

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

Revs. Rude & Miller, Editors.

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.

Satisfied.

PART I.

When I awake with the dawn, I feel as if I were disappointed. I feel as if I were disappointed.

What a glorious structure must this world have been as it originally came from the hands of the Creator. How lovely even now, so great, and so stupendous, so stupendous, we can form no adequate conception as to the actual magnificence. Here is the loveliness lingering around the world, and we feel awe-struck, as our imagination tries to picture its grandeur rivaled by the breath of God. Pronounced by infinite wisdom and perfection to be "very good," there could have been nothing more exquisite beauty, and no more magnificent to the needs of a glorious race. Its dells, its woods, its trees, its flowers yet have the witching spell of beauty upon them; and the grander works of nature, as exhibited in the sun, moon, stars, and lofty mountains, seem so to realize our own insignificance and to form some faint idea of the perfection of their Creator. We almost feel, too, that were not our senses blighted by the chill that has fallen upon all creation, we could be content to dwell forever under the soothing influence of these gladdening scenes. But, ah! far more than the inanimate nature have we been blighted by this blight. And yet there is the same evidence, too, of glory in our formation, though it be in ruins. Occasionally brilliant sensations from this dark ruin evince the Godlike nature of the original creation—fragments of which will sparkle through the sin-encased exterior.

One evidence is our dissatisfaction with our condition, and our unwillingness to be delivered. "The whole creation groans to be delivered," and the "groans of God" must have redemption of their physical nature as well as their moral; they aspire to perfection in every part, and thus give token of their origin. This consciousness of creation for better things is intuitive, and is not simply a consequence of our renovated nature, although this intuition only takes a definite and distinct form after we have been spiritually enlightened. And having this consciousness, we can not be satisfied with the imperfection that adheres to our best efforts, our most useful pursuits, our most valuable attainments. We feel keenly the disorganization introduced by sin into the material creation, and the aspirations after perfection within us cause us to long for renovation here. Fallen as we are, the cravings of our immortal nature can not be satisfied with less than full perfection, and as our moral degradation and impotence are thoroughly understood, we loathe ourselves as keenly as ever Job did himself. We feel ourselves hopelessly under a dominion that we despise and abhor, and as our chains tighten around us with a tenacity that all the malevolence of our tyrant can apply, we, indeed, do groan and say, "O wretched man that I am." We experience a loss of self respect at our low abasement, and a despairing hopelessness at the impotence that can not burst these galling fetters. The knowledge that there is no condemnation on account of our failures, and that Jesus is to effect the deliverance our weakness can not accomplish, does not remove this feeling entirely. We are reduced to a certain extent, but we can not be satisfied with our condition. We long for full purity, and our dependency at times is almost insupportable at the consciousness that "sin is mixed with all we do." We are creatures of sense, and the certainty of effectual deliverance eventually can not always still the longings after the unattainable here, when we realize so keenly the taint in our natures. We want to be delivered, to be satisfied.

And then the afflictions, the sufferings, the death, to which our mortal natures are subject, are all incompatible with a state of satisfaction. We can not be content when we feel the sufferings from sickness, and we long for "the land where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick." We can not feel satisfied when all the dreams and hopes of youth are buried in the dark tomb, and we are left to walk alone in sadness and grief down the gloomy and stormy path of life; but we long for that immortal land where all the heaven

born passions of the heart will not be evanescent, but will bloom in perennial beauty beside the green pastures and still waters. We can not feel satisfied when we see the widow oppressed, the orphan defrauded, iniquity of all kinds prevailing, and wrong of every description perpetrated by the powerful against the defenceless.

When we see ignorance, misery, sin abounding in every direction; when we see the mysterious inequalities existing between so many of the human race, and know that we can not deplore these evils to the extent that God does, and yet see that He does not think it proper to interpose; when we realize that our own efforts for the good of our kind—both temporal and spiritual—are so feeble and so ineffectual; and that the preaching of the gospel is attended with so little success in comparison with our hopes and expectations, we long with unutterable intensity for him who shall take the government upon his omnipotent shoulder, and shall rectify forever all these fearful abuses and evils. Whilst the prince of this world is triumphant, and the plan of redemption incomplete, we can not be satisfied. M. E. S.

For the Lutheran Visitor.

Our Homes.

The best men and women who inhabit the earth are those whose homes in early childhood have been surrounded and influenced by the atmosphere of piety, virtue and love. Few there are, if any, who are the promoters of religion, morality and christian social intercourse whose early homes were filled with vice, irreligion and domestic discord.

Think of that, all ye parents. Make your homes the households of prayer and faith—make them attractive. Never mind how humble in outward appearance, strew flowers of kindness and leaves of love along the stair ways and rooms of your dwellings. You will never regret it. Perhaps you may have a prodigal, but like the one in Holy Writ, he will return. Think of that home in Bethany, where Jesus sat and talked with Mary and Martha. Had that not been a home of piety would He have sanctified it by His presence? Would not He have passed it by?

Can we expect Him to enter our homes, when love for Him does not exist? Do we like to go into the houses of those who dislike and scorn us? See how we shrink from it. Just so with Jesus. He never intrudes—unless called upon by the prayer of faith and love, and then, oh then, how gladly and kindly does He come.

Call upon him all ye parents and heads of households. Let his sweet name, like the morning sun and the effulgent rays of sunshine, pervade the atmosphere of that spot where dwells husband, mother and children. And when Jesus, the mighty Judge, at the last day shall read the record of immortal souls, there will be no blank. The reward will be an unbroken, eternally happy and endless home in heaven. EVE.

Selections.

Christ's Resurrection.

The evangelists tell us very little of what the disciples thought and felt. They are wholly silent as to what was in their hearts during the time between Christ's death and resurrection. Perhaps that experience was so dark that a sort of sacred reserve forbade them to speak of it. To the disciples it must have been like what Gethsemane was to their Master. One ponders on the different ways in which they would severally be affected. From the utter incredulity with which all received the news of Christ's rising, there could seemingly have been not a ray of hope left to them. What was in Peter's heart, left with the remembrance of that last look of his Master on him who doubted him? How did John bear the smoldering from him of that life which had become as part of his own? Our grief for our departed friends is no measure of the blow that must have fallen upon them. We know that our friends must at some time leave us; and the whole force of our christian faith goes to uphold us under the loss. But with them, every hope for the next life as well as this had come to centre in their Lord. That he should die seemed a contradiction at once to every personal hope, and to every hope for their nation. Patriotism, love, religion, all lay buried in that tomb in the garden.

And if the darkness was so profound to the disciples, what must it have been to the mother of Jesus! The wonder of the angel's message—the mother's pain glorified by more than the mother's joy—those mysterious outshinings in childhood which she had kept and pondered in her heart—that career with its alternations of triumph and disappointment and mysterious promise—all had ended here; she had seen him die on the cross.

What was it to the sister of Lazarus? How did that scene by the grave at Bethany return to her mind? Then, above the night of death the conquering morn of life had risen. Now, the night had returned to swallow up the morning. What an echo must the words of the Jews have stirred in the depths of her heart, "He saved others, himself he can not save."

And unto these broken hearts, Christ came again. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni! which is to say, Master!" Was it true? Was it not a cheat played upon the heart by vain hope and love? Ah, yes! It was nothing—said the disciples as they walked toward Emmaus—it was some delusion, born of sorrow and weakness. So they said to the stranger who joined them. But to their despair he speaks words of encouragement, such words as Jesus used to speak. Their hearts burn within them. He breaks and blesses the bread—it is himself!

"Nay," says Thomas, "visions and dreams can not comfort me. I can not deny my reason and my senses." Before his startled eyes stands the well-known form. The voice he knows is in his ears. As by the lightning's flash the truth breaks on him; and he cries, "My Lord and my God!"

Such glimpses are given as of the transcendent joy, the strange and sweet surprise, which broke upon those who mourned Christ's death. We have greater witness than this of what Christ's rising wrought in them. Before, they had been but a group of weak children. From that hour they became the spiritual conquerors of the world. The ignorant fishermen of Galilee went forth to lay the foundations of a new empire. They went on their way amidst persecution and sufferings, to the martyr's death, full of joy, full of peace, full of power over men. While their teacher lived, they appeared as weak, erratic, undeveloped men. With his death it seemed that they must sink back into sheer insignificance. Instead of that, they became heroes, rich in courage and spiritual wisdom; rich above all in absolute faith and conquering hope. From the tomb of Jesus a new life had entered into their souls with their rising Lord.

From us our Christ often seems taken away forever. Sometimes the darkness of doubt buries him. We long to see and feel him, and can not. We can not make him other than a thing of the past, unseen and unknown. We would give our lives, if with Thomas we might see and hear and touch him, and so believe.

Sometimes the grave of a great grief swallows up all that has given life its meaning and value. The world is utterly empty. We are conscious of an ache in our hearts, and that is all. The daylight is gone out. Our love, our hope, our all lies in the grave; and we look for no resurrection thence.

Sometimes the weight of our sin buries us with it. The sense of our own guilt wraps us around, so that we can feel no ray of forgiveness. We have been forgiven again and again, and still we have sought the evil; and now we lie in night that expects no dawn.

It was when the disciples were in the lowest depth of hope crushed, and joy all gone, that Christ was given back to them from the grave. And as he came unto them, so shall he come unto all that are his. The sun that sets to-night is not so sure to rise to-morrow, as Christ is sure to shine forth upon his people. As he came to Mary, as he came to Peter and John, as he came to Thomas, so will he come to every soul that needs him. To him who gropes in doubt, he will come as the light indeed. To the bereaved he will come as consolation, as love given back and made good a thousand-fold. To the sincere he will come as pardon and healing. In the garden, upon the road, in our secret chamber, when we expect him not, he will come. It may be through the gate of death. It may be while we yet walk the earth. To some he discloses himself by slow degrees, so that at last they wonder to see in how close companionship with their Lord they have unknowingly been. But to all alike his word is the same. "Watch for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." Unto all who faithfully watch for him, the promise stands: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.—Christina Union.

All Unprepared.

A christian minister in N— had a neighbor who never attended church. Distressed by this neglect, he resolved to visit him and urge upon him the necessity of personal piety.

Before a favorable opportunity for such an errand occurred, a messenger came hurriedly in one morning and said, "Oh, sir, come at once to our house; Mr. H— is dying." Obedient the summons without delay, he hastened to the residence of the very individual for whose spiritual interests he had become anxious.

Going up stairs, he was shown into a room, where lay the occupant of the dwelling, apparently suffering intense agony of mind and body, and approaching the end of life.

"All unprepared, all unprepared!" were the first words he muttered, as the minister entered.

"Oh, my dear sir," cried the dying man, "you are a professed servant of God, and I have sent for you to tell you that I now see how the neglect of religion is the greatest folly in the world. Oh, I have known what serious thoughts are; I have known what it is to hear the Bible read and explained, I have been kindly spoken to about my soul, I have been prayed for, and I have often said I was resolved at some time to begin to be a christian, but I never did begin. Ah, death is now coming and I am not ready to die. Oh, sir, whenever you preach, do bid your hearers prepare for the hour."

"Shall I pray with you—for, notwithstanding all your sins and your rejection of his love, I assure you that the dear Saviour of sinners will bear your cry even at this eleventh hour, if you lift your heart penitently and sincerely to him. Shall we not together earnestly pray?"

"Yes, pray, pray for me. But wait till I tell you something of my past days.

Advantages to become a child of God myself, I can not explain. Alas, why was this neglect? Oh, my improved opportunities! Oh, my ruined soul! I have known well enough the truths of religion, but I have thought more of other things. I persuaded myself that I could live without Christ. I have pleased myself with every new stage of my life with its peculiar labors and pleasures, and I left no room in my heart for God. I have refused the friendly invitations of Jesus, and have grieved his Holy Spirit by putting off accepting them to a convenient season.

"I now see the awful delusion by which I deceived myself. I cherish the notion that if I lived as I chose, even up to the hour of death, I could then turn to God. I have often resolved that I would call upon him then, and ask him to save me, and have thought that he would do it; that he would have mercy on my soul at last. But all my hopes are gone. I am utterly ruined. Indeed I am now all unprepared! all unprepared!"

Too Fast.

It seems to me that christians must make it a solemn duty to take leisure. You must withdraw from the sphere that so absorbs you—you must retire from that electric atmosphere that sets your nerves on end, and kindles a consuming fire in your veins—you must draw a thick curtain between your closet and the world, and sit down to read, pray, meditate, worship, and commune with God in quietness. If you are consciously deficient in the knowledge of God, you must take leisure to know more of him. If you have a mere smattering of scriptural information, you must insist on time for the study of the Bible. If a besetting sin tyrannizes over you, you must enter into the closet, and with many sighs of sorrow wrestle for subduing grace. You must take time, of any expense, to make yourself an humble follower of the Lamb.

Closet religion produces the true christian. He that comes forth from the secret hidings of the Almighty will not bow the knee readily to any Baal of trade or fashion. His steps will keep time, not to the rush of a fast age, but to the stately march of all that multitude who have walked in the good old ways of God.

Closely connected with closet religion is fireside religion. Are the days to come no more in which parents shall take time to gather their children around the family altar for common prayer and for scriptural study and indoctrination? Or are we ready to haul down the Catechism flag because a superficial age sneers at it? Are we to be hurried away from the old paths and the old landmarks, because it is the fashion of the restless world to ridicule the tried and venerable, and resort to new and experimental ways of doing the Lord's work? If so, the result will be a generation of sentimentalists, having no substratum of knowledge. Error will creep in unopposed because undetected. Heresy will flaunt its glittering lies at the very altar of the church. Sensation will take the place of principle. Indeed, it is difficult to say what will not happen if christian parents commit themselves and their children to the wild rush and hurry of the times, so as to suffer the moss to grow upon the home altar.

But the rejoinder to all this will be, we did not make the times, neither can we control them; life is at high pressure, and we must take it as we find it, for we have families to support and the future to provide for; business is business, and we must plunge into the current of trade with the rest, or starve! We must take the fast train, or be distanced by our competitors!

This is peremptory language, but our Divine Lord meets it as peremptorily. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This divine collocation of duties can not be reversed without jeopardy. First, be true and royal to God; first, be ruled by faith; first, prepare for business in the closet and go forth to duty "in quietness and confidence." There may be reverse, loss, and disappointment, but there is no such thing as failure for him who goes into the world without conforming to the world. Why are the times so fast? Why does blood heat, and brain boil so? Because men permit the thought of a secular to-morrow to crowd out the thought of

present spiritual duty. Having no faith in God they struggle with disastrous energy to win the prizes of life, and the very dread of failure lends intensity to their struggles. But christian men have no right to participate in these oppressive anxieties. While it is their duty to have foresight of the storm and take in sail when there is time, they are not to be shaken from their trust in Jehovah Jireh.—Interior.

The Cup of Cold Water.

It is hard to make men feel the responsibility that goes with the one talent. Great riches, great abilities, wide influence—these generally make their possessors sensible of their stewardship. But where it is only narrow sphere, small opportunities, the influence of a word, a tone, a smile, cheap kindness, common sympathies, it seems hardly worth while to use these. But how much they may do.

Mr. Robertson was a great preacher. One day he was going out of Church, and on the steps stood a poor servant girl, lonely, sorrowful, hungering for some kindness. The great preacher was very weary and in great suffering, but as he went by he saw her wistful eyes and gave her a smile of tender sympathy. What a little thing it was! But the poor heart leaped up for joy; she burst into happy tears, and went home cheered and content that some one cared for her. He put the cup of cold water to the lips of a thirsty disciple. Such as he had he gave her. Have you not even a smile for the lonely, a word for the neglected?

There was a blacksmith blowing away at his bellows in a dingy corner of London, and singing as he worked. A weary, haggard face looked in at the window and paused. This blacksmith was a good man, a man like Christ. He was poor; "silver and gold had he none," but there was a crust on his shelf and a warm love in his heart for all sorts of men. He ran to the door, called after the wretched man who was shambling off, made him sit down by the fire, gave him his crust, and talked to him of heaven and God's love. The wanderer ate his crust, and listened, and warmed himself, and wondered. Presently he got up and went away. The blacksmith saw him no more; but he had given him such as he had. That forlorn outcast was converted by that poor act of kindness. It was only a crust and a warm by the fire and a christian word of welcome; but it went to his heart; it shined him Christ; and he was saved, and became afterward an evangelist who preached the gospel to thousands. Have you not an outlook for the wretched? When you see an unhappy face looking into the window where you are singing, have you not a crust and a christian word?

There are none of us who are not pricked in our conscience often about the quality of our religion. We look at it and hold it up to the light, and it is all full of holes, moth-eaten, worn threadbare; such poor stuff it is. But we are not generally troubled most about the worst failures in our life. This man says: "Yes, I am a very poor christian; I do not pray enough and as fervently as I ought;" and that one, "I do not read my Bible as carefully as I should;" and another, "I do not feel my sins as I would like;" and yet another, "I am too worldly and fond of amusement." They are all right; but these are not the worst things about them. They do not think of the times they have passed by the suffering and neglected them; they do not recollect the ignorant they have left lying in their ignorance, the children they have pushed aside, the sorrowful they have refused to comfort.

How many times our love has failed, how many times men have come to us for help, and because it cost us money or time, or some sacrifice of our pleasure, we have said: "Go away; I can't be plagued with you." Sometimes it is our children that are begging for some help, and we get irritated and tell them not to bother; and then it is a neighbor who seeks some good office of us, and we turn him off; and then a poor family send an imploring wall, and we say: "Why, there is no end to this thing; if I don't put my foot down and say so, there will be nothing left of me." And is not that what you are in Christ's company of disciples for? Is not the very life of christianity love-service? For what are you struggling and praying but to come

into the temper and likeness of Christ? And what is heaven? Is it not a great sea of love, where the joy of earth is the joy of all, where Jesus broods in love over all, and each lives in every other? When the beggar calls to you to-morrow, whatever shape he takes, do not turn him off. Give the cup of cold water; and some day you will see with wonder that it was Christ who called to you from the wayside for help. You would not be sorry to have missed serving Him.—Luthera Observer.

Bible and Nature.

The God of Nature and the Bible is one. He who inspired histories, and psalms, and prophecies, and epistles, was he who made stars and flowers; and the works of his hands never look so fair as when studied in the light of his Word. Nature is not so much a book by which we can find out God as a book from which we may gather illustrations of what God is, having learned his perfections from his revealed truth. It is said of Archbishop Usher, when he grew old, and spectacles could not help his failing sight, that a book was dark except beneath the strongest light of the windows. And the aged man would sit against the casement, with his outspread volume before him, till the sunshine fitted to another opening, when he would change his place, and put himself again under the brilliant rays; and so he would move about with the light till the day was done and his studies ended. And truly, we may say our weak eyes will not suffice to make out the inscription on the page of Nature, unless we hold it up in Divine light—unless we get near the window of Scripture, where God pours in upon us the radiance of his Spirit. And wherever it shines let us follow it, knowing that nowhere but in its illumination can we study the spiritual meanings of Nature so well.—J. Stoughton.

The World Without Sunday.

Think how the abstraction of the Sabbath would hopelessly enslave the working classes, with whom we are identified. Think of labor thus going on in one monotonous and eternal cycle, limbs forever on the rack, fingers forever straining, the brow forever sweating, the feet forever plodding, the brain forever throbbing, the shoulders forever drooping, and loins forever aching, the restless mind forever scheming.

Think of the beauty it would efface, the merry-heartedness it would extinguish, of the giant strength it would tame, of the resources of nature it would crush, of the sickness it would bring, of the projects it would wreck, of the groans it would extort, of the lives it would immolate, and of the cheerless graves it would prematurely dig! See them toiling and moiling, sweating and fretting, grinding and hewing, weaving and spinning, sowing and gathering, moving and repairing, raising and building, digging and planting, striving and struggling—in the garden and in the field; in the granary and the barn, in the factory and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the roadside and in the wood, in the city and in the country, out at sea and on the shore, in the day of brightness and of gloom. What a picture would this world present if we had no Sabbath!

STUDY YOUR BIBLES.—A writer complains that christians, as a general thing, read the Bible so scantily, instancing a church-officer who for years together limited himself to a chapter a day. He is right. This is a small measure for one who wants to thrive in divine life. Paul says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" and surely this means something more than a mere fragmentary portion. He who would be a lively, growing christian, must acquaint himself to read and enjoy large portions of the Scripture; for this purpose redeeming time from business, recreation and sleep. On the Lord's day especially, should he give holy time without stint to the Holy Bible. The more a pious soul reads intelligently, the more it wants to read, and the deeper it sees into what it reads.

None but the eye of Omniscience can pass a fair and just judgment on the issues of life. Our unfruitfulness is great, our sins greater, but God's mercies greater than both.