

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

Revs. Rude & Miller, Editors.

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

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.
Systematic Benevolence.

All the pastors will keep the matter before the people. "Let the treasury boxes be presented." Thus writes "Quidam," under the caption of "Keep it before the People." But what if the pastors are utterly negligent or indifferent upon the subject. A great deal has been said and written about the want of liberality on the part of the members of the church, and various means devised to induce greater liberality, and the result generally has proved to be a failure. And whose fault is it? The peoples? I unhesitatingly answer, no! After close observation of many years, I long since came to the conclusion that, as a general thing, there is no lack of liberality of the part of the laity. They are willing to give, and do give, when approached in the right way. What congregation has refused to respond to the appeal of the pastor? There may be some such, but I am convinced that they are few in number. In most, if not in all cases the fault rests with the pastors. They do not call upon their congregations in a systematic way. They may occasionally be forced to make a spasmodic effort to raise money for some specific purpose, and there their efforts end. Well, after a great deal had been said and written, it was finally concluded to adopt the Box System. The General Synod took up the subject at its last meeting, and referred it to a committee for consideration, who reported favorably, and recommended a resolution which was unanimously adopted, recommending the several District Synods in connection with that body to adopt the plan. At the meeting of the South Carolina Synod the President, in his annual report, says, "After mature study of the subject, I feel convinced that the embarrassed condition of our church institutions is wholly attributable to the want of system in giving," and proceeds to recommend the scriptural mode of laying by in store weekly. This endorsing the box system as recommended by the General Synod.

The Committee on the President's report presented a report which was unanimously adopted by Synod, in which they say, "On the subject of systematic benevolence advertised to by the President, your committee recommended to the Synod, and through the Synod to the churches under its jurisdiction, the box system, adopted by the General Synod at its last meeting; and subsequently a resolution was adopted appropriating the collections of each quarter to a specific object, to wit, Newberry College, the Synodical Fund, and the Missionary Society. After this array of reports and resolutions, general and particular, some sanguine persons supposed that the finances of the church would be largely increased, and that the Parochial Reports at the next session of Synod would show great things accomplished by 'systematic benevolence.' The first quarter has passed away, and some approximation may be made to the final result, if we can ascertain what has been done thus far. How it may be with the churches generally, I have not the means of knowing, but I can tell what has been done by three of them, located in my immediate neighborhood, and each served by a separate pastor. These three congregations are reported as having, in the aggregate, over 1,100 communicants. An estimate of five cents a week for each would amount to \$2,750, or \$715 per quarter. This estimate is exceedingly small, as no doubt there are in most of the families persons not communicants who would willingly make deposits in the box occasionally, if not regularly, while many, very many of the communicants would give much more than five cents weekly, so that it is more than probable that an estimate of ten cents each would be much nearer the truth, which would make the contributions \$1,430 a quarter, or \$5,720 for the year. Well, how much have these three congregations contributed in the first quarter? Answer, Not one cent! Why? Simply because not one of the three pastors has said a single word to his people on the subject, and not a box has been procured. Well did the President of Synod say in his annual report, "It has become a matter of growing complaint of late years that the legis-

tion of Synod is treated with so much indifference by many of its members. Resolutions of the most important character are sometimes passed with the apparent unconcern of the entire body, and yet at the close of the year it will appear that many paid no attention to them whatever."

I ask again, to what is the want of success in church finances to be attributed, the illiberality of the laity, or the negligence of ministry? I think "it needs no ghost to come from the grave to tell us that."

For the Lutheran Visitor.
Pastoral Visiting—Its Neglect, Importance, &c.

Editor of Visitor: Ministers truthfully tell us that we ought to feel grateful to them when they tell us of our sins and neglected duties, and many of us do feel thankful, not only to them for doing this, but more so to God for a faithful minister to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Hence I conclude that those who neglect pastoral visitation, or merely make friendly calls, instead of religious visits as ministers, will at least take no offence at what I may say.

Not long since one of our ministers, who has been pastor of the same charge for years, said that he had never seen many of the members of his church in their homes, or conversed with them individually about their spiritual condition, or the salvation of their souls. Now how could he know what spiritual food was best adapted to them individually?

A few days ago, a lady belonging to another denomination said, "Our pastor has frequently called at our house, but I have never heard him mention the subject of religion there yet, except in a general way."

Now I have been thinking of isolated or extraordinary cases; and they are very suggestive. How is a minister successfully to preach to, or even pray for his people, unless he knows their individual condition? How could a physician intelligently prescribe for his patient, or a lawyer rightly advise his client, without knowing the disease—its stage and peculiarities in the one instance, or the facts and circumstances in the other?

It does not sound right to me to hear a minister, praying for his own church, say, "If any are doubting, if any are backsliders, &c." He ought to know their condition and tell God about it, and make his people feel that he knows and will know it.

Now to the other point: suppose a patient sends for a physician, and when he comes, he talks about the weather, crops, trades, &c., but says and enquires nothing about the condition and disease of the patient, would he be likely to be sent for again? What would be the conclusion formed of a lawyer, who, instead of diligently and minutely enquiring into all the evidence that could be adduced for and against his client, spent the time appointed for consultation in telling him how to farm, or vote, or trade?

What must we think! how sadly disappointed must we feel, when our pastor comes, and we long to tell him our doubts, fears, and anxieties, to find him spend the entire time of the visit in talking about marriages, synodical resolutions, colleges, disputed doctrines, and miscellaneous modes of worship! Christian people are not so averse to talking about religion as some ministers seem to imagine; on the contrary, they desire and expect it to be introduced during the pastoral visit. More faithful pastoral visitation, more intimate association of the pastor with the people would create mutual endearments between them—would remove doubts and fears, and build up the church, not merely filling her with nominal Christians, but with a living, working and intelligent membership. In the name of many of the laity of the church, I insist that ministers visit more, and manifest, during their visits, more solicitude about the spiritual than temporal condition and prosperity.

Selections.

The Scripture Patchwork-Quilt.
BY AN ARMY CHAPLAIN.

In one of the boxes sent to us by the Sanitary Commission was a patchwork-quilt, of unusual softness and lightness. "How nice! How good it feels—so home-like! This will make the poor fellows laugh," we said. And it did make them laugh heartily—and made some of them cry, too. When we opened it we found a note pinned to it. I read as follows:

"I have made this Scripture quilt for one of the hospital beds, for I thought that while it would be a comfort to the poor body, it might speak a word of good to the precious soul—the words are so beautiful and blessed, and full of balm and healing! May it be blessed to the dear boys in the army, among whom I have a son."

"Oh, that it may!" I said, and dropped the first tear upon it—no, not the first nor the hundredth tear even, for that quilt had not been made without many tears. Every block had been prayed and wept over. It was made of square blocks of calico and white cotton intermingled, and on every white block was written a verse from the Bible, or a couplet from one of our best hymns. On the central block, in letters so large as to catch the careless eye, was that "faithful saying" in which is all our hope and strength: "CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS;" and below it, the prayer of all prayers we need to pray: "GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER."

The head-block, which would be nearest the sick man's eye, and oftenest read, had the sweetest texts of promise, and love, and comfort. Among them I read: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." "Oh?" we said, wiping our eyes, "that all our beds had such quilts as this! God will surely speak through these texts to the sick and wounded men! They will read them when they need them, and when they need them they will read nothing else. Who knows how much good they will do!"

It was not long before a man sick with pneumonia was brought in, and we put our new quilt on his bed. He noticed nothing at first, he was too sick; but when he grew better, I saw him intent on the texts.

"Handy to have 'em here!" he said, pointing to them as I stood near him.

"You know how to value them, then?" I said.

"I do," he answered, with heartiness. "Do you know that verse, 'A lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path?'"

"Well, that's what the Bible is, and I've found it out down here."

After that I saw many studying the quilt—almost all who lay beneath it! One poor fellow, who had tossed in pain and feverishness for several days, caught sight of the words, "And I will give you rest." He beckoned to me.

"Rest! Where can I get it—rest for body and mind both? I am half dead; sick, as you see, but sicker as—no one can see. Tell me how to get rest."

"Did you never hear of the way? Never hear of Jesus?"

"Tell me, again, and as you would a child."

I told him, as I would a child, the story of the cross.

"Just leave yourself to God then!"

"Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do!"

"That's all you have to do."

"Is that verse here?"

I showed it to him on the quilt.

"I'll keep it before me. Oh, for rest; a little rest!" he groaned again.

Not long, and his hand it—found peace in believing—and left his hospital bed happier than he had ever been before.

An Irishman lay under the Scripture-quilt. One day, when nearly well, he was looking at it.

"Is that radin'?" he asked, putting his finger on a text.

"Yes."

"Sure, and what does it say?"

I read: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain."

"Ye might rade that," he said, pointing to another text.

"I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." "It is the Lord who says this," I added after the text.

"Sure, it's good to a lonesome person to hear what you rade."

"So it is. There's nothing like the Bible in dark and trying hours."

At last came the boy who had best right to the comfort of our Scripture-quilt—the "son" of whom the good woman who made it spoke in the note attached. It was a strange circumstance that he should have come to me beneath it, but so it was.

He had lain there nearly senseless for more than a week, when I saw him kiss the patchwork. I thought he might be wandering, or if not, had found a text of hope or consolation that seemed to suit his need, and marked with my eye the place he had kissed, to see what it was.

"It was no text, but a calico block—the pattern a little crimson leaf on a dark ground. He kept looking at it, with tears in his eyes, and was almost sure his eyes were in his right mind, and his thoughts were at home with his mother. A bit of the gown he had so often seen her wear had carried him back to her. He kissed it again. I approached him. He looked up, and smiled through his tears.

"Do you know where this quilt came from?" he asked.

"Some good woman sent it to us through the Sanitary Commission."

"You don't know her name, nor where it came from?"

"No, but I saved a note that was pinned to the quilt."

"Would you be willing to let me see it some time when it's convenient?"

"Oh! yes. I'll get it now."

I got it for him; his hand trembled and his lips grew white as he opened it and saw the writing.

"Please read it to me quite slowly," he said, returning it.

I read it.

"It is from my mother; shall you keep it?"

"Yes," I answered, "I value it very much, as also the quilt."

He put his hand over his eyes. I thought he wished to be alone, and left him. As I stood by his bed the next day, I was wondering if he had not seen his mother's texts, as well as the bit of her gown. He had, and pointed one out to me. It was: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called by son."

"I am no more worthy," he whispered.

I put my finger on the next white block, and read aloud: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

As I looked up, saw there were tears upon his cheeks, and his lips were tremulous. I covered his eyes, and left him.

A few days after, when he had grown much stronger, he held up to me the text I had shown him.

"I was a great way off," he said, "but he has met me, and had compassion on me."

"You feel the Saviour's love," I inquired.

"Oh! yes, it fills me with peace," he replied.

"What love! What a Saviour!" I said in my thanksgiving. "Shall I not write to your mother and tell her that her son who was dead is alive again, who was lost, found?"

"Will it not be touch'd treivable?"

"Oh! no; a blessing instead."

I wrote the blessedness, making the mother's heart rejoice. And now our Scripture quilt as even dearer and more sacred therefore.—Parish Visitor.

A Blast from a Watchman's Trumpet.

What opium-eating is to the Chinese, or gambling to the people of Buenos Ayres, or Romanism to Ireland, or laziness to Africans, stings is to the Christian church of the present day. It demoralizes it, eats up its life, paralyzes its energies, and prevents its progress. All who occupy positions from which they have a favorable outlook upon the religious world, see clearly that the chief hindrance to the church's efficiency of the present day is the vice-like grasp that the Money Fiend has upon its members. It is the sheerest folly to use smooth words and laudatory phrases and glittering circumlocutions about this matter that which opposes the progress of the church more than anything else is the aversion of professing Christians.

The church needs now a Reformer as really as it did in the days of Luther and Calvin, or in the times of Wesley and Whitfield. Some one must speak out, and speak loudly and sharply, and continue to speak on this besetting sin. If that Reformer ever comes, woe to him! for he will be opposed and slandered; and hate and reproach will be poured upon his good name. Sound doctrine on this subject will not be endured. People who love their money more than the cause of God or their own souls, won't be told the truth. What Micaiah was to Ahab, or John the Baptist to Herodias, such a Reformer would be to Christian idolaters in the church. They would hate him, and put his head in a charger if they could. But must the trumpet of reproof give an uncertain sound, or not be blown at all, because somebody don't want to hear it? Isn't it the duty of the watchman to lift up his voice and spare not? The meanness of of Christian people about money has long unrebuked so long in the church as its peculiar and reserved right to be let alone. People must not be offended, you know; you mustn't hurt their feelings. Be careful lest you drive them off, and they withhold the little pittance they have been giving. Then let them go; the cause of God can do without their gifts. Giving is not for God's profit, but for the good of those who give. Then how comes it that the feelings of people are so tender and sacred that they must not be touched, even if the truth of God and his cause and the glory of the Redeemer should be sacrificed? Very precious feelings indeed!

If a man wants to know the meanness of human nature more fully than he can know it in any other way—of religious, orthodox, baptized, Presbyterian human nature—let him study this subject of giving as it is practised in our churches. People have many excuses for not giving. Yes, and so they have for every mean thing they ever do. Adam had an excuse for eating the forbidden fruit, and so did Eve, and so does every other sinner, in the church and out of the church. These excuses may satisfy their consciences and satisfy their fellow-men; but do they meet the claims of God, and will they be sustained by him? If not, they are simply a waste of breath.

It is wonderful how God in his ever busy and marvellous providence measures out the penalties for non-giving for those who withhold their offerings or bring the torn and sick and lame. Heaven's curse lights down with unfailing precision upon the stingy church. God does not wait till the judgment day before he visits this sin; but now and here he puts the cup of his indignation into the hands of his faithless stewards. Can one example be found in all this wide world of a vigorous life and increasing efficiency and rapid progress in a church that does not meet fully its pecuniary obligations? Is the Spirit ever present upon a church that does not meet fully its pecuniary obligations? Is the Spirit ever present upon a church that is behind in the payment of its pastor's salary? Are revivals and arrears ever found together? Can a congregation that does not go its full part in supporting the general enterprise of the church, show among its membership growing and happy Christians, full of peace and joy, basking in the smiles of a reconciled Father? Do such churches continue long to be blessed with a faithful pastor, one who increases in all the elements of efficiency, whose preaching from day to day shows a more accurate learn-

ing, a clearer insight into the deep things of God, more aptness to teach, and a more thorough possession of the gift of utterance? Or, on the other hand, will not the pastor sink down into a tenth-rate man, when he has to expend his energies in some secular employment to eke out a scanty living? When will the church learn this simple lesson, that men of genius and eloquence and power are not born, but made; by diligence, by constant application, having all their energies absorbed in one direction, in one peculiar pursuit, and by these alone they rise to eminence. Take the greatest blockhead that ever comes out of a theological seminary and put him over a church, and let him be entirely free from worldly cares and avocations, and devote the whole of his time and all his powers, feeble as they may be, to study and pastoral work, and in ten years he will stand head and shoulders above the average minister of our Southern Presbyterian Church. No minister can have the leisure and books necessary for successful study without a competent support. And who is the looser when the pastor neglects his studies? Why, of course, the church. People are fed on knowledge and understanding, and not on fuss and gestures.

It is said people can not afford to give. Can they afford to do without giving—can they stand it, if God continues to withhold his blessing? The alternate is before them: to come up to the full measure of their duty in the matter of money to their pastor and the enterprises of the church, and have God's blessing in overflowing abundance on their souls and their business; or keep back the Lord's portion and sink into a weak and shriveled up and dead thing, utterly worthless, except for the one purpose of warning other churches of a similar fate. When the tithes are not brought into God's storehouses, the heavens are not opened. When money is kept back the heavens are brass, no prayer goes up and no spirit comes down.

"See, here, what do you reckon can be the matter with our church; when we get a pastor that is any account we can't keep him, and when we get one we don't want we can't get rid of him; there are none coming in from the world; the young people are going off to other churches, every thing seems to drag heavily. I wonder if it wouldn't stir up our folks if we could get the Rev. Dr. Rensler to come over and hold a protracted meeting. I'll declare we must do something, what do you think we ought to do; and what can be the matter that every thing about our church is such a dead strain and such an up-hill pull. Oh, me, it's very discouraging, and times are mighty hard."

You, old sinner! do you really want to know what is the matter? Then look into your pocket and see there that you have robbed God and kept back part of the price of the devoted thing, and God in righteous wrath has cursed you and your church with a curse. Heaven's curse is as plainly branded upon a stingy church as it is upon the field of the sluggard, or the home of the drunkard, or the person of the licentious. This is the true philosophy; this is the subject brought to its last analysis; this is the solution of the problem over which God's people often torture their brains.

The third chapter of Malachi is yet a part of the Scripture canon. The law establishing the proportion between gifts and grace is yet in force. People may get mad at what I have written in this article, but I defy the world to controvert the positions I have here advanced.—"Old Grim," in So. Presbyterian.

Clean Lips.

You must have clean lips. One of the highest characteristics of ministerial manhood is purity of speech. If all other men are careless of their words, he must have a watch upon his lips, and put a bridle on his tongue. Nothing will send a minister's influence and reputation below par more speedily than improper conversation. An unchaste story, a lewd *entree*, a filthy joke, a questionable word or gesture, a sentence that would make a pure woman blush in public or in private, in select or in mixed company, is a burning shame and scandal to any minister of the Gospel. An impure story is next to an impure action; a filthy

joke is morally as wrong as a filthy deed. He who has impure lips, and who indulges in impure speech, be he divinity student, doctor of divinity, or bishop, is a disgrace to the church, a grief to the Saviour, and a corrupter of the morals of the young. Clean lips are essential to the success of a minister. The people watch the words of a young minister with the closest and sternest criticism.—Ira C. Bidwell.

Christ Our Prophet.

Christ is a great prophet; he brought the holy mysteries out of his Father's bosom; he speaks outwardly by his word, and by his spirit, he is an inward Ecclesiastes, who can enter into the heart, and there express himself in words of life and power. Unto this, faith answers by a humble docility; it softens and meekens the heart; it makes the believer sit down at Christ's feet and hear him in the hardest lectures; if Christ talk of a cross, the believer is ready to take it up upon his back; if of supernatural mysteries, he is ready to subscribe to them; he becomes as a little child, rutable by every holy beam or motion; he yields up himself to the Spirit and word to be instructed by them; this is the apt posture; it is called "an hearing of the prophets," (Acts iii: 22). The believer in this posture is sure to hear of him; he shall be more and more led into holy truths; his ear is opened, and his mind in a readiness for further instruction. The Spirit will make deeper impressions, and seal divine truths upon his heart; the rich mines of precepts and promises shall lie more open before his eyes.—Polhill, 1675.

Duty vs. Ease.

Talking with a friend who was about taking up his residence in a new neighborhood, he said to me: "You will of course unite with Mr. So-and-so's church?" "Well, no, I hadn't thought of it," was his answer. "I had been intending to worship with Dr. Cook of the walk's people." "But Mr. So-and-so's people are few in number and poor in this world's goods." "Yes, I know it; but that doesn't especially draw me towards them." "Why, you want to go to that church where, with your talents, your social position, and your money, you can do the most good, don't you?" "Well, no, I don't know that I do."

Here was refreshing frankness—in delightful contrast with the demagogic of hosts of brethren who affect to be governed by the motives which we urged upon our friend, and yet who do just as he proposed to do. How few Christians there are, we thought, who are governed by considerations of ease, pleasure and honor! How few who, when it comes to choosing between a church which really needs their membership, but which will impose on them burdens and sacrifices, care to go where they can do the most good!—Erasmer and Chronicle.

The Lord's Prayer.

The spirit of the Lord's prayer is beautiful. This form of petition breathes—
A filial spirit—Father.
A catholic spirit—Our Father.
A recedential spirit—Hallowed be Thy name.
A missionary spirit—Thy kingdom come.
An obedient spirit—Give us this day our daily bread.
A forgiving spirit—And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
A cautious spirit—And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
A confidential and adoring spirit—For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.
"THY AND 'US."

The two divisions of the Lord's Prayer—the former relating to the glory of God, the latter to the wants of man—appear very evident on a slight transposition of the personal pronouns!—
Thy name be hallowed.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, &c.
Us give this day our daily bread.
Us forgive our debts, &c.
Us lead not into temptation.
Us deliver from evil.
A wise man will desire no more than he can get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly.