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Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

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Do you see the knave back of the Interim? We Lutherans will not have any dealings with him. When the drive for the Prussian Union was on, Professor J. A. Tittmann spoke up in this way: "The Lutheran Church knows pretty well what these friendly invitations mean; she sees in every interim a knave, in every invitation of that sort a temptation to renounce her confession, in every union movement the self-seeking schemes of syncretism. — But, they tell us, since not everything can be accomplished at once, 'something' is surely better than nothing, and one must have patience, everything will work out well in the course of time. I answer, nothing good can come of it, for the truth is not there; consequently that 'something' is worse than nothing, for it beclouds the truth, benumbs the zeal for the truth, and does not lead to the unity in faith and in the truth, but to the domination of human opinions." (See Rudelbach, *op. cit.*, p. 623.)

(To be concluded)

TH. ENGELDER

Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity

Dan. 3:19-30

In war, nations frequently place their trust in weapons, number of soldiers, and brilliant leadership, but in the crisis are confounded. We Christians, too, are at war—against temptation and sin. By placing our confidence in God's mercy our trust will be vindicated, even as the trust of Daniel's friends.

A Flaming Vindication of Ardent Trust

1. *Ardent trust put to a fiery test*
2. *Midst raging flames it finds its vindication*

1

Vv. 19-23. This is not the first test of the three friends. Cf. chap. 1:10 ff. Their trust became more ardent but now faced more

of a change they can go over from one confession to the other without difficulty. The training of future preachers by the majority of German theological faculties has not been much different lately. *Is it surprising that our Church has lost its moral esteem among the people in most of Germany?* The people certainly do not understand much theology; yet they understand something about veracity and have a finer feeling for it than many an educated person. They understand more about theological honesty and veracity than many an educated theologian. The people certainly notice whether the preacher or teacher is profoundly convinced or if he is only presenting a theology of the "as if."

fiery test. Obedience to God necessitated disobedience to idolatrous demands of king. Worship of colossal national idol implied a test of patriotism and loyalty to king. Their ardent trust in Jehovah now faced the burning anger of an enraged despot whose face was inflamed with anger and whose eyes seemed to flash glowing sparks, v. 19. The king does not count the cost of carrying out his threat. No time is given for deliberate consideration, v. 22. They must choose between political power or death in disgrace; between life in luxury or execution in superheated furnace. By God's grace no threats could move them, and they continued to place their trust in the Lord.

We, too, face fiery tests. Persecution of Lutherans in Baltic Provinces in 1920. For most of us the form of testing is not so bloody, yet severe. Choice between acceptance of the inerrancy of the Scriptures and being branded as mossbacks and the atheistic philosophy of evolutionism, with attendant popular acclaim; between faithfulness to the Scriptural doctrine under the stigma of narrowmindedness and unionism, praised as evidence of fraternal love; between virtuous life, with accompanying sneers of would-be friends, and the ever-loosening moral standards commonly approved. After all their prating about tolerance those tempting us finally insist on a clear-cut decision, and this suddenly at the most inopportune moment. Prov. 19:3. In their own zeal to serve sin rather than God they count no cost too great to make the test fiery for us.

Yet, placing trust fervently in their Savior, Christians, even midst flaming worlds, never lose sight of the fact that their obedience to God is supreme. The temptations are real and the tests fiery (cf. Eph. 6:10-17); yet by the Word of God we "shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

2

Vv. 24-30. (a) Instead of consuming the three defenders of faith, the raging flames rather proved the vindication of their ardent trust. The three men were not dead, but alive; not bound, but free; not in pain, but at ease; not alone, but in company of God's holy angel. Those same flames which had snuffed the life out of the king's attendants held no power over them. These flames showed convincingly, "it is better to trust in the Lord." Ps. 118:8; 146:3-5. (b) The king admitted the vindication of their ardent trust; called them servants of the most high God, v. 26; blessed God, v. 28; forbade interference with the worship of God, v. 29; cf. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, III, par. 140. (c) Not only was the life of the three men spared, but they were honored: the king himself called them out of the fire, v. 26; their religious liberty was granted, v. 29; they were promoted to higher offices, v. 30.

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Also on other occasions Scripture teaches a vindication of ardent trust. Cf. Ps. 34:7. Joseph's chastity and his subsequent elevation to regency. Elijah's persecution by Ahab and his translation to heaven. It pays to believe. John 4:47 ff.

God provides an avenue of escape for his trusting, obedient people. Job 5:19. This the common experience of Christians. In their many trials He sustains them. The hot, fiery anger of the enemy cannot consume them. God holds the enemy at bay. Where seeming harm is done, God provides a glorious issue. Cf. Stephen, who saw heaven opened even while he was being stoned.

More serious than the physical tests are the spiritual trials when the Law convicts us, our conscience condemns us, Satan accuses us. It is then that the Lord sends his "angels," messengers, pastors, who through the Word of God's everlasting Gospel liberate our souls from despair and bring us the divine protection wrought for us by Christ. Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:19. Because of Christ's meritorious, substitutionary work in our stead and in our behalf the terrorizing flashes of God's consuming, fiery wrath over sin cannot strike us. The hot anger of the wrath of God will not even singe the hair of our head nor cause us to shrink from Him in burning shame. The torrid threatenings of the Law cannot wither our spirit. The lapping tongues of the fires of hell cannot reach us, and the sizzling hissings of the fire-spewing monster of hell cannot cause our soul to shrivel; for when all the furies of the blazing deep rush in upon us, their hot breath shall not even leave a smell of fire on us. Midst flaming worlds we shall lift up our heads—vindicated—for we trusted in God.

VICTOR MENNICKE

Twenty-Second Sunday After Trinity

Gen. 50:15-23 a

By the marvelous power of memory the past, even the distant past, may become present for us. Thus, too, past sins revive. God's children often are harassed by such remembrance of the past. We see it in our text and experience it in our lives. Our text offers

Comfort for God's Children over Against Their Past Sins

1. *The remembrance of past sins is salutary for God's children*
2. *Their past sins are covered by true brotherly love*
3. *Their past sins are overruled for good by God*

1

After their father's funeral (vv. 1-13) a wall arose between Joseph and his brothers, due to the fears of the latter (v. 15). Joseph's loving solicitude for the past seventeen years had proved

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how groundless such suspicion was. Nor were these fears due to impenitence on their part. They are repentant children of God (42:21); Joseph has forgiven them (45:4-15); God has forgiven them. (Luther points out that the dying Jacob's blessing was like an absolution.) They are now "servants of God" (v.17). And yet they are terrified at their past wickedness, so that the assurance of forgiveness is temporarily eclipsed.

One reason for their fear is that, so at least it seems, they have not yet made an open confession to Joseph with a plea for his pardon. Unconfessed sin always lies as an incubus upon the heart. Their fears, accentuated by the father's death, at length lead to salutary, unburdening confession.

Then, too, it is the very nature of sin to cause anguish as it comes back to memory. Sin thus has power to inflict pain until death; aye, it has power to condemn after death if unforgiven by God. "Here you see the terrible calamity of sin and a guilty conscience. Sin causes a wound all but uncurable. When sin 'lieth at the door,' one fails to give heed and plunges ever deeper into new and more horrible sins. But when sin awakes and becomes alive . . . no less costly remedy will avail than the God who has become man and the blood of the Son of God Himself." (Luther, St. L., I:2076, 2078.)

The recollection of past sin should teach us the dreadfulness of all sin, so that we may watch and pray lest we fall. It should prompt us to make amends if possible and to seek the pardon of the offended. It should keep us humble and penitent and make us constant suppliants for grace, praying: Ps. 25:7. Luther: "We are not to forget our sins of the past. If we forget our sins, we shall lightly esteem God's grace. And if we forget our sins, we shall fail to thank God. But if we fail to thank God, we shall become secure and ready to commit even graver sins." (IV:1569 f.)

2

Following Jacob's wise pastoral counsel, the brothers first send a messenger to Joseph with the plea framed for them by the father (v. 17 a), coupled with their own plea (v. 17 b), culminating in the appeal to forgive for the sake of God. The reception of the message: v. 17 c—tears chiefly of joy at the evident sincerity of their repentance. Now the brothers appear in person, in humble submission (v.18). Presently all their fears are wiped away as they see their past sin covered by true brotherly love (vv.19-21).

Surely a heavenly scene! And it is constantly repeated wherever true Christians are asked to forgive their offender. The Christian knows from experience the anguish of a broken and contrite spirit, and so sympathy will dispose him to forgive. He

knows from experience the joy of God's forgiveness, and so he cannot withhold mercy from him who asks; indeed, like Joseph, he has forgiven long before the offender has asked. The Christian is mindful that he is "not in the place of God" (v 19), so as to execute vengeance (Rom. 12:29); he is but a fellow sinner, commanded by Christ to forgive (Gospel Lesson). Therefore, if you are burdened by the memory of sins against your Christian brother, make a frank confession before him and experience the sweet consolation of a brother's love.

3

The climax of comfort: v.20. Surely Joseph had often in private communion with God blessed Him for His marvelous guidance, turning all darkness into light, and he will have much occasion for renewed praise in the sixty-one happy years yet to come (v. 22 f.). But here the words are spoken to men whose hearts have long carried a sore wound. He wishes to bind that wound. As they review the past—Joseph's history and theirs, the evil *they* had intended and the good which *God* has effected—they must blush with shame, until adoring wonder and grateful praise takes complete possession of them, so that they can go their way with rejoicing.

We are experts in turning good into evil. God alone can turn evil into good. He does so for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28), and only they are capable and only they have the right to take comfort in His overruling providence. If anyone says: "Let us do evil that good may come," Scripture says: "whose damnation is just," Rom. 3:8. But God's children who have been chastened and stand in His grace find enduring comfort against the sins of the past, which weigh so heavily upon them at every remembrance, in the assurance that they are overruled by God for good. We may need the vantage ground of eternity to trace the pattern of God's mysterious ways. But in the meantime let us trust in His grace, the grace that is so eager to forgive and comfort troubled hearts.

V. BARTLING

Thanksgiving Sermon

Gen. 3:15-21

A national thanksgiving in a global war? Should it not rather be a day of humiliation? In the time of Israel's greatest national calamity Jeremiah displays a truly grateful spirit, Lam. 3:22 f. In the midst of the sweat, blood, and tears of a global war Christians are truly thankful.

A God-Pleasing Thanksgiving Festival in a Global War

1

What a dreadful change had taken place in Adam's relation to God! Created in the image of God to serve his Creator, Adam presumed to be above God. The chief characteristic of our modern culture is the so-called "emancipation of man"; modern theology is man-centered, not Christ-centered, not even God-centered. Man, the product of the evolutionary process, is not responsible to a supreme being. Man sets his own standards of right and wrong, man is a potential god and refuses to recognize an authority higher than his own mind.—But the global war has hurled man from the high pedestal of his own making. And now man, instead of finding the cause of this global war in his own sinful and rebellious spirit, attempts to shift the blame to God. Even as Adam and Eve blamed God for their disobedience (the woman whom *Thou* gavest me—the serpent [which I did not create] beguiled me), so modern man often blames God for the horrors, the sorrow, the losses of this war; at any rate, man is not willing to confess that *his* disobedience, arrogant defiance, open rebellion have brought all this woe upon mankind. Man's "no" to God's command has re-echoed down through the ages and will resound even through hell.

This rebellious spirit is not a light matter; is not a remnant of the bestial nature of pre-historic man; is not a mistaken quest for God. God views sin differently, as is evident from the punishment which He metes out in our text. Each transgressor receives not only the punishment of temporal death, v. 19 b, but also a specific punishment: Eve and her daughters must bear a heavy burden throughout the history of the world, v. 16; Adam must bear the results of his rebellion in his body and mind; vv. 17-19 a. Sweat, blood, tears, heartaches, and disappointments; suffering of body and mind. Yes, sin is such a horrible thing in God's sight that the very things which man touches and employs come under God's curse. The beautiful earth now brings forth weeds, parasites, predatory beasts, death, decay; and all because of man's rebellion, Rom. 8:20-22. Man's rebellion has cursed everything that was beautiful in this world, including his wonderful body prepared by the Creator, 19 b. And temporal death is only the beginning of eternal death, for man has brought himself under the tyranny of Satan through his rebellion against God. Sin is so great that only the Woman's Seed can deliver man from the consequences of it.

The rebellious spirit of Adam manifests itself in our national sins. And we are guilty of them. Because of these sins we have deserved nothing but this world's misery, the wrath of God,

eternal death. Thanksgiving Day in a global war must therefore be first of all a *day of deep and sincere repentance*. In this spirit we shall trustingly and gratefully accept the gracious promises for our temporal and eternal welfare.

2

Shamed, frightened, and expecting the condemning power of God to strike them instantly, the guilty couple stands in the presence of God. But what a contrast! Addressing the serpent, God said, You attempted to destroy man, but by man — the Seed of the Woman — your power shall be taken from you. The darkness of sin which enveloped our first parents is illuminated by the first Gospel. They lost Paradise, but God promises them a Savior and a more glorious Paradise. This gracious promise is our comfort in the global war: God, who spared not His own Son, will order all things for our eternal welfare. We must trust God's providential care. We must learn to find the evident traces of His love, and then we shall become truly thankful, for we who have deserved nothing but punishment are basking in the sunlight of God's grace and are sitting under the wings of His mighty protection.

Yes, there is a curse. But note how wondrously God weaves a blessing into the curse. Adam must work in the sweat of his brow and under disappointing hardship, but he shall eat of the herb of the field all his life. Plenteous supply of food is provided, not only the food of our own vicinity, but rare spices and delectable fruits from faraway countries. Not only a full table, but a rich table. Trust God's providential care in this global war, when high taxes, a changed economy, the collapse of financial structures, or even the loss of a loved one threaten to depress you. If the Army quartermaster can supply our vast Army, what will the Almighty not be able to do, who has promised: Thou shalt eat the herb . . . the bread. Trusting in God's promises, you will be grateful for every crumb.

Yes, there is a curse. Eve and her daughters hear of sorrow and pain. She expected to hear of death, and God speaks of childbearing, of life, of motherhood. Wedlock, the happy union of two loving hearts, will not only continue, but be richly blessed. The family, the bulwark of our society; the home, a haven in this world, will remain. Have we deserved it? How grateful we should be to God whose providential care has maintained our homes, our families, though our national and our personal sins have threatened to undermine their very foundations. Believe and gratefully acknowledge God's wonderful gift as Adam did in v. 20.

Yes, death and decay on all sides! But God has promised protection. God exchanges Adam's flimsy garments with permanent ones. Creation must serve man, that is God's promise.

In this global war we must *trust absolutely in the promises of God's providential care*. The more we realize our own unworthiness, the more gratefully shall we receive every evidence, no matter how small, of God's grace and benevolence. Amen.

F. E. MAYER

Outlines on the Old Standard Gospel Lessons

First Sunday in Advent

Matt. 21:1-9

The beginning of the new church year falls upon days of world-wide turmoil and upheaval, upon difficult, dangerous, critical times for world and Church, family and individual. Yet the same age-old message of v. 5 is still being proclaimed, and 2 Cor. 6:2 is still true. Let us welcome our King!

Blessed be the King that Cometh in the Name of the Lord!

1. *He comes as the King of power*
2. *As the King of grace*
3. *As the King of glory*

1

While Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, John 18:36, yet He is the powerful King of the universe, Matt. 11:27; 28:18. He shapes the events of time according to His eternal plans. His whole life's history proves this, particularly the events of the last days of His life, so contrary to expectations of His friends and the schemes of His enemies, yet planned by Him down to the least detail, Matt. 16:21; 26:1-5. He rules the life of the individual, Text, vv. 1-5; Luke 22:10-16; the history of the Church and world, Matt. 24:1-35.

This powerful ruler comes to you again today! In these days of uncertainty and heartaches he tells you Matt. 10:30, 31; Rom. 8:28; and invites you, Matt. 11:28-30. Welcome Him and obey Him as did the disciples, v. 6. Do His will in days of joy and of sorrow, in humble tasks as well as important duties. Exemplify!

May we, being sinners, welcome and serve the powerful King and Judge of the world? Surely! He is at the same time the King of grace.

2

As such He has been announced in the Old Testament in the prophecies from Gen. 3:15 to Mal. 4:2; as such He has proclaimed Himself Luke 4:18-21; 5:20; 7:22. Today He tells you Text v. 5.