral love, rejecting the thought of establishing a precedent.) Paul served with intense zeal publicly (preaching) and privately (every one of you), tirelessly (without ceasing). He adorned the doctrine with a godly life, v. 10; he served well as an example to all, in prosperity and in adversity. He notarizes, as it were, his report, as one would an affidavit, with a solemn oath, calling upon God as the witness of truth and upon the congregation as the evidence, the exhibit, of the truth.—Everyone was in need of all this labor upon that congregation. Paul labored strictly along the plan designed by God for the welfare of the congregation, and he thanks God for the success of the plan.

No pastor should, on peril of his soul, report faithfulness to doctrine, practice, life, to God and his congregation unless he can confirm his report with an oath without committing perjury.—God emphasizes the importance of the pastor's work. According to God's order, Eph. 4:11-15, the welfare of the congregation requires the service of a faithful pastor. An extended vacancy is detrimental, as also experience proves. But the pastor must not be expected to do the tasks which the members must perform personally as their own Christian duties.

Let the congregation learn to estimate the work of the pastor and to evaluate his example of life. Then the congregation, realizing what work is being done for its welfare, will not become weary in well-doing.

## 3

God works for our welfare by means of the Word, which is the spirit of His mouth, v. 13. The faithful pastor, God's co-worker, works for our welfare by means of the Word, which is the power of God unto salvation. God, the Author of the Word, gave it by inspiration. We see that Word in operation in the congregation at Thessalonica, as God's power effectively working on the hearers, administering doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, comfort, as the entire text states, perfecting the believers in faith and life for time and eternity, because it gives and conveys Jesus Christ.

"Also in you" the Word proves to be the power of God. You see its success upon us. Every other work which would crowd out the work of the Word must be energetically opposed. The welfare of the congregation comes only by means of the Word. Luke 11:28. You are a highly favored congregation. Show your appreciation by observing actively v. 12.

G. H. SMUKAL

### Fifth Sunday after Easter

1 Tim. 6:11-16

Many people have false ideas about the way to eternal life. Some believe that eternal life will come to them as a due reward from God for their good deeds; others believe that eternal life will come to those who hold certain religious opinions and observe certain ceremonies, regardless of their conduct in life. We must know the truth about the way to eternal life. If one misunderstands road directions, one may get lost; but one can turn back and start over. However if one does not understand the way to heaven correctly, he will be lost forever, unless he is shown the right way.

#### Lay Hold of Eternal Life!

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Have faith in the Savior</i> | 3. <i>Flee from sin</i>                 |
| 2. <i>Confess His name</i>         | 4. <i>Follow after Christian virtue</i> |

## 1

"Fight the good fight of faith"; to do this, one must *have* faith in Jesus. This most important truth, briefly stated here, is repeated in many places in the Bible: Mark 16:16a; Rom. 1:17; 4:3; John 3:16; and many others. It is evident that faith in Jesus is the hand that takes the gift of eternal life.

But what is faith? We must know whether we have faith, 2 Cor. 13:5. Faith is not a sweet, pleasant feeling that everything will be all right; it is a conviction, based on God's promise, that our sins are forgiven and that God will take us to heaven. If you know that you are a sinner cast out by God, if you are sorry that

you sinned, if you believe that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from your sins and that God has forgiven them all: that is faith in the Savior, based on God's Word and promise. If you have that faith, then you have eternal life, John 3:36.

## 2

We cannot, however, retain this faith unless we are willing to confess Jesus' name. St. Paul tells Timothy that he has made a good confession, v. 12, even as Jesus did before Pilate, v. 13. And this confession voiced by Timothy is demanded of Christians in many places in Scripture: Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; 1 John 4:15. Men of God, who were on the way to eternal life, confessed their faith: Matt. 16:16; John 20:28.

Some things are desirable in the Christian's life, but not absolutely necessary for salvation: Walther League, voting membership, ladies' aid, men's club, etc. Since denial of our Savior and His holy name will rob us of salvation, Matt. 10:32, we must confess His name and let people know that we are Christians. There must be something about us that tells people what we are. One way of making this confession is by belonging to Christ's Church, by attending services and by going to Communion. Open adherence to the true Church is a courageous confession of Christ.

## 3

Those who desire eternal life must flee from sin, v. 11. "These things" — what things? The apostle had named various sins in the preceding verses, particularly, v. 10, the burning desire for money and the power that comes from money. The love of money is a ruinous thing and causes men to err from the faith, v. 10b; Saul became covetous and lied, 1 Sam. 15:13; Ahab became covetous and committed murder, 1 Kings 21; Achan became covetous and committed theft, Josh. 7:21; Judas became covetous and betrayed Christ. And today the love of money leads men to theft, embezzlement, cheating, and many other sins. If a man does these things, if he serves sin in any form, he will err from the faith and be lost. Therefore a man of God must flee these things if he wants to remain on the way to eternal life. And anyone who believes that his sins are forgiven through his Savior will gladly flee these things out of gratitude to his Savior, who showed him so much love.

## 4

And the fourth requirement for those to consider who have laid hold on eternal life is to follow after Christian virtue, v. 11b. It is not our privilege to choose whether we care to attain these virtues or not. They are fruits of faith. Where there is faith, these virtues will show themselves: obedience to God, kindness to

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others, patience with another's weakness, readiness to forgive, and many more.

We may be assured of receiving eternal life because we are called unto it, v. 12. God will give us that to which He has called us, Rom. 8:30.

Yet, having received eternal life as a gift of God's grace, we must lay hold on eternal life, not stand listlessly by, but grasp it with vigorous effort, an "all-out effort." St. Paul commands Timothy to make such an earnest effort toward his salvation, vv. 13, 14; to be prepared for the coming of Christ in His glory, vv. 14-16. Let us, then, prove our faith in Christ by confessing His name, by fleeing sin and following after virtue, lest we lose our hold on eternal life. Hymn "Fight the Good Fight."

FREDERIC NIEDNER

### Ascension Day

Heb. 4:14-16

Our text speaks of a high priest. Many have a somewhat vague conception of the peculiar work or office of a priest. Properly speaking, a priest is one who offers a sacrifice to God. In the Old Testament we read that priests daily offered sacrifices of lambs or goats to the Lord.

The ordinary priest brought these daily sacrifices. But the Jews also had a *high priest*. He was the one who alone was permitted on the great Day of Atonement to enter the Most Holy Place of the Temple, there to bring a bloody sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, Heb. 9:7-22. Now, all this sacrificing by priests and by the high priest was symbolic only. Those sacrifices were to remind the people that in God's own appointed time a true, genuine High Priest was to come who was to bring one sacrifice for all sins and, having finished His work, return to His Father, Heb. 1:3.

Of this true High Priest and His ascent into heaven our text speaks. It answers the question

#### Why Should We Confidently Trust Our Ascended High Priest Jesus Christ?

We should confidently trust in Him

1. *Because this High Priest, Jesus, is acceptable to God.*

He is acceptable

a) Because of His sinless life, v. 15b. The high priests of the Old Testament were sinful. Before they could appear before God for the people, they had to bring a bloody sacrifice for their own sin. Jesus does not need to do this. He is sinless, Heb. 7:26, 27; John

8:46. He is the only man who because of His own life pleased God, Matt. 3:17; Ps. 2:7.

b) Because of His sacrifice. The sacrifices of the Old Testament did not actually atone for sin, Heb. 10:4; Micah 6:6, 7. They only pictured the true, valid, and efficacious sacrifice. This valid, sin-removing sacrifice was made by Jesus when He offered up Himself, Heb. 10:10-12; 1 John 1:7. Therefore our text calls Jesus "a great High Priest." This sacrifice is precious beyond all calculation. Therefore it pleased God.

c) Our text mentions another reason why we may be sure that Jesus, our High Priest, is acceptable to God; namely, He has even now passed through the heavens, *i. e.*, above all heavens, v. 14. It is for this reason that we celebrate our Lord's ascension. We even set aside a specific day. We are to be sure Jesus, our High Priest, has gone where we hope to go. We are not only sure that God will accept Him; we know that He *has* accepted Him. Our High Priest's credentials have been approved. He has finished all that was to be done for us, and is now pleading our cause with the Father. He has told us: John 14:3; 12:26. Certainly we have every reason confidently to entrust our case to this High Priest, since God has received Him into the glories of heaven.

2. *Because He is so well fitted to represent us and to aid us.*

Our text does not only declare that this High Priest is pleasing and acceptable to God, but also that He is so well fitted to represent us and to aid us, v. 15.

a) He was "tempted in all things like as we are." A physician who does not understand your case is liable to make great mistakes, but we may have confidence in one who thoroughly understands our case. Jesus is not a stranger to our plight, our struggles, temptations, weakness. He Himself passed through life with all its trials and temptations. He was misunderstood, He was unjustly criticized and condemned. He was threatened and flattered. Satan tempted Him. Well-meaning friends misunderstood Him and troubled Him. Open enemies maligned and persecuted Him. Traitors betrayed Him. He is no stranger to the difficulties, trials, and little sorrows which beset us. Indeed, He is an understanding Helper.

b) And more than this, He is a merciful High Priest. "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," He sees our danger, He knows the craft and deceit of our enemies; and He pities us, He wants to help us. Even the Jews, who rejected Him, experienced His love and kindness. He went after the lost sheep, He gave His life for the sheep; and over those who rejected Him, He wept and said, "If thou hadst known," etc., Luke 19:41, 42. See

how He dealt with His weak disciples Peter and Thomas. Certainly that is the kind of high priest we weak and sinful people need.

Should all this not give us boldness to approach the throne of God's grace? We do not offer Him the filthy rags of our own righteousness, but the spotless, precious sacrifice of His own beloved Son. Nor do we alone offer all this; the perfect, sinless Jesus, who is pleasing to God, offers God this sacrifice for us. Come then, v. 16.

This Jesus, our High Priest, has been preached, proclaimed, and pointed out to all the world by all true prophets from the beginning of the world, Acts 10:43; the angels of heaven have proclaimed Him; God from heaven has declared Himself satisfied with this High Priest and His sacrifice for our sins; the Holy Spirit continually testifies of Him and glorifies Him. Today again you have been told of the sacrifice for your sin. Remember Acts 4:12. But: Hymn 220.

MARTIN S. SOMMER

### Sunday after Ascension Day

Col. 3:1-10

Nearly all things are now being put to the test, *e. g.*, blood, lungs, heart, intelligence. The testing of spiritual life is mostly neglected. Yet that is even more important than all other testing. 2 Cor. 13:5; Ps. 139:23, 24.

#### Christians, Put Your Christianity to the Test

1. *Do you set your affections on the things above?*
2. *Do you possess the evidence of sincerity?*

#### 1

V. 1a. Being Christians, you have been raised with Christ from spiritual death unto spiritual life, in Baptism, 2:12, through faith of the operation of God. By faith you are partakers of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and all the blessings accruing therefrom, Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26, 27. By faith you have the forgiveness of all your trespasses, 2:13b, 14, through Him who has blotted out the handwriting.

V. 3. Ye are dead, dead to the Ceremonial Law and to man-made ordinances, 2:16-23, especially 20; dead to sin. Alive in Christ, dead to sin. Rom. 6:12, 14.

V. 3b. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ, though ever present with us, is now invisible, removed from the world of sense. He now lives to God, Rom. 6:10. Even so the Christian's spiritual life. The world knows nothing of it; it knows neither Christ nor the Christian. It is wholly ignorant of the fact that Christ dwells in the believer, blesses him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places, and motivates his life. To be sure, unbelievers cannot but notice some of the manifestations of the Christian's spiritual life. They ask, What is it that makes the Christian so different from others? Because they find no answer, they are ever ready with the verdict "Hypocrites." Even the Christian himself, though he is aware of his spiritual life and all that it includes, finds it all, its source and power, to be a mystery.

But it will not always be hid, v. 4. Christ, who is your Life, will appear, become visible to all men. Then shall ye Christians also appear with Him in glory. 1 John 3:2.

Therefore: Seek, keep seeking — set your affections on vv. 1b, 2. On what? Not on things on earth. Paul is evidently referring to what he has just written, 2:8 and 16-23, vain philosophies and man-made religions. They can give man no comfort, no direction or strength for the service of God. The same is true of all other things on earth: money, honor, etc. A Christian finds pleasure in his family, in his work, in art and music, etc. That is not wrong, provided it is of a kind that has God's approval, even blessing. But he must not forget that his chief concern should be directed toward the things which are above. He should with his whole heart seek Him of whom Paul has written: 1:13-23; 2:9-15.

Christians, put your Christianity to the test. Do you follow this admonition? Luke 12:34, 31a. Is your Christianity worth much or little to you? Remember that all things else are of little importance and become insignificant in comparison with Christ and His blessings.

## 2

When you were raised with Christ, you became dead to sin, etc., vv. 9, 10. This, however, is a process which never comes to an end during your lifetime. Eph. 4:22, 24. "The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die, with all sins and evil lusts." V. 5, mortify, put to death, your members which are upon the earth. Rom. 6:13, 19b.

Put off the sins that defile your own person, sins against the Sixth Commandment, v. 5b; the First Commandment, v. 5c; Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10. — For all these the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, v. 6. Already in this life. Is God now pouring out His wrath upon our people because of just these sins? Surely on the day of reckoning. Remember v. 7. But now you are Christians.

Put off all sins against the neighbor, vv. 8, 9.

In your conversion you have put on the new man, v. 10; Eph. 4:24. Do you let the "new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever?" (See the Christian virtues mentioned in the verses following the text.)

Christians, put your Christianity to the test. To put it in another way, is your new man constantly battling against the old, who is forever trying to gain the upper hand? If not, then you are a Christian in name only. If, on the other hand, you are constantly engaged in this warfare, that is an evidence of your sincerity. But just how determined and successful are you in your battle? Are you going from victory to victory, or are you suffering many defeats? What is to be done in order to become more successful? Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:9-11. To this end make diligent use of the means of grace, v. 16. Pray for growth and strength. Watch and pray, Matt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 16:13.

R. NEITZEL

### Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:32-41

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This is the question which bewildered men and women are asking in these perilous times. Confusion and uncertainty have gripped the world and our nation. Also Christians look to the future with foreboding.

That question was asked also at the first great day of Pentecost, and the first Pentecost sermon furnished the answer. It is an answer which is *the* answer today.

#### Men and Brethren, What Shall We Do?

1. Repent
2. Look to the exalted Lord
3. Be assured of His unfailing promise

#### 1

The people whom Peter addressed in his sermon had seen Christ in their midst for a long time. But in this audience there were many who had rejected Him; Peter openly accuses them of having crucified the Lord, v. 36. Now the enormity of their wrongdoing flashes through their minds; they "were pricked in their heart," v. 37. This was no time for them to shift the blame to others — to the leaders, to Pontius Pilate, or others — but to ask, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer is: "Repent."

We also have lived through many pleasant and care-free years. Did we perhaps ignore Christ, regard Him as superfluous in our lives, find no time for His Word and for prayer? The Pentecost message to us also is this: Repent. Turn to the Savior in heartfelt sorrow and ask His forgiveness. Evil days are always a call to repentance. Amos 4:6-11; Haggai 1:9-11.

In his urge to repentance Peter adds: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation," v. 40. The world is always the same:

greedy, selfish, the enemy of God's kingdom. The members of the visible Church are often not only in the world but also of the world. Neither long years of economic prosperity nor years of depression have brought a general return to God's Word. The Pentecost message of our text is a message also to the Church of our day to save itself from this untoward generation, Rom. 12:2, and again avow its loyalty to God's Word.

## 2

Pentecost is removed by fifty days from Easter; yet in reality the events of these festivals are inseparably connected. The miracle of the first Pentecost was the work of the risen and exalted Lord, vv. 32, 33. The Old Testament writer had foretold the exaltation of the risen Lord, vv. 34, 35. This first Christian congregation was to look to the exalted Lord Jesus as the Ruler over all the Church and over all His enemies.

Today forces are at work in this world that seem to argue that the devil, not Christ, has assumed control: war, hatred, destruction, skepticism, despair, and reckless abandon to indulgence are seeking to overthrow everything that the Church in centuries of Christian work has attempted to build up. Can it still be that the Lord rules over all?

Through all this turmoil we have the assurance that the exalted Christ has all things under His feet, Ps. 2:4-6. We may not always see the manner of His rule, but as Christians we have the assurance of the fact of His rule, 1 Cor. 15:24, 25.

The message of Pentecost bids the whole Church to look up to the exalted Savior, who rules over all things.

## 3

The people of our text did not only hear words of warning, but the words of this first Pentecost were also words of far-reaching promises.

a) Remission of sins, v. 38. (Original words call this a "sending away" of sins.) No sin too great to be "sent away," for even those who had helped in crucifying the Lord, v. 36, receive this promise. Cp. Is. 1:18. This assurance is still an assurance today.

b) Gift of the Holy Ghost, v. 38. This is the gift which every believer has by virtue of faith in Christ. (Note the word δωρεάν, not χάρισμα.) John 7:38, 39; 2 Cor. 1:22. We know Jesus as our Savior, trust and believe in Him, rejoice and take comfort in Him. This hope cannot be taken from the Christian even in the darkest hour of danger and destruction.

c) This promise is unto "you and your children and to all that are afar off," v. 39. What a wide scope to this promise! Our chil-

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dren, though growing up in these perilous times, are not a "lost generation." Rather, they are an especial urge towards parental efforts to give them the one thing needful while the opportunities are still here. Neither is this present time an excuse for indifference to missionary work, for the promise is to them that "are afar off."

Great perils and opposition met the early Church; great perils lie in the path of the Church today. But that same exalted Lord who made His promises to the early Church come true will also be faithful in His promises to us.

H. O. A. KEINATH

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### **Pentecost Monday**

#### **1 Cor. 2:7-16**

The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Not third in rank, however; but coequal with the Father and the Son in majesty and glory. The same divine honor and worship we extend to the Father and the Son we should give to Him. To do this, we must know, and know from experience, His work.

#### **The Blessed Work of the Holy Spirit**

1. *In Holy Scripture He reveals the Gospel.*
2. *Through Holy Scripture He brings us to the knowledge of the Gospel.*

#### **1**

The preaching of Christ Crucified is God's wisdom, v. 7. God ordained it. He prepared it, v. 9. To man it is a mystery, hidden, something man cannot know except by divine revelation. It was hidden to high and low, to all alike, vv. 8, 9. How, then, could man have been its author? To "us," the apostles, God revealed these things by His Spirit, v. 10. The Spirit of God can reveal them. He is omniscient, "searcheth even the deep things of God." "Not a process of investigation is meant, but a result, namely, full, adequate, profound comprehension." (Ps. 139:1 and 7.) Lenski, Eisenach Epistle Selections. Man is specifically excluded as a source of the things of God, v. 11. And not only did the Holy Ghost teach the apostles the things which are freely given us of God, v. 12, but the very words in which they clothed them, v. 13. The revelation of the Gospel is the work of the Holy Ghost.

What a blessed work this is! The Gospel speaks of the deep things of God. Christ is the King of Glory, yet died on the cross. By His death He devoured death and won for us life and immortality. He seemingly succumbed to the devil, and yet His apparent defeat was Satan's destruction, Heb. 2:14. God extends

mercy to the sinner, yet avenges sin. He justifies the ungodly and yet is just. The Gospel proclaims and offers the free gifts of God: justification, grace, peace, reconciliation. The Gospel tells how the Lord is minded. He hates sin, but loves the sinner. He rejects the impenitent and proud, but shows grace and mercy to the remorseful and the wretched. Surely, deep mysteries revealed by the Holy Ghost in Scripture.

## 2

What is man's natural attitude toward the Gospel? Man does not recognize it. Not even the rulers of this world perceive it, v. 8. The leaders of Jews and Gentiles, Caiaphas, the Council, Pilate, were chiefly responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. These rulers are typical of all the unbelieving leaders of this world. In spite of their superior mentality, educational privileges, and attainments they do not acknowledge Jesus as their personal Savior. Are the common people more favorably disposed to the divine Redeemer? "They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified," Matt. 27:22. Opposition to the Gospel is the spirit of the *world*, v. 12.

V. 14. "The natural man" even at his best does not admit the word of the cross to his heart. Salvation solely by faith in the crucified Lord of Glory does not make sense to him. He rejects this marvelous message as foolishness. And, alas, he cannot judge otherwise! It is impossible for him to know the things of the Spirit of God, to repose confidence in them. Paul himself in his natural state knew not the Gospel. Acts 26:9; 1 Tim. 1:13; cp. Luke 18:34. Man must get a spirit different from that of the world, a new spirit, mind, attitude, from God, v. 12, eyes to see the surpassing glory of the Gospel, ears to hear its celestial music. The mind must be enlightened, the will changed, the heart renewed.

How is this to be brought about? By means of the Gospel. "We speak," vv. 7, 9, 13. In Corinth Paul spoke among people imbued with the spirit of the world, puffed up with human wisdom, lovers of sin rather than of God. But many of them became spiritual. And what did it? The Gospel as the means by which the Holy Spirit operates, vv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:3, 7, 8.

The preaching of "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," is preceded by the preaching of the Law. Paul shows up natural man in his impotence, wickedness, and folly in order to break down his pride. Today, too, sinners need to realize that they must be born again or be forever shut out from glory. On broken and contrite hearts the Holy Spirit works the miracles of His grace. Matt. 11:25.

Let us ever keep on reading and hearing the inspired Scriptures. By the grace of the Holy Ghost we shall then, in the mirror of the Law, behold ourselves as we really are, spiritually blind and

dead, hostile to God, totally depraved, lost; and in the Gospel we shall see Jesus Christ set before our eyes as crucified. Thus we shall receive that knowledge and spirit which prompts us to say: "When I survey the wondrous Cross," etc., Hymn 175.

PAUL G. BIRKMANN

### Trinity Sunday

Titus 3:4-8

Trinity is the forgotten festival. Even in circles where the full church year is observed, Trinity, after the climax of Easter, seems an anticlimax. Trinity should be the queen of festivals; it commemorates the sum total of all that God has done for man's salvation. So it is a fitting conclusion of the festival half of the church year; the great task which began at Bethlehem is now finished, and we praise the Triune God for its accomplishment. So we may well take the angel song which introduces the first festival as our theme for this last festival: there it was promise and prophecy; now it has become fulfillment.

**Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth Peace,  
Good Will toward Men**

#### 1

"Glory to God in the highest"—that is the message of Christmas, of the Father who in His kindness and love to men spared not His only-begotten Son but delivered Him up for us all.

We needed saving; by sin we had lost our soul and were inevitably drifting into perdition. We cannot save ourselves; we are corrupt and can do no good when we come into the world, v. 5. Moreover, we do not even want to save ourselves; we do not know, nor do we want to believe, that we are lost. There was no possibility that a plan for our salvation should originate with us.

There was nothing in us that could have moved God to plan our salvation; we are rebels against His authority; nothing that might mitigate our guilt. In perfect justice God could have said: You had your chance; now take the consequences.

But God is love; so He planned our salvation, vv. 4, 5. Nothing but His grace moved Him, vv. 4, 5, 7. No one but the all-wise God could have found a plan that would violate neither His justice nor His grace. All glory to Him!

#### 2

"On earth peace"—that is the message of Lent and Easter, of the Son, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree and was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

God, though loving and kind, could not deny His justice; His Law, given to man, had to be fulfilled by man; and man, transgressing the Law, had to bear the punishment of his transgression. So the Son of God became man and our Substitute, v. 6; He did for us what we could not do, fulfilled the Law; He paid the debt which in all eternity we could not pay; and when He said, "It is finished," the justice of God was satisfied; the wall of partition that separated between us and our God was broken down; and God said so by raising Christ from the dead.

Now there is peace between God and man; all men on earth. God is reconciled; we are justified, v. 7, declared righteous for the Son's sake. And we are restored to the place from which we had fallen and the inheritance which we had lost, v. 7.

3

"Good will toward men" — that is the message of Pentecost, of the Spirit who comes now, sent by the Father and the Son, to impart to us through Word and Sacrament the blessed fruit of the great atonement.

The work of the Spirit is individual work. "What Christ has done for all mankind," so He assures the individual, "that He has done for you." He convinces the sinner of this truth and leads him to set his trust firmly on this blessed fact. So He regenerates him, makes a new man of him, who now knows that he needs saving and knows where and how he finds salvation.

And the natural and inevitable result is that this new nature also becomes evident in life and action. While the final result of our salvation is the perfect restoration of the divine image in heaven, this restoration must begin while we live here, v. 8; Christ has redeemed us for a life of service to Him and to our fellow men.

So, then, the prophecy of the angel song has become history. "Salvation unto us *has come* by God's free grace and favor."

All blessing, honor, thanks, and praise :  
 To Father, Son, and Spirit, .  
 The God that saved us by His grace — .  
 All glory to His merit! . . .  
 O Triune God in heaven above,  
 Who hast revealed Thy saving love,  
 Thy blessed name be hallowed.

THEO. HOYER

