

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

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

NEW SERIES, VOL. 2--NO. 9.

COLUMBIA, S. C., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1869.

OLD SERIES, VOL. IV--NO. 61.

The Lutheran Visitor

IS PUBLISHED
EVERY WEDNESDAY
BY
RUDE & MILLER.

TERMS:
The Lutheran Visitor is furnished to subscribers at \$2.00 per year, if paid in advance. Clergymen, their Widows, and Students of Theology, are charged \$2.00 per year, if paid in advance.

Those who do not pay within three months of the time their year begins, will, in every case, be charged fifty cents additional.

RATES OF ADVERTISING:
For one square (one inch of column):
First insertion.....\$ 15
Second.....10
Third.....7
Six months.....50
Twelve months.....100

On advertisements of three squares and upwards a discount of 25 per cent. of five squares and upwards, 30 per cent. of ten squares and upwards, 40 per cent. and of one half column and upwards, 50 per cent. will be deducted from the above rates.

Obituaries when more than five lines, ten cents for eight words, payable in advance.

Postage—Five cents per quarter.

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Rev. A. R. RUDE,
Columbia, S. C.

Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor,
Propositions on Baptism.

[To be considered at the next meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Virginia, Oct. 14, 1869.]

1. Baptism, as a positive institution of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only a sign of grace, but also a sacrament by which "the grace of God is offered."

2. As such, it is a necessary ordinance, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." ("Born again of Baptism and the Holy Ghost."—Augs. Conf.)

3. This necessity, as to the outward part of Baptism, is that only which arises from the precept or command of God, and is not absolute, as is that of the inward part, or "the renewal of the Holy Ghost."

4. As an outward rite, its administration does not invariably precede regeneration, or the new birth, nor regeneration always follow it "ex opere operato."

5. To those only who rightly use it does it become an instrument whereby the gracious influences of the sanctifying Spirit are conferred.

6. Thus as an appointed medium of God's gift to us, and not of our gift to him: "It effects the forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the Devil, and confers everlasting salvation upon all who believe it, as the word and promise of God declare."

7. As little children were actually received and blessed by our Lord when on earth, and were encouraged in coming or being brought to him, it can not be supposed that he deemed them unfit to be received into his church by baptism.

8. If infants were received into God's gracious covenant under the Mosaic dispensation, it is as undoubtedly their privilege to be thus received under the present Christian dispensation.

9. If God did not regard their age as any barrier to their reception of "the sign of circumcision," it is mere presumption now to urge it as an objection to their receiving baptism, which is "the circumcision of Christ." (Col. ii: 11.)

10. It was no more necessary that infant baptism should be enjoined by Christ, than it was that he should prescribe the age or sex of those admitted to the Lord's Supper.

11. If our Lord had intended that infants should not be received as members of his church by baptism, as they had always been by circumcision, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have given express prohibition to that effect.

12. No one is warranted in asserting that God, in his own appointed way, does not work faith and other graces in the infant heart. We have both precept and example to prove that he has done it.

13. But were it otherwise, faith in the heart of a child is no more a prerequisite to baptism than it was to circumcision. It is no more essential to the validity and benefit of the former than it was to the same characteristics of the latter.

14. Therefore, to the infant as well as the adult, baptism is "the sign and pledge of that inward grace, which,

though modified in its operations by the difference of their circumstances, has respect to, and flows from, a covenant relation to each of the three persons in whose name they are baptized, acceptance by the Father, union with Christ as the head of his mystical body, the church, and the communion of the Holy Ghost."

15. No proof has ever been furnished that the apostles did not baptize infants.

16. It may be confidently affirmed upon the testimony of some of the christian fathers, that infant baptism has been practiced by the church from the apostolic until the present age, and was never seriously opposed, except by an occasional word of question, until the sixteenth century, by the Anabaptists. It is therefore no innovation.

17. As our Lord was circumcised when a child, the rejection of infant baptism robs his infancy of its most consolatory and profound significance to the parental heart.

18. It is as improper to re-baptize one having received the rite in infancy, on the ground that he had only subsequently attained a conscientious justifying faith in Christ, as it would be to re-baptize, for the same reason, one who had first received the rite in adult years.

19. The continuous benefits of baptism are only secured in their increasing fullness by a voluntary and sincere compliance with the covenant, faithful culture and a diligent use of the means of grace.

20. We hold, therefore, that it is the privilege and duty of parents, as the spiritual, mental and social guardians of their children, to secure them the benefits of baptism, believing, with our Confession, "that children ought to be baptized, who through such baptism are presented to God, and become acceptable to him."

21. Those members of our communion who either reject or withhold this holy sacrament from their children, are inconsistent, deficient in duty, and deny the faith of our Evangelical Church.

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Ministerial.

Ministers at Table.

There are other places besides the pulpit where the minister must make a suitable impression. In his personal intercourse with his parishioners, at their houses, he will find frequent occasion for the exercise of care and just taste, that by his presence he may do good, and not harm.

A writer in the New York Christian Advocate has some excellent remarks on ministerial etiquette, and thus touches on the behavior of clergymen at the tables of their people:

Ministers, more than any other class of persons, are invited out to dinners, teas, and social parties, and at these gatherings, as elsewhere, they are looked up to as examples of propriety—and for this reason, if for no other, they should be qualified to grace the festive board or the table of any family, and "eat and drink and be merry" in such a manner as to make the food provided most palatable, and the guests delighted with the meal.

As in the parlor, so at the table, a little observation and common sense will enable the minister to act well his part, and to behave with becoming propriety. He should avoid the extremes of vulgarity and daintiness, and no more monopolize all the conversation than all the food. He should pass on to others the courtesies paid to himself, and be more solicitous about their wants than about his own.

He should eat and drink moderately, and observe the rules of taste and elegance which govern at tables of refinement. If he is inattentive to others, or brusque in manner, or boisterous in talk or laugh, or careless in eating or drinking, he is accused of a coarse nature and ill-breeding, greatly to his disadvantage. If he is a stranger to the usages of the society or to the customs of the table, he should observe others and follow their example, as singers follow the leading voices of a choir, without destroying the harmony of the tune or making an unpleasant discord, and in this way adapt himself to the requirements of any table. It is a chagrin to persons of culture, and it shocks their feelings, when their pastor, or any other clergyman admitted to their society, by virtue of his office, is indelicate or discourteous, or wanting in any of the qualities of a gentleman. On the other hand, they are delighted with and proud of their guest, when he is an example of propriety, and impresses

the company with the graces of culture which he brings to the table—and no minister can afford to be indifferent to his conduct, at meals, any more than in the pulpit.

Are You in Earnest?

It is Christ's work that you are doing. He has entrusted it to you. You profess to love your Master. Are you really in earnest in your work for him?

It is a great work. Immortal souls committed to your trust; a work shared by God himself; a work for the promotion of which Christ died; in which angels are interested. O, thou, who, in God's providence, art called to work in the same field with prophets, apostles and martyrs; with angels, with the Father himself—*art thou in earnest?*

The time is short. Your own life is uncertain. Your pupil is mortal. Youth ripens into manhood. The golden opportunity is fleeting. "The night cometh." Are you in earnest? Fellow-teachers, face your own conscience, and remembering that God is looking on your work, ask yourself the question, *AM I IN EARNEST?*

"Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might."

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Practical.

Individual Effort.

After we had embarked on a vessel to cross Lake Michigan, and were just ready to set sail, a young stranger came on board and entered the cabin. The few other passengers had already retired, and he seemed to suppose that he was alone, for he took out a Bible, read a few moments and then knelt in prayer. He was evidently much engaged, but when the oaths of the captain and officers became very audible, his earnestness greatly increased, and, presently, he seemed in such an agony of spirit for these swears that he could scarcely suppress his voice, while pleading with God to have mercy on them.

Early in the morning I was awakened by a loud voice in the companionway, calling out, "Here whose tracts are these?" followed by threats and imprecations. "Those tracts are mine," responded the young stranger calmly. "I have but a few you see, but they are very good, and you may have one if you wish." The sailor smiled and walked away, making no reply.

When seated at the breakfast-table the young man addressed the captain, saying, "Captain, as the Lord supplies all our wants, if neither you nor the passengers object, I would like to ask a blessing on our repast."

"If you please," was the reply, with apparent good will. In a few minutes the cook was on deck, and informed the sailors, whose mouths were at once filled with curses. The captain apologized for the profanity of the crew, saying that it was common and that they meant no harm by it.

"With your leave, Captain," said the young man. "I think we can put an end to it." The captain was embarrassed and hesitatingly replied, "I might as well sail against a head-wind as to think of such a thing."

"But I meant all I said," replied the young man.

"Well if you think it possible you may try it," said the captain.

The young man soon found an opportunity to enter into conversation with the oldest and most profane of the sailors, and drew from him a history of his adventures. At length, proud of his nautical skill the sailor boasted that he could do anything that could be done by any sailor.

"I doubt it," said the young man.

"I can!" was the reply, "and will not be outdone, my word for it."

"Well, when a sailor passes his word he ought to be believed. I knew a sailor who resolved that he would stop swearing and he did so."

"Ah," said the sailor, "you've anchored me; I'm fast, but I can do it."

"I know you can," said the young man, "and I hope you will anchor all your shipmates' oaths with yours."

Not a word of profanity was afterward heard in the vessel. During the day, as opportunity presented itself, he conversed singly with each sailor on the subject of his soul's salvation, and gained the hearts of all.

After supper he requested the privilege of attending worship in the cabin and all the crew were assembled. He read Matthew's account of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and then looking around on us said, "He is risen; yes, Jesus lives—let us

worship him." It was a melting scene. After prayer we went on deck. All was peace and solemnity. We ceased just as the setting sun was flinging upon us his last cheering rays.

"Look yonder," he exclaimed. "You who have been nourished in the storm and cradled in the tempest. Look at the setting sun and learn a lesson that will make you happy when it shall set to rise no more. As rose that sun this morning to afford us light and comfort, so has the Son of God arisen to secure salvation to all who will accept and love him, and as that sun withdraws his beams and we are veiled in darkness for a season, so will the Sun of Righteousness withdraw his offers of mercy from all who continue to neglect them. But remember, that season is one that never ends—one dark perpetual night."

The captain, deeply affected, went into the cabin, took his Bible, and read it until we had all retired to rest. And thus for three days we regularly attended family worship, and had much interesting conversation on various subjects, for there was nothing in the religion of the young man to repress the cheerfulness of social intercourse. From his familiarity with the Bible, his readiness in illustrating its truths and presenting its motives, and from his fearless, but judicious and persevering steps, we concluded that he was a minister of the gospel. But a few hours before we arrived in port, we ascertained that he was a mechanic.

Before we reached the wharf the captain came forward, and with much feeling bade him farewell, declaring that he was resolved to live as he had lived, no longer. "I have had," said he, "ministers as passengers on board my vessel, on week days and Sabbaths, but never before have I been reminded of the family altar, where my departed parents knelt."

As we left the vessel, every countenance showed that our friend had, by his decided yet mild Christian faithfulness, won the gratitude of many and the esteem of all.—*Sub-bath Day Miscellany.*

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A Remarkable Case.

A few years ago an old man died in London, who was a remarkable instance of the mutability of human affairs, of the long suffering and the grace of God, and of the benefits arising from special and extraordinary efforts for the salvation of men.

He was born in 1770, and when twenty years of age he went to London to seek employment as a journeyman tailor. In a few years he commenced business on his own account, and he was so successful that in 1824 he was the owner of one of the largest establishments in the most fashionable part of the city, with an income of nearly ten thousand pounds a year, a capital of one hundred thousand pounds, an expensive establishment in the country, and considerable influence.

But he was not satisfied with what he possessed, and his desire to increase his wealth led him to poverty. He became a speculator in the Stock Exchange, and investing his money unwisely, he in one year lost three-fifths of his property. Other losses followed, the remnants of his wealth soon dwindled away, and he who had lived in a fashionable square had at length to take up his abode as a weekly tenant in a miserable attic in the most wretched part of the city. He was at this time nearly eighty years old. A few years after this his wife, who was a christian woman, died and his cup of sorrow, already filled to the brim, seemed to overflow. With his home comforts diminished, he was reduced to a miserable pittance, doled out to him by the parish authorities and some relatives.

In these trying circumstances he had not the privilege which christians enjoy in seasons of difficulty and sorrow. As a man of business, he had been esteemed for his integrity and uprightness, and he had striven to maintain his character, and had prided himself upon it. He had been accustomed to attend the services of the Established Church, and thought he was doing his duty. But he had not submitted himself to God, he had not received salvation through Jesus Christ, and hence, instead of trusting in God in the time of extremity, and looking to him for help, he could only curse himself for his imprudence and folly, which had brought him into these straits.

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Reduced from affluence to the most abject poverty, burdened with sorrow, without money, without friends, without hope for the present or the future, an old man nearly ninety years of age, he went about like one beside himself. One Lord's day evening, in the summer of 1860, he resolved to commit suicide, and left his miserable room with the intention to return to it no more. His destination was the square called Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was nearly nine o'clock, and to his surprise, instead of finding it nearly deserted, he saw a crowd of persons there. On going up to them to ascertain what was going on, he found a city missionary in the midst, who was reading the account of the conversion of the jailor at Philippi, and the words, "Do thyself no harm," forcibly arrested his attention. He listened with interest to the address which followed. He saw that he himself was on the brink of ruin, that he needed salvation, and that only Jesus could save him, and instead of rushing into the presence of God, he returned home to cry to God for mercy. In a few days he was led to trust in Jesus as his Saviour. Poor and wretched as he was, he learned that Jesus was his friend, and this knowledge made him happy. He enjoyed peace in believing.

27. He now became very earnest in his attendance on the means of grace, and almost every evening in the week found him at some religious meeting, and in the summer he was a constant attendant on the open air services of the square where he first realized his condition as a sinner, and was thus led to Christ for salvation. On one occasion, he told the city missionary and his pastor that he had enjoyed more real happiness since his conversion, notwithstanding his loneliness and poverty, than he had experienced in all the years of his worldly prosperity; that he continually blessed God, that in order to save his soul, he had permitted his riches to fly away; and that although that day he had had only two baked apples for his dinner, he would rather have that and Christ with it, than to have all his former superfluities without Christ; and he said that he was then the happiest man in London, although a short time before he had been the most miserable.

28. The day before he completed his ninety-third year he became sick, and was confined to his bed. It soon became evident that he was near his end; but he was happy. He knew that Jesus was his Saviour, and that absent from the body he should be present with the Lord; and in seven days he passed away.

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Religion and Old Age.

"YET THERE IS ROOM."

"How dreary (said the late John Foster) would old age be without the atonement? But with it, old age may be cheerful and a death-bed a happy one.

Two hundred years ago, the Rev. S. Rutherford wrote to an aged nobleman in Scotland, nearly as follows, and the aged reader in the present day may reap good to his soul by the faithful letter. Oh that the Holy Spirit may be sought for to make the reading of it a blessing! His influence will not be asked in vain:

"I beseech you, sir, by the wounds of the Redeemer, by your appearance before Him as your Judge, and by the worth of your soul, lose no more time—run fast, for it is late. You are now upon the very borders of the other life; the Lord has given this your MUCIL, and therefore he will require MUCIL. Oh, for the Lord's sake, most honored sir, look narrowly to the work; for if you be upon sinking sand, a blast, a storm of death will blow you off, and there will be no foundation for your poor soul."

32. "Read over your long life with the light of God's daylight. Surely it is good to look to your compass, and all that you have need of for your shipping for eternity; for no wind can blow you back again into time. Remember that when your race and the voyage of life shall be ended, that when you shall be in the outermost circle and border of time, and shall put your feet within the reach of eternity, all the good things of this short night's scene will be as nothing. One mile from God will be more for eternity than if you had the charter of three worlds.

33. "Now, when you are drinking the dregs of life, and when old age, like death's long shadow, is casting a covering upon you, surely it is no fit

time to count upon this vain life, and to set your heart and love upon it. Do then, seek ease and rest for your soul in God, through Christ. There is infinite justice, dear sir, with the party with whom you have to do. It is His nature not to acquit the guilty: God forgetteth not the Surety, and the sinner; and every man must pay either in his own person (the Lord save you from the payment) or in his Surety, Christ.

34. "Bless the Lord that there is such a thing as the free grace of God, and a free ransom given for sold souls—the precious blood of Christ. But the man that is not born again can not enter into the kingdom of God. I wish you an awakened soul; and, oh, betake yourself to Christ without delay.

35. "Haste, aged sinner, to the Lamb of God, and seek salvation in His precious blood. O dear, honored sir, lose not a moment, for you have not one to spare. By your past neglect of religion to the present moment, you have made your repentance the more difficult; yet if you now at once implore the help of God's Holy Spirit in the name of the Lord Jesus, he will grant your petition even now. It is not too late for you. 'Yet there is room.'"

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Selections.

Luther's Death and Burial.

His death at length drew near. About one o'clock on the morning of February 18, 1546, the pain at his chest became intolerable. He frequently prayed, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit. My heavenly Father, eternal and most merciful God, thou hast revealed to me thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Him have I professed. Him have I preached. I adore him as my only Saviour and Redeemer. I know I shall be forever with him, for no one can pluck me out of his hands." Dr. Jonas said to him, "Beloved father, do you still hold on to Christ the Son of God, our Saviour and Redeemer?" "O yes!" was his last utterance. He then folded his hands on his breast, turned his face to one side, and fell asleep softly as an infant on its mother's breast. The Countess of Mansfeld, who was present, would scarcely believe that he was gone, till the icy coldness of death under her touch chilled all hopes. She wept as one that refused to be comforted. On February 19th his body was borne in a leaden coffin to St. Andrew's church, Eisenberg, where Dr. Jonas preached from Thessalonians iv: 13, 14, and next day the body was borne to Wittenberg. As the procession proceeded one of the crowd unexpectedly gave out and began to sing the first hymn composed by Luther:

"From deep distress I call to thee,
My God, regard my crying!"

And the whole multitude joined in the hymn till their voices choked with weeping. The body was finally taken to the castle church, which was crowded with weepers. Bugenhagen and Melancthon successively entered the pulpit. The former gave out his text, but the moment he attempted to address the audience he was overcome by weeping. The congregation joined in this burst of feeling, and from thence the crowds in the streets caught the solemn sympathy, and the whole city became literally a *Bechium*. Martin Luther fell asleep in Jesus. His mighty spirit now soars amid the seraphims, worshipping Him whose glory he indicated, and whose church he emancipated from thralldom. His ashes repose peacefully in the hope of a resurrection in Wittenberg. His living voice consecrated its churches, and his dead dust endears its soil. Kings and emperors have made pilgrimages to the tomb of that monk, and nations cherish in their hearts his imperishable name. Charles V., Frederick the Great, Peter of Russia, and Wallenstein, and lastly, Napoleon, visited the spot where the remains of the Reformer lie; and even these names, the sounds of which still shake the casements of the world, seem but ciphers beside the dust of Martin Luther. The moral grandeur of an Augustinian monk dims the lustre and diminishes the greatness of heroes, consuls, and kings. Nobler far is moral than mere physical domination. He is the true ruler who sways minds with truth, not he who restrains with a rod of iron. We may not applaud the energy which subdues rebellious provinces and clothes with golden harvests otherwise and

arid fields. But we must admire and infinitely prefer that more glorious might which throws into other minds kindling thoughts—awakens in human hearts the sense of their lost prerogative, and moulds society into all the forms of truth, and beauty, and order. The Pauls, the Luthers, the Calvins, the Crommers and the Knoxes are the true sovereigns of the earth; the Napoleons, and Caesars, and Alexanders are not to be compared with them. The former shall only begin to approach their meridian glory when the latter sink into mid-night oblivion.—*Cunningham.*

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54. "Haste, aged sinner, to the Lamb