

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM."—EPHESIANS IV: 5.

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.

Greater Church Love—How to Awaken It.

NUMBER FOUR.

BY ITS HISTORY.

There is no church with such a prestige as the Lutheran. She is no less superior in her history than in her doctrines, and in her records we find another element that will strongly attract and bind firmly the affections of her people to her altars.

1. We must teach them the history of her doctrines. We should show them by whom they have been held. We must prove to them, as we are able to do, that the great doctrines we teach were believed by the immediate successors of the Apostles, by those who enjoyed their inspired instruction, and the errors of the fathers of the second and third centuries were penurious of the distinctive doctrines of our church. This can not but confirm them in their adherence to them. We ought to lead them, too, down through the storms that these doctrines have passed and the battles in which they have been engaged. We should point out the manner in which they ran up through the rubbish of scholastic theology—how they were developed—the tests by which they were tried, and how, one after another, having passed the ordeal of the strictest scrutiny, they took their places in the recognised expressions of faith. We must not omit to mention the character of the men who have devoted their lives to their study, made them specialties in their investigations, and, finally, the effect upon the christian department of those who have heartily accepted them. We must tell them of Arnold, Gerhard, Francke, Spenser, Pastor Hanns, and a host of others, "whose praise is in all the churches," who lived and died in the firmest conviction of the truth of the faith of our Lutheran fathers.

2. We must teach them the early history of the church. There is no portion of history, either ecclesiastical or profane, that possesses such interest as the Reformation. If there is any historical theme able to rouse the slumbering emotions, elevate the feelings, and inspire a thrilling eloquence, it is this struggle with Romish hierarchy. But this is the history of the Lutheran Church. The great actors in the one were the founders of the other. The heroes in the great battle against the man of sin were the architects of the house in which we rest. Take away the part our fathers bore in the conflict, and you divest it of all its interest and shear it of all its glory. In the great drama of the world, Luther is the most prominent character. In everything great and ennobling he is without a peer. His life stands out to-day among men without a parallel. The other great ones of earth shine brightly only in the absence of this blazing star. Even in dauntless physical courage he was the equal of the Cæsars, Charlemagne, Peteres, Napoleons; while in moral courage, braving the frowns of the world, fearlessly confronting the scorn and contempts of all men, he was far above them as finite extremes well can be. In force of genius he has had no superior. In deepest devotions to the glory of his

Master, in the most ardent attachment to the truth, in his forgetfulness of self, and in his zeal to accomplish the will of God, of all men he was most like the Saviour. Everything that constitutes true greatness was found in him. All Protestants look to him with feelings of profound reverence and gratitude, and each denomination would gladly claim him. Did our people know him, the very name we bear would draw them closely to the church.

But there is something more in his history calculated to attach them to it, and is the ground of a more rational devotion. His greatness, when united with a love for the truth, would insure a measure of pureness in its doctrines. But when we contemplate the unmistakable evidence of the direction of Providence in all his important steps, and see so clearly that the Spirit of God led him from one advance to another, accomplishing an end through him, of which he never dreamed in the commencement of his opposition to papacy, we can not well resist the conviction that the same Spirit which raised him up to that great work did continue His care in teaching the doctrines by which it was effected. Can they believe He would so wondrously rear a man to teach fundamental error, and invest his character with such brilliancy, only to lure souls to the fires of perdition? There are a number of other great and noble spirits, the coadjutors of Luther, who cluster around him and heighten the interest of this period. In our church there was at this time a most splendid galaxy of noted worthies. Great and good men, very learned in theology and spotless in character, are gathered together to lay the foundation and rear the structure. And by that they did and suffered, they have left it the rich legacy of a peculiar charm.

3. We may teach them the early history of the church in America. The labors and struggles, the perplexities and trials, the dangers and difficulties, the conflicts and triumphs of the pioneers of Lutheranism in our western continent, like the early history of our government, have a special power to please and inspire with affection. No period has a more absorbing interest for an American citizen than the settling of these wilds by his hardy fathers and the revolutionary struggle, the trials and adventures in giving birth to the new nation. So the history of the church at that period, connected frequently with that of the country, cannot but lend some influence in making our people love her. We should by no means stop there. We should trace that history for them to the present day. We should teach them the lives of those men by whom their fathers were baptized and brought into the church, and whom they loved and revered as spiritual fathers. We must show them the mistakes that have been made and the ground we have lost. We must show them also the steady, though slow advance of the church. We must point out to them her increasing importance among the denominations of this country. We must show them her wants, her operations, her responsibilities. We must make the names and characters of her institutions and her ministers known to them. We must make them fully acquainted and bring them into deep sympathy with her, and their most ardent devotion will be secured.

4. We must teach them the strength of the church. Many do not love it because they believe it weak and feeble. In the South, particularly, we are a "feeble folk," and they feel lonely with such a few. The greater number attracts more, and while they are yet young and not able to understand the more important characteristics of the best church, they are drawn from us. We have lost many because they knew nothing of our numbers. Some among these may have been conscientious. Without opportunities of a full examination they have concluded that possibly they were in error, since so many disagreed with them and such a few believed like them. In teaching them the history of the church we should take some pains to tell them how many we are; though weak here we are strong elsewhere; that in number, in talents, in learning we are not only the equal but very far superior to any Protestant denomination; that we are constantly increasing; that the greatest theological writers of modern times have been of us; and that those who shine around us are but reflectors of

a borrowed light or shine dimly when contrasted with sons of our church.

It is not necessary to dwell specially upon the power of history in begetting love for its object. We get in deep sympathy with any person whose life we study. We love our country because we are proud of the great men she has had and the great deeds she has done. To us as citizens we feel that their honor descends and a sacred trust to preserve it unscathed. A kind of sacredness is attached to anything when it has something noble and worthy in its history. Old ruins have attractions and we delight to linger among their broken columns and shattered, fallen walls. Old cathedrals and ancient chambers where great ones have stood, and old battle-grounds where victories have been lost and won, throw a spell around us that binds us to them. The shades of the dead seem to tarry about the places that were the scenes of their earthly labors and to foster the projects they spent their lives in promoting. The spirits of the best men of modern ages are hovering about that church in which we live. In believing its truths we come into communion with their spirits. In loving it we love that which engaged the warmest affections of the noblest hearts. And in laboring for it we place our sacrifices on the same altars that the worthiest hands have placed the gifts of their lives. Our experience shows us what impressions that history will have. Recall the warm emotions that were awakened as you first learned it, and what it did for you it will do for all.

I have often asked how it has come to pass that so many of them are so poor. And I have been answered that "it is allowed to some people to be rich, and to some to be poor." The soundness of this ultimate reason I don't dispute, any more than I would dispute that it was "allowed" to the Jews to crucify and slay the "Prince of Life," who was delivered into their "wicked hands" by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God. But still, within this "allowance," there is room for the question as to the means by which the "allowed" end was brought about, and the use of those means involving man's responsibility in the matter. Do any families become, and remain rich from generation to generation, without following those directions to diligence and economy which Solomon has so wisely, and so truthfully laid down? Or have many families become and continued very poor, without in some way neglecting those directions, and indulging some of that "slack hand," or "slouch," or "love of pleasure, or oil, or wine," which he so soundly condemns? I am tempted here to transcribe a little, fearing that some of your readers will not refer to Solomon:

Practical.

From the A. R. Presbyterian.

A Plain Talk.

PARSONAGE, July 7th, 1869.

Mr. Editor: From the amount of selected matter in the *Presbyterian*, I apprehend you will soon be after the preachers again. I have been "thinking," and if my thoughts are worth anything, you and your readers can have them:

A while ago, some writer called attention to the fact that a great many prayers are offered for the poor, and but few for the rich; and that these, having the greater temptations, have the greater need of prayers. This remark suggests another: That a great deal of advice is tendered to the rich as to how they should use their riches, and very little to the poor as to how they should use their poverty.

Now, rich and poor are relative terms, the very rich man in our community, would be the very poor man in another. Many would be rich; yet, the poor are a privileged class. To them the gospel is preached, and of them chiefly are chosen those who become "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which God hath promised to them that love Him."

They are a necessary class. They do not feel above doing anything that ought to be done. And without them how could the rich who are "called," exercise the "grace of giving"? They are also a perpetual class. "For the poor never cease out of the land," and, "Ye have the poor always with you."

It is good, no doubt, for the spiritual welfare of many, to be poor; just as it is good for many to be sick, or in any way "afflicted," still, extreme poverty is not to be desired. It has its fiery trials, and sore temptations, as well as extreme wealth. And while no one should covet the latter, so all ought to deprecate, and endeavor to avoid the former. In many ways "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." It is never mentioned in the Scriptures as a blessing, though it may be made an occasion of blessings to those who are better qualified to bear poverty than riches; yet, it is very often threatened as a chastisement—a curse, for disobedience, upon God's professed people.

I have spent a score of years in ministerial life, and more than a third of them in missionary labor. I have been in frequent, and close contact with many poor people, and poor churches; and I have observed some things. Hence a string of questions: Why have so many vacancies been so long without pastors? The poverty of the people. Why have so many pastors charge of two, three, and sometimes four, congregations, widely scattered, requiring him to spend weeks, nay, months of each year in riding? The poverty of the people. Why has not Synod

given employment to all the ministers she has raised? The poverty of many ministers prevented them from "going a warfare at their own charges;" and the poverty of Synod's treasury prevented her from employing them at home or abroad. And it is sometimes asked, with a little petulance, too: "Why are so many pastors following the plow, or in the school-room, when so many of the aged, and infirm of their flock, unable to attend church, have not seen the shepherd's face in more than a year? The pastor's reply: "Our families must have bread. When called here, the people promised us a support, but they have not given it. And the people say: it is true; we did promise, and have not given it; but we are so poor."

Then, how does he show his worldly-mindedness? He loves money so. He is always working, and planning, and talking about what will pay. And he does make lots of it.

What does he do with it when made? Spend it, I suppose, for fine house, and carriage, and horses, and dressing, and table? No, indeed; some people think him smartly stingy about these things. I have heard folks say that he is most too stingy to take a living, after he has worked for it. A heap of the neighbors that haven't the fourth of his property keep a better table than he does.

Then, I suppose, that he does very little for your pastor, and the missionary box, and the poor? Well, no, I believe he does pretty well for these things. They say he is right good to the poor, that are really poor. And he has a kind of fancy for our pastor; he pays him about a third of what he gets, and sends him lots of things besides.

And after he has done all of these things; toiling hard, when others are taking it easy; racking his brain for the best plan to "guide his affairs with discretion," while others are vacant or trifling; living temperately, and economically, while others are indulging to the extent of their means, and giving for the support of his pastor, and the comfort of the poor, what has he thus saved, while others are consuming it at home—you call him stingy, and worldly-minded?

Well, really it don't look like he is; but that's what people say about him. Now don't you suppose that Elder Thrifty, by nature, loves ease and comfort, and luxury, as much as any of the congregation? It is likely he does. They say, before he joined the Church, he was a little too fond of them, and if he had gone on as he was going, he would have soon run through.

No, we don't think that; but is it not strange that he came to look more like worldly-minded, money-loving men after he became a christian, than he did before? It would be strange indeed, if he really looks so. But is that a fact? You admit that he has a nature that loves ease. When, therefore, he is toiling, while others are indulging this love of ease, does he not deny himself that indulgence? Now, if he hoarded up the money thus made, you might say truly he is a money-lover. If he spent the money for a sumptuous table, or showy dressing, you could justly say that he is worldly-minded; and that he manifests it by indulging the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." But when he denies himself the ease, and the luxury, and shows, in order that he may have wherewith to relieve Christ's poor ones, to support his pastor, to contribute to the missionary box, and to furnish his family with "ample conveyance to church, and comfortable clothing for all kinds of weather," in what part of all this conduct does he look more worldly-minded than he did before he became a christian?

Well, really, I never looked at the thing in that light. I suppose he must be a great deal better man than some folks think he is. Yes; he is what I call a Christian, wide awake, doing whatsoever his hands find to do with all his might. Suppose all the members of your pastor's charge should commence now to do in all things as Elder Thrifty does, what would be the result?

I suppose it would not be long before the charge could have four pastors instead of one; and each congregation preaching every Sabbath instead of once a month; and our pastor could spend in study the time he now spends working for bread; and in pastoral visitation the time now spent in riding to and from his appointments.

Exactly so. And would not all the families become better off? He is able to support good schools, take the *Presbyterian*, give the young people a little help as they marry off, and all without any one becoming any more worldly-minded than they are while indulging a little "love of pleasure," of ease, a little sloth, a little slack-handedness, a little love of "oil and wine"? Because many are "chosen" from among "the poor of this world" to become "rich in

faith and heirs of the kingdom"; it does not necessarily follow that they are to remain "the poor of this world." "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is." It has proved true in the experience of thousands, that the growth of their "wealth and outward estate" began with their christianity. They left off sinful, expensive habits. They forsook idle company. They loved home better. They felt bound in conscience to deny themselves, and to labor for the present and the future welfare of their families; and, also, that their beneficence should extend to others. They felt that it was "blessed to give." They scattered freely. And in reaping bountifully, they verified the Scripture, that "with such sacrifice God is well pleased," and that "God loveth the cheerful giver."

Such, Mr. Editor, are some of my thoughts, founded upon years of observation. Is there not a defect in the manner in which christianity is taught? I have heard many a sermon against world-loving and money-loving, which many people understood as being preached against enterprise, industry and economy; but I never heard one against thriftlessness, idleness, and slack-handedness. Nor did I ever hear one very plainly teaching the people that the "love of Christ should constrain them," to practice economy, diligence and enterprise—to make money for Christ's sake—to make it that they may have it—not to keep, but to give for every good work.

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God, was in such constant companionship with him, was so assimilated to him, that he walked as God walked. He neither went before nor fell behind what God required. In spirit, in word, and in deed, God was his model; and, so far as imperfect man could be, he was conformed to the Divine likeness. What a power a holy life is! It speaks more eloquently than words. Its logic is perfect, and can not be gainsayed. Its rhetoric is faultless. Such, in a high degree, was the life of Enoch before a corrupt and wicked race. Such, without a single imperfection or flaw, was the life of Jesus. But in both cases, powerful as it was, it did not and could not arrest the wickedness in man's heart and turn him to righteousness. It may stop the mouth and palsies the tongue of evil-doers, but the energy of God's spirit alone can change the heart.

Faithful preacher, Enoch was, holy as his life was, his peculiar end from the world is the manner in his history. Seven short words express it all: "He was not, for God took him." The commentary of another eminent servant of God, in a later age on these words, explains them, and takes away all obscurity from them. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." "He was not found." It may be, men sought him as the sons of the prophets sought Elijah after his translation. What effect this marvelous exit from earth had upon his contemporaries is not known, only that their wickedness became more and more flagrant. Neither his faithful preaching, nor his holy life, nor God's miraculous interposition in the removal of Enoch, could, or did, cure man's evil nature. Neither did the mighty work of Jesus cure the inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. "If men believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." "He was translated that he should not see death." He was the first of the human race in whom redemption was completed.

The disembodied spirit of Abel, another of God's saints who died before the translation of Enoch, went to glory. But Enoch was the first whose soul and body, redeemed from the ruins of the fall, entered the celestial gates. The first pledge of completed redemption, the wonder of "principalities and powers in heavenly places," changed at once, and rapt to heaven. He needs no resurrection, for he knew no death; and yet, in celebrating the glories of redemption, he can sing and join all the redeemed at last in their "thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The same redeeming love which granted him a reprieve from death, and getting upon slits, but even then it is foolish. It is truly amusing to hear some men roll out big words, and it is more amusing to see men ignorant, but fastidious, trying to swallow those big words with the idea that the speaker is a very learned man. A New York contemporary gives an illustration of the stilted style, and also of the common-sense style, as illustrated in two eminent clergymen of Brooklyn. At a meeting of the Brooklyn City Mission Society, in Plymouth Church a few years ago, Rev. Dr. Storrs exclaimed, "Brethren, we are in need of an enlarged pecuniary subsidy!" Mr. Beecher, in the course of a few remarks said, in his direct way: "In carrying out our plans, we want money, and we must have it." This is a pretty good illustration. Fastidious fools would think Dr. Storrs had said a very nice thing, but Mr. Beecher's remark would reach the pocket and do the work. There are some congregations who undervalue their pastors because they speak simply and to the point. They want a great show of learning. They judge by the hard words, and if the preacher "gets off" enough of these, they are content. What foolishness. The most eminent of our men were simple in their address. The charms of Webster's speeches lies in their simplicity. Dr. John Hall, who is so popular just now, is noted for his simplicity. "He does not use a word that the common people can not understand. His sermons are plain talks with men's hearts. And the great man is generally simple. Way-laid is a model in this respect, and is worthy of imitation.—*American Christian Review.*"

Such, Mr. Editor, are some of my thoughts, founded upon years of observation. Is there not a defect in the manner in which christianity is taught? I have heard many a sermon against world-loving and money-loving, which many people understood as being preached against enterprise, industry and economy; but I never heard one against thriftlessness, idleness, and slack-handedness. Nor did I ever hear one very plainly teaching the people that the "love of Christ should constrain them," to practice economy, diligence and enterprise—to make money for Christ's sake—to make it that they may have it—not to keep, but to give for every good work.

Well, no, I believe he does pretty well for these things. They say he is right good to the poor, that are really poor. And he has a kind of fancy for our pastor; he pays him about a third of what he gets, and sends him lots of things besides.

And after he has done all of these things; toiling hard, when others are taking it easy; racking his brain for the best plan to "guide his affairs with discretion," while others are vacant or trifling; living temperately, and economically, while others are indulging to the extent of their means, and giving for the support of his pastor, and the comfort of the poor, what has he thus saved, while others are consuming it at home—you call him stingy, and worldly-minded?

Well, really it don't look like he is; but that's what people say about him. Now don't you suppose that Elder Thrifty, by nature, loves ease and comfort, and luxury, as much as any of the congregation? It is likely he does. They say, before he joined the Church, he was a little too fond of them, and if he had gone on as he was going, he would have soon run through.

No, we don't think that; but is it not strange that he came to look more like worldly-minded, money-loving men after he became a christian, than he did before? It would be strange indeed, if he really looks so. But is that a fact? You admit that he has a nature that loves ease. When, therefore, he is toiling, while others are indulging this love of ease, does he not deny himself that indulgence? Now, if he hoarded up the money thus made, you might say truly he is a money-lover. If he spent the money for a sumptuous table, or showy dressing, you could justly say that he is worldly-minded; and that he manifests it by indulging the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." But when he denies himself the ease, and the luxury, and shows, in order that he may have wherewith to relieve Christ's poor ones, to support his pastor, to contribute to the missionary box, and to furnish his family with "ample conveyance to church, and comfortable clothing for all kinds of weather," in what part of all this conduct does he look more worldly-minded than he did before he became a christian?

Well, really, I never looked at the thing in that light. I suppose he must be a great deal better man than some folks think he is. Yes; he is what I call a Christian, wide awake, doing whatsoever his hands find to do with all his might. Suppose all the members of your pastor's charge should commence now to do in all things as Elder Thrifty does, what would be the result?

I suppose it would not be long before the charge could have four pastors instead of one; and each congregation preaching every Sabbath instead of once a month; and our pastor could spend in study the time he now spends working for bread; and in pastoral visitation the time now spent in riding to and from his appointments.

Exactly so. And would not all the families become better off? He is able to support good schools, take the *Presbyterian*, give the young people a little help as they marry off, and all without any one becoming any more worldly-minded than they are while indulging a little "love of pleasure," of ease, a little sloth, a little slack-handedness, a little love of "oil and wine"? Because many are "chosen" from among "the poor of this world" to become "rich in

faith and heirs of the kingdom"; it does not necessarily follow that they are to remain "the poor of this world." "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is." It has proved true in the experience of thousands, that the growth of their "wealth and outward estate" began with their christianity. They left off sinful, expensive habits. They forsook idle company. They loved home better. They felt bound in conscience to deny themselves, and to labor for the present and the future welfare of their families; and, also, that their beneficence should extend to others. They felt that it was "blessed to give." They scattered freely. And in reaping bountifully, they verified the Scripture, that "with such sacrifice God is well pleased," and that "God loveth the cheerful giver."