

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM"—EPHESIANS IV: 6.

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.
OUR CHURCH.

Dear Doctor: The want of harmony and united, energetic co-operation in our Church is to be lamented. Many a good and faithful heart is sad, very sad, in looking over our history for the last decade of years. Our future appears, to many, gloomy and unpromising. Men are discouraged. The tone of our papers is unhealthy, and despondency fills the souls of some of our best and most efficient men. Private letters, once so cheerful and encouraging, have a sombre appearance. It is true the envelopes have not the black border of mourning, yet the contents partake of sadness. The circumstances that brought about this state of things may or may not have been under our control; the consequences are nevertheless upon us. Instead of one General Synod, we have many, or, more properly speaking, the one has been divided into many. The great question therefore is, *What is duty in this condition of our Church?*

The general cry is, "Let us labor to reunite our Church." However kind this intention may be, and however worthy of the noblest efforts of our greatest minds and best hearts, I fear that it is impracticable if even it were possible. Nor do I think it necessary to the rapid progress and ultimate success of our Church. "In union there is strength," I admit; but there are other elements besides in unions far less commendable than strength. This cry for union smacks of centralization. It aims at power, which, if concentrated, may not always be exerted in the most judicious manner, nor in the best direction to attain the highest good. Examples might be cited from history to prove that ecclesiastical power, like political power, may become dangerous, and needs to be broken by a Higher Power. In this almost universal cry for union and concentration there is danger lest the principal duty of the ministry, the salvation of souls, may occupy but a secondary place. Cardinal Wolsey's language, "If I had served my God with half the zeal," &c., may, with slight variation, become the language of some of our good ministers, when about to be summoned before the Great Tribunal, under a consciousness that souls have perished whilst they were laboring to unite Synods and produce ecclesiastical harmony.

In the condition of our Church then so deplorable? Has it none but gloomy prospects? Will it finally become extinct as a Church? Will the name of the immortal Lutheran perish from off the earth? To me it seems that our Church never had so hopeful a prospect as just now. Our institutions are flourishing, our benevolent enterprises have a commendable vigor, our ministry is steadily increasing, our papers and periodicals are supported, and notwithstanding all this, some persons are gloomy and look at the dark side of the picture. They never stop to inquire, whose is the fault of any languishing in the Church? Do such persons put on a hopeful, cheerful countenance, such as the presence of God will fully warrant, in the family circle, in the pulpit, at Synod, in their intercourse with men, in their correspondence, and they will produce sunshine in a hundred sympathizing hearts.

But we are divided. We have the General Synod of the United States, the General Council, the General Synod in North America, the Synodical Conference of North America, together with ten independent district Synods. Now all these may exist, and need not necessarily interfere, the one with the other. They all have their bounds and their own particular fields of labor. They nearly all have their territorial or geographical limits within which to operate unmolested. Each of the above named bodies is doing a great work. Each has its own institutions, its own periodicals, its own Seminars, its own hymn book, its own liturgy, if any liturgy at all, and finds enough to do, and ample room for the most extended operations within its own bounds.

A wholesome rivalry between these bodies need not necessarily interfere with piety, good-fellowship or progress. If there is a feeling or expressed complaint of weakness in consequence of the smallness of the organized body, the remedy is at hand. It needs but increased zeal, energy, prayer, faith and work, on the part of its members, and the body will not be insignificant long. The history of our church, in this country, furnishes more than one example, of a few ministers and a few hundred members organizing a district Synod, and in ten years numbering fifty ministers and its membership running into thousands. The General Synod of the United States was a very feeble body at its organization. It had no college, only a gymnasium or high-school under the superintendence of the two brothers Jacobs. It had no Theological Seminary, only a few students, taught privately, here and there over the church. Dr. S. S. Schumaker had five or six students at New Market, Va., whom he instructed privately. This was, I think, the highest number in any one of these private Seminars. The General Synod had no paper except a little 8 by 10 published by Dr. Shaeffer, of Frederick, Md. The fact is, it had nothing except a few devoted men, and all else to provide for. These men determined to succeed. They did succeed. They built a Seminary, chartered a college, published a paper—they rose like a rocket, and to this day the *stick* has not come down. Their work exists to the present day. This General Body is the mother as well as the model of all our General Bodies. It were wise if her children were directed by the wisdom and energy of the mother. This brings me to my subject more particularly, viz: *Our General Synod in the South.*

I noticed above the deficiencies and the difficulties of the old General Synod. In contrast let us see what we really possess, and make our superior advantages over that first organization in our church.

1. We have Roanoke College with 160 students on its roll, a full corps of professors, a library of near 10,000 volumes that will compare favorably with any in our Church, in this country, and a very superior mineral cabinet of our 10,000 rare and valuable specimens. The reputation of this institution is not to be made, but it is established and its success beyond experiment.

2. We have a regularly organized Theological Seminary with a respectable number of students the first year. By the generosity of Roanoke College, both the books of her fine library and the labors of her Professors are cheerfully tendered for the use of the Seminary.

3. We have a church paper that takes rank with any of our church papers North or South. True it is only a single sheet of four pages, but this is not necessarily a disadvantage. Whilst a double sheet gives more reading matter upon its eight pages than a single sheet upon four, it often has this disadvantage, that the brains of one man spread over eight pages must necessarily be *thinner* than when concentrated upon four.

4. We have any desirable amount of territory, and respectable organizations in many prominent places throughout the South, as *nulli* around which to operate in the formation of new organizations. We need, most of all, men, earnest, working, self-denying men, to occupy almost every city, town and village within our territory; for Lutherans are found in them all.

5. We have another advantage over the early days of the first General Synod. I mean an advanced stage of education in liberality and the spirit of progress. The fathers of that body were obliged to educate the people first and then ask their donations. These donations were often very small. If a man gave one dollar the solicitor had to be satisfied and pass on to the next. Now hundreds of dollars are given as often as tens were then.

Give our advantages to any body of men, earnest, determined men, and they would ask for no better assurances of success. Many of our good brethren feel discouraged because North Carolina has withdrawn. It is a cause for regret that such action was taken by that Synod; but a tree with one limb lopped off need not necessarily pine away and die. Men may lose an arm or a leg and still be useful in society and accomplish much. A limb may be lopped

from a tree and the symmetry marred thereby, but in a few years nature, by compensation, will restore that symmetry. A young person may lose a tooth, and it will leave an ugly gap, but in a few years nature will force the adjoining teeth together and fill the vacancy. The loss of the North Carolina Synod need not prevent our ultimate success. North Carolina is not the soil into which our young tree has sent its tap-root. Let us all work together, and by a little more energy and a little additional labor for each one, we can do the work that the North Carolina Synod would have done in connection with us. I was once on the Ohio river, going from Louisville to Cincinnati. The crank of one of the engines broke, and one wheel stopped. The engineer geared the machinery to the remaining engine, and gave it double duty. We were a little behind the time, but we reached Cincinnati. So with our General Synod, and the work it has to do. We may be delayed somewhat by the North Carolina Synod, but we will reach the goal—we will succeed. There is no room for despondency. Faith, work and prayer, in a right cause, has heaven's promise of success. So far as I am acquainted, we have the laity to sustain us, and every Synodical convention shows that they will nobly redeem their promise.

There is a banking, on the part of some of our good brethren, for the General Council and the General Synod North. This same feeling was often manifested by weaker powers to be identified with the Roman Empire in her palmist days. Their application was always successful; but all that they gained, by being thus identified, was to pay heavy tribute under Roman governors. Would we not gain about the same, and no more, by forming a union with the more powerful organizations of our Northern brethren? We have a glorious work to do, and by uniting with one of the bodies named, we would not have less to do, nor would we have more strength nor means to accomplish our allotted work. By carrying our contributions to a general treasury in the North would not give us more means for our necessities South. It is vastly preferable to have freedom of action in our own little body to hold a little minority in a larger body, in which a majority vote could crush our best intentions for our Southern interests. Here, in our own body, we can endorse our college, our Seminary, our paper, our Book of Worship, &c.; there, in a minority, we could have none of these things done save by favor of a majority. I do not say that such would be uniformly our lot, but we would place ourselves in a position that would subject us to such restrictions.

D. H. B.

Selections.

Assisting the Pastor.

We once heard a man say, speaking of a pastor: "His congregation greatly assists him, for it is at work like a hive of bees." Of another it was remarked: "He will easily succeed, for his people are noted for their industry." The philosophy contained in these remarks is a true one. A working people will make a happy minister and a successful pastor. No amount of preaching, no matter how sound and good, it may be, will accomplish the end of congregational and spiritual growth, if there is not energy and activity on the part of the people. Full prayer-meetings, eager devotion to Sabbath-school and other interests, and a busy effort at reaching them that are without—this will achieve wonders. And this, too, we are sorry to say, is the great want of the church. The preaching and exhorting are far ahead of the working. The do-nothing policy is largely in the ascendancy, and the whole church suffers in consequence. One, two or three good active workers in a church will supply it with life and help to a great extent; but if "all the people have a mind to work," they can make it a power which will be irresistible. Therefore, ye that are "at ease in Zion," go abroad and tell what great things the Lord has done for you, and persuade men to come to Jesus for life.—*United Presbyterian.*

Many a child goes astray not because there is a want of prayer or virtue at home, but simply because home lacks sunshine.

The Doctrines of Death.

There is such a thing in christian experience as an ardent, but submissive, desire of death. It is, however, one of the highest christian attainments; but one which it is not more a privilege than a duty to make.

That it is a privilege is sufficiently evident from the fact that it has been enjoyed by many of God's people. In Old Testament times Job could say, "I will not live always;" in New Testament times Paul could say, "We are content, I say, and willing, rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." And why? Not in either case because of extraordinary gifts. Paul was, indeed, miraculously endowed. That was for his office and work as an apostle. So far as his personal experience of the power of religion was concerned he depended upon gracious influences and spiritual exercises common to all christians—such as it is as such our privilege to have as it was his. If we cultivate, as he did, the common graces of christianity to that degree to which it is our privilege to do, we may unite with him in every triumphant sentiment he expressed.

That it is our duty to be able to unite with him is not less evident. To do so we must have a like character. He had his state of mind as a result of faith in Christ, an assurance of an interest in all the blessings of his great salvation, and a confidence that death to him would be but the beginning of a higher and happier order of life. Is not our duty to have the same confidence? If we cultivate the christian character to any thing like the measure of our duty, we may have such confidence. If we love God with sincere hearts fervently, if we repent of our sins with a godly sorrow, if we receive and rest on Christ in the exercise of a living faith, if in testimony of our love and patience and faith we consecrate ourselves to the service of God, if we continue in that service with increased and increasing devotion, we will have evidence of pardon and acceptance not to be doubted.

In respect to the infinite superiority of the life on which such a christian hopes to enter at death, his confidence may be absolute. In the earnest he has of it now, in his joys of union and communion with God, in the realization he has of the favor that is life, and the loving kindness that is better than life, he can not but be confident of the superiority of his heavenly home, where, free from all sin and all sorrow he will have fullness of joy in the presence of God and pleasures there forever more. And then God has revealed the heavenly life to be infinitely superior to anything to be enjoyed in this life. His word is full of such revelations. And on this testimony alone it is our duty to believe in a future life of ineffable felicity and glory.

Now, it is in such confidence of safety in Christ and certainty of future blessedness through him, that the christian may become superior to all the terrors of death. Such superiority naturally and necessarily results from such confidence. Where the one exists the other will exist. And it is as much a duty to have the one as to have the other.

Why should not the person who has this confidence desire, rather than fear death? The longing of a sanctified soul for suitable and satisfying enjoyment should fill it with a desire to depart and be with Christ, which, than all earthly enjoyments, is far better. What is there here to satisfy the desires of such a soul? What is there to satisfy the desires of any soul? In reality, the more we have of what is called earthly good the more sensible we are made of its unsatisfying nature. There are no earthly objects that can satisfy immortal desires, no earthly pleasures that can fill immortal capacities. For immortal man, fullness of joy is only in the presence of God. Only when he shall see his face in glory will his longing soul be satisfied.

If we have right views of this subject, and are rightly affected by them, we will be moved to more earnestness and diligence in cultivating the christian character. The more we have of this the more will our religion be a matter of enjoyment. The gloom and doubts and fears of many christians come of low attainments. It is because they do not cultivate the christian graces to that degree to which it is their privilege and duty. If they did this they would grow to

a superiority to all the trials and sorrows of this life, and even the terrors of death itself. Living on a plane above the world they could rejoice even now with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and when the last enemy approached, king of terrors though he be, they could meet him with the triumphant exclamation, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

It may be said that christians seldom show this triumphant state of mind. This is too true. And sometimes they will give as their reason for not having it, that they do not feel assured of their preparation for death. But that is no excuse. They are not expected to contemplate death with confidence and joy while they have no clear evidences of christian character. But they should have these evidences. That they may have them they should have higher attainments in the divine life; they should not be satisfied with any attainments until Christ is formed in their hearts the hope of glory. To neglect this is no excuse for the want of the blessed fruits of it.

Others will say that they have no desire of death for the reason that they think they can yet do much for the glory of God here. It is true there is yet a great work to be done for God on earth. We should be willing to act our part in it. We should not be weary of his service, or impatient with anything we may be called to do or endure in it. But we should be just as ready to obey his call to another world. We are not to suppose that we will have less opportunity of serving him there, or that our service will be less acceptable than here. Heaven is the highest sphere of service as of life, where our immortal powers may be ardently, unreservedly and forever devoted to his glory.

Away with all such subtleties! Let us rather give all diligence in the cultivation of that character that will give us a present enjoyment of our religion, that will make this life, with all its trials and sorrows, a matter of resignation, and the life to come a matter of joyous anticipation.—*United Presbyterian.*

Webster's Most Important Thought.

When Daniel Webster was Secretary of State, some years ago, under another administration than that of Mr. Fillmore, he wrote to one of the proprietors of the Astor House in New York, saying that he would reach that house on such a day, and begged that some of his friends should be invited to dine with him the same evening.

There were about twenty or so at the table, and Mr. Webster seemed wearied by his travel, and speaking but little, if at all, plunged into a darksome sort of reverie not well calculated to enliven his friends.

This at length became so apparent, and the situation of all so unpleasant that one of the company urged a very distinguished man present—a warm friend of Mr. Webster—to get him into conversation. He needed to be joggled to become as lively as they wished.

This friend consented, and spoke aloud to Mr. Webster, asked him some questions that, in ordinary circumstances and with ordinary men, would have led to conversation, but it failed in the present case. The dark Secretary of State merely answered briefly, and crept into his cave again.

Again the gentleman, frightened by his failure, was urged to renew the attempt to draw him out. "Mr. Webster," (Mr. Webster looked up out of his cave), "I want you to tell me what was the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?"

Here was a thumper for him, and so everybody thought at the table. Mr. Webster slowly passed his hand over his forehead, and in a low tone said to a friend near him: "Is there any one here who does not know me?"

"No, sir, they all know you—all are your friends."

Then he looked over the table, and you may imagine how the tones of his voice would be on such an occasion, giving answer to such a question.

"The most important thought that ever occupied my mind," said he, "was that of my individual responsibility to God!" Upon which, for twenty minutes, he spoke to them

there; and when he had finished, he got up from the table and retired to his room, and they, without a word, went into an adjacent parlor, and when they had gathered there, some one exclaimed—"Who ever heard anything like that?"

What Mr. Webster said in advocacy of his sublime thought I do not know. No one has ever repeated it, and presume no one can.

Lead Horses.

Some horses are balky, and will not work or let their yoke-fellows work. Some other horses have traits of character not much better. We were travelling on the highway, and we overtook a team with a well-formed and powerful lead horse. We entered into conversation with the driver:

"That is a fine leader you have in your team, sir."

"Yes, sir, he is a very strong animal."

"He must be a very valuable one."

"He might be if he would."

"He looks willing enough. He holds a high head, and appears to be a horse of spirit."

"Oh! yes, he has spirit enough; but spirit is not everything. He has one very bad trait. He will not work anywhere but in the lead. If I make a wheel horse of him, he frets and foams and tries to get in the lead, and when he finds that impossible, he takes the sulks, and will not do anything. I have to be as careful of that horse's feelings as I would be of the feelings of a spoiled child."

"Oh, no," they answered.

"How many miles have you been in all?"

"Twenty."

He touched the spring, the cover opened, and there, on the face of the instrument, the thirty miles were found recorded.

"Where have you been?" he then asked them.

"Where we said we were going," was the answer.

"Have you not been farther than that?"

"Oh, no," they answered.

"How many miles have you been in all?"

"Twenty."

He touched the spring, the cover opened, and there, on the face of the instrument, the thirty miles were found recorded.

The young men were struck dumb with amazement at being thus discovered in an attempt to cheat the owner of the carriage. They had told a falsehood, thinking that no one would ever find them out. Little did they imagine that they carried with them, in that silent little box, an invisible witness which would expose their wickedness.

So God has put an invisible witness on our hearts to record all we say and do, think and feel. We never see the curious machine which keeps the account, but, nevertheless, it is there. It goes where we go, stops where we stop; it is with us continually. So long as we live we carry this invisible witness, like the box on the carriage wheel, fastened upon the heart.—*Christian at Work.*

Conscience.

An ingenious mechanic invented a machine to register the number of revolutions made by the wheel of a carriage, so that its owner could tell just how many miles it was driven. A stable-keeper once had one put upon a carriage that he kept for letting, and by this means he could tell just how many miles any one went.

Two young men once hired it to go to a town some ten miles distant. Instead of simply going and returning, as they promised to do, they rode to another town some five miles farther, thus making the distance they passed over, going and coming, some thirty miles.

When they returned the owner of the establishment, without being noticed by the young men, glanced upon the face of the measuring instrument and discovered how many miles they had travelled.

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The Kohinoor Recut.

[The Kohinoor, as it originally came into the hands of the queen of England, was far from being "the mountain of light" its name signifies. It was cut, as Indian diamonds usually are, upon the sides, the top being flat, and many inferior diamonds far exceeded it in brilliancy.]

It was sent to Holland, and there recut in the style of a brilliant, a principal face surrounded by many facets, reflecting the prismatic colors from every side, and is now a marvel of beauty.

An experienced workman often spends two years of continuous labor upon one stone; such delicate and patient work is necessary to preserve the stone and exhibit its beauty. Even the diamond-dust is preserved with care, to be used in its final polishing.

How like the Indian diamond are God's children untouched by adversity! Precious jewels, but reflecting little of heaven's light. Then the Great Workman takes them in hand, and patiently and carefully cuts upon the hard surface. Worldliness yields at his touch, hidden lights flash out, each cut reveals a new beauty. But the sorrowful heart cries out, Why this long-continued pressure, why blow upon blow for me, while others sit serene, untroubled?

Ah, sorrowful heart, take comfort, thou art one of thy Lord's chosen, precious stones. The more thou art cut and fashioned and polished, the more wilt thou shine in his crown when he maketh up his jewels.—Thine is the rare and precious portion of his favored ones: chosen in the furnace of affliction, wrought upon by the Spirit, freed from the impurities of the flesh, polished by the diamond-dust of care and sorrow and disappointment, until the soul is lifted heavenward, and heaven's own light is reflected in its face. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—*American Messenger.*