

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

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

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.

Conference of North Carolina Synod.

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It was one of the most successful and best attended meetings of the kind I have been present at.

I have become a member of the Synod. All the clergy belonging to this Conference were present, with the exception of two.

One was sick, and the other was absent, being excused from attendance by resolution of Synod.

The Conference opened at 10 o'clock on the 25th day, with a very instructive and edifying sermon by Rev. J. W. Murray, lately ordained to the ministry. His subject was, "The light of the world."

He treated it in such a clear, lucid and interesting manner, that the subject of the discourse will be remembered by all who heard him for many years to come.

He is "a work of art" and needeth not to be ashamed, as the Lord has blessed him with a "understanding heart, rightly to understand the Word of truth."

After this sermon the Conference was regularly organized, the roll called, and the names of clerical members recorded.

The election for officers for the ensuing year was next in order, and resulted in the choice of Rev. S. J. Scherer, President, Rev. J. G. Neiffer, Secretary, and Rev. S. Scherer, Treasurer.

The regular order of business was then pursued, and considerable interest manifested under "pastoral experience," and "interchange of views on the duties and usages of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." From remarks made by each Minister present, it was evident that the true spirit and genius of the Lutheran Church remained no longer a thing of the past, but that, like a living stream, it has infused itself into the minds, and is working with happy results for the great ends for which it is ordained.

A pure gospel and a right use of the sacraments have never been the boast of the true church, and to-day both of these are found in the bounds of this Conference, as is clearly shown from existing circumstances. There is no longer any modern, spasmodic revival spirit—which always undervalues the means of grace—found in our ranks. Wherever the Word is proclaimed in its purity, all these human devices and methods vanish.

They are some of the "tares" which will one day sow where the "good seed" has taken root; and although these tares are very obnoxious and dangerous, yet must we be careful we root them out. Human industry and knowledge is by no means adequate to the task; divine wisdom and judgment are required in the case, and they alone, through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, can remove these poisonous weeds without injuring the good seed of the Word. God, in his wisdom, has seen fit to lead our whole Synod back again to the old landmarks and into the old paths by which our fathers directed themselves, and in which they trod. Blessed be the name of the Lord, for "He hath done to us great things, and holy are his names."

The following preamble and resolutions were passed in reference to a petition existing in Lou's church, concerning a slanderous inscription on a tombstone erected in the graveyard of said church. It is one of the most novel cases that ever came to our notice, and perhaps there is no similar case on record anywhere on this continent. We therefore give the whole transaction of Conference in this matter, so that the church abroad may see how such affairs are disposed of among the members of the church in these sections.

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A certain obnoxious, unadvised and partial editorial and resolution, which made their appearance in that paper, presumptuously termed "Our Church Paper," claimed the attention and consideration of this body. We will not burden the columns of the Visitor with the affair, for were we to notice in its columns all the pervasions, misrepresentations and digressions of which that sheet is guilty, you would have to enlarge the Visitor to a quarto, and then want for room to print your editorials. Of late, it has descended so low in the scale of journalism as to drag into its columns the grossest personalities, and wilfully insult aged christian ministers, for the simple reason that they loved and honored the "mother Synod of the South" too highly to allow it to humble and degrade itself in being prematurely and unlawfully joined in a union with a rebellious and perverse daughter, whose past history is not very desirable, and whose works are dead. You have acted wisely in not paying any attention to that insulting sheet, for it was clandestinely begotten and clothed in the foul rags of insult, misrepresentation and perversion. One thing is certain: it will never do much harm in our Synod, for it is taken by but few and relished by less.

A very interesting article from the columns of the Western Vindicator, headed "Emanuel's Church," was read before Conference, and as it contained light as to the split between the North Carolina and Tennessee Synods, it was ordered to be preserved in the archives of Conference for future use. A committee, consisting of the Revs. Rothrock and Neiffer, were also appointed to investigate the claims of our Synod in said Emanuel's church, Lincoln, N. C., and report at the next meeting of Conference.

A resolution was passed to memorialize Synod on the subject of holding an annual Sunday-school Convention within the bounds of Synod.

Resolved, That we, the members of the Eastern Conference, recommend to the favorable consideration of our people the LUTHERAN VISITOR, published by the Rev. A. R. Rude, D.D., Columbia, S. C., and that we exert ourselves to introduce it among our people.

The next meeting will convene in Pilgrim's church, Davidson County, N. C., on Friday before the fifth Sunday in March, 1874.

The Conference was closed according to the regular form, and all the members returned to their respective fields of labor, delighted with the unanimity and good feeling which prevailed during all its sessions, and encouraged to prosecute their work with renewed energy.

THE PEASANT'S PRAYER.—A peasant was employed by some Jesuit missionaries to accompany them on their journeys. They observed that when they halted for prayer the peasant also knelt at some distance, and appeared to be engaged in devotion. One of them took occasion to ask him what was the subject of his prayers. His reply was, "Well, sir, I am but a poor and ignorant man, and I don't know what to pray for, so as I know you are good and holy men, when I see you praying, I just ask God to give me the things you are praying for." The simplicity of this poor man may teach christian people how they stand in relation to the intercessions of the Saviour.

Selections.

Eternal Life.

One of the principal elements of bliss in the world to come is life. Ancient cities were called after heathen gods. Athens was the city of Minerva, and Rome the city of Mars. These were dead and false gods; but the holy Jerusalem—the city of the everlasting kingdom—is the city of "the living God." As its gates are ever open to all who may be seeking to enter therein, as my thirsty and hungered soul looks within its pearly gates, foremost in the scene, enthroned in glory, appears to my soul the one who is the "resurrection and the life;" the one in whom has been mysteriously combined the feebleness of humanity and the omnipotence of divinity. As the God-man in whom is concentrated all life that was, and that now is, and that that is to come, he appears to my view, the "savior of life unto life." In the beginning, in the plenitude of his power, the heavens and earth were created by his word, and in the infinitude of his compassion he took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of man, and died for the creature he had formed. Surely, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness;" and with profound reverence, nay, with devout reverence, would I give ear to the announcement, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." Kings of the earth may reign long, yet death is sure to overtake them; but he who sitteth on the throne is the "Prince of Life." From him natural, spiritual, and eternal life proceed. The sceptre of empire he will wield forever. Why? Because his throne will never be vacated by death; he can never have a successor. Blessed and happy are those who dwell in the presence of such a King! Because of their residence and union with him, they too are kings; and on their heads are crowns of life that fade not away; kept by the power of God unto salvation. Of earthly rulers it has been said, and that truthfully, "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." But not so with those who have put on Christ; not so with those whom God delighteth to honor; not so with those who have eaten of the bread that came down from heaven, for "whosoever shall eat of this bread shall live forever." They are equal unto the angels, and shall die no more; for life fills the entire system, and as they walk the golden street, joy and love beam from every eye, from every countenance, and fear has taken flight from every bosom. Behold them on the banks of the "river of life!" Its water, pure and clear as crystal, flows at their feet, an emblem of the purity of the country they inhabit. Over their heads wave the branches of the "tree of life," its precious fruit intended for the health of the nations of those "which are written in the Lamb's book of life." They pluck and eat, for they shall "hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters." Everything is life—like in the city. Oh, heavenly Jerusalem, I long after thee! I hunger after thee and thirst after thee; and my soul, as thou viewest the day at hand when the eternal weight of glory shall be given to those that are Christ's, let it animate thee to greater energy, to greater diligence and duty. Thou art called to be a laborer in the vineyard, and art not a drone or a snail by the wayside. Arouse, then, from thy slumber! Souls are perishing in their sins; there is no time to be lost! Life was never made for dreaming. God's own arm hath need of thee! If the frivolities or the vanities of the world call after thee, say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Then buckle on the full armor of faith and lay hold of eternal life, or imitate Bunyan's pilgrim, who, sticking his fingers in his ears, ran on crying, "Life, life, eternal life." I would to God men everywhere would seek with such determination to obtain eternal life.

General Neill was one of the most distinguished officers of the French army. It was the ambition of his life to become marshal of France. And when another officer was elevated to that high position he was greatly disappointed because the position or honor had not fallen to him. His friends heard him say that in the next battle he would win the marshalship of France or die. The opportunity came—the time for a fearful charge. Forgetting danger, he put spur to his steed and urged him onward with reckless daring, amid the wild hurrahs and admiration of his soldiers. But when the battle was over he was among the missing. On searching the battlefield he was found crushed beneath his horse, in a dying condition. The Emperor, when he found him, took the badge of marshal from his own person and fastened it upon the uniform of the ex-lieutenant general. Looking up into the face of the Emperor with a look of satisfaction which he was too weak to express in words, he saw his arms about the neck of the Emperor, and then relaxed his hold and died. He died at the very moment of the realization of his lifetime wish, which consisted simply of an empty title.

If men only could be persuaded to-day everywhere to seek with such determination that life which grows more and more bright in our dying moments, a life which invests its possessor with the title of immortal honor, what happiness there would be in the world!—Religious Telescope.

Prayer is the expression of the soul's need; praise, of its fulness; but communion is greater than either. Communion is the highest privilege which the Creator can bestow on a creature. It brings us to God himself—not to serve, not to worship at a distance; but it brings me as a son to a Father, to hear his voice, to see his smile, to share his joy. Only a Father's love would bestow such a blessing, only souls can receive it. It is our eternal portion.

Communion is having something in common with another, a partnership, mutual participation. This is the very essence of true and happy communion with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Infinite as the distance is between us, as to natural and essential rank, love places us hand to hand, face to face, heart to heart. "God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Can this be true? Wherein can I have fellowship with him—the worm of the dust with the King of kings, the chief of sinners with the Lord of glory? Let us survey the great things which God has prepared for them that love him. The glories of him into whose fellowship I, a poor lost one, am called, are unnumbered and exalted; but grace makes us partakers of them all. Is he Son of the most high God? So am I. Is he heir of all things? So am I. Is he a citizen of heaven? So am I. Is he a conqueror? I am made more than a conqueror through him that loved me. The glory which he has given to me, he has given to us. If God has exalted him and given him to be head over all things, it is "to his church." He will not take his place without us, his partners.

The glory of all things is brightened when we know that he is in himself, and what he became in order that we might be exalted to this distinction. The mighty God and everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, stooped down to us, took part of flesh and blood, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he might make us partners on his throne, partakers of his glory, citizens of his city, brethren in his Father's house! Here is a theme for heaven's loudest, loftiest anthems.

Nor is it alone to be the partners of his glory that we are called; we are partners in his sorrow as well as in his joy, in his labor as well as in his rest, in his humiliation and rejection as well as in his exaltation and acceptance. In merely human friendships, those who were closely knit in prosperity became alienated in adversity. But Jesus in love took his place among us in our ruin, and now he is not ashamed to call us brethren. We are not of the world, as he was not of the world. As he was the light of the world, so are we. As the Father sent him into the world, so he has sent us.

Why is this? Why did Jesus make himself so low, and why has he raised us up so high, and why is all this made known to us? It is that he might have fellowship with us, and we with him. It will be for ever thus—he finding delight in us, and we in him. This mutual joy begins now. It will be perfected in heaven; but it is enjoyed on earth, and it may be observed that without all these other attainments are worthless. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up;" and knowledge even of the loftiest truth concerning the privileges and place of believers will only distract if dwelt upon apart from God. The Spirit of God is given to guide us into all truth, but let it be remembered that this is not all: "He shall glorify Me," said our Lord; "His testimony shall be of Me as a person." And, rest assured, unless all else is seen in relation to Christ and in fellowship with him, there will be no fruit-bearing, no joy, no love, no peace. It was this of which the Lord said, "Out of me ye can do nothing"—His abiding in us and our abiding in him; he enjoying our love, we enjoying his love.

Perhaps you have thought that communion was prayer, and have thought that prayer was the highest privilege bestowed on us. But there is a privilege as much higher than that as heaven is higher than earth, as God's fulness is beyond man's neediness. We go to our Father and our Lord to tell out our troubles, too seldom our joys, and we go away uncertain whether our Father has taken any interest in the matter, because we do not listen to him; we have not his word abiding in us. This heedlessness of what God says is a main cause of the deadness in prayer of which christians complain. Unless some matter presses us with a sense of need, would it not be better to wait silently before the Lord that he may speak to us, than to kneel in the attitude of prayer and go through a lifeless form?

Prayer is a reality when it expresses a felt want; without this, the best form of words is vain. You ought, indeed, to pray without ceasing, and to be ever longing for something higher and better. But if your heart is cold, go to him and say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And should a word of his be brought to your soul with living power by the Holy Spirit, the song of praise will burst from your heart with an energy that will make the courts of heaven ring again. If the sun does not pour its warm rays upon the earth, the flowers will not bloom. So your efforts may be unwarmed, but you will bring forth no fruit unto God unless you abide in Christ and his words abide in you.

I would say a few words regarding fellowship of love; but so infinite is the expanse before us, that we could not even look upon it, except as we beseech the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. The highest joy in heaven or earth is the joy of loving. He who loves most rejoices most. This is the joy of Christ, of which he says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." The things which he has spoken are words of deepest, God-like love. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love." We are prone to frustrate his design by regarding it as presumption to take home these words to our own hearts. Nay, but it is pride which brings in the question of our deserts at all. Humility, knowing that the ground of his love is all in himself, would rather say at once, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Continued in his love is not a stilted emotion, but dwelling upon the proofs and expressions of his love, sitting constantly under its shadow with great delight.

We are apt to be occupied too much with our love to him, groaning, it may be, under its littleness, as an invalid who aggravates his disease by shutting out the air of heaven, and so breathing again and again his own corrupted breath. Nothing but the love of God in Christ, known and believed, can revive our cold hearts. Satan's most cunning device to hinder the outflow of our affections is, to keep us looking downward and inward, instead of outward and heavenward. At the same time, we must not overlook the value of our love in his estimate of it. Strange it is, but true, that he does delight in the love of such as we are. It does not seem strange that the bride should say, "Thy love is better than wine;" but it seems passing strange that the Bridegroom should say, "How much better is Thy love than wine." We need not wonder that she would say, "Sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely;" but it is passing wonderful to hear him answer, "Thou art all fair, my

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General Neill was one of the most distinguished officers of the French army. It was the ambition of his life to become marshal of France. And when another officer was elevated to that high position he was greatly disappointed because the position or honor had not fallen to him. His friends heard him say that in the next battle he would win the marshalship of France or die. The opportunity came—the time for a fearful charge. Forgetting danger, he put spur to his steed and urged him onward with reckless daring, amid the wild hurrahs and admiration of his soldiers. But when the battle was over he was among the missing. On searching the battlefield he was found crushed beneath his horse, in a dying condition. The Emperor, when he found him, took the badge of marshal from his own person and fastened it upon the uniform of the ex-lieutenant general. Looking up into the face of the Emperor with a look of satisfaction which he was too weak to express in words, he saw his arms about the neck of the Emperor, and then relaxed his hold and died. He died at the very moment of the realization of his lifetime wish, which consisted simply of an empty title.

If men only could be persuaded to-day everywhere to seek with such determination that life which grows more and more bright in our dying moments, a life which invests its possessor with the title of immortal honor, what happiness there would be in the world!—Religious Telescope.

Prayer is the expression of the soul's need; praise, of its fulness; but communion is greater than either. Communion is the highest privilege which the Creator can bestow on a creature. It brings us to God himself—not to serve, not to worship at a distance; but it brings me as a son to a Father, to hear his voice, to see his smile, to share his joy. Only a Father's love would bestow such a blessing, only souls can receive it. It is our eternal portion.

Communion is having something in common with another, a partnership, mutual participation. This is the very essence of true and happy communion with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Infinite as the distance is between us, as to natural and essential rank, love places us hand to hand, face to face, heart to heart. "God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Can this be true? Wherein can I have fellowship with him—the worm of the dust with the King of kings, the chief of sinners with the Lord of glory? Let us survey the great things which God has prepared for them that love him. The glories of him into whose fellowship I, a poor lost one, am called, are unnumbered and exalted; but grace makes us partakers of them all. Is he Son of the most high God? So am I. Is he heir of all things? So am I. Is he a citizen of heaven? So am I. Is he a conqueror? I am made more than a conqueror through him that loved me. The glory which he has given to me, he has given to us. If God has exalted him and given him to be head over all things, it is "to his church." He will not take his place without us, his partners.

The glory of all things is brightened when we know that he is in himself, and what he became in order that we might be exalted to this distinction. The mighty God and everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, stooped down to us, took part of flesh and blood, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he might make us partners on his throne, partakers of his glory, citizens of his city, brethren in his Father's house! Here is a theme for heaven's loudest, loftiest anthems.

Nor is it alone to be the partners of his glory that we are called; we are partners in his sorrow as well as in his joy, in his labor as well as in his rest, in his humiliation and rejection as well as in his exaltation and acceptance. In merely human friendships, those who were closely knit in prosperity became alienated in adversity. But Jesus in love took his place among us in our ruin, and now he is not ashamed to call us brethren. We are not of the world, as he was not of the world. As he was the light of the world, so are we. As the Father sent him into the world, so he has sent us.

Why is this? Why did Jesus make himself so low, and why has he raised us up so high, and why is all this made known to us? It is that he might have fellowship with us, and we with him. It will be for ever thus—he finding delight in us, and we in him. This mutual joy begins now. It will be perfected in heaven; but it is enjoyed on earth, and it may be observed that without all these other attainments are worthless. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up;" and knowledge even of the loftiest truth concerning the privileges and place of believers will only distract if dwelt upon apart from God. The Spirit of God is given to guide us into all truth, but let it be remembered that this is not all: "He shall glorify Me," said our Lord; "His testimony shall be of Me as a person." And, rest assured, unless all else is seen in relation to Christ and in fellowship with him, there will be no fruit-bearing, no joy, no love, no peace. It was this of which the Lord said, "Out of me ye can do nothing"—His abiding in us and our abiding in him; he enjoying our love, we enjoying his love.

Perhaps you have thought that communion was prayer, and have thought that prayer was the highest privilege bestowed on us. But there is a privilege as much higher than that as heaven is higher than earth, as God's fulness is beyond man's neediness. We go to our Father and our Lord to tell out our troubles, too seldom our joys, and we go away uncertain whether our Father has taken any interest in the matter, because we do not listen to him; we have not his word abiding in us. This heedlessness of what God says is a main cause of the deadness in prayer of which christians complain. Unless some matter presses us with a sense of need, would it not be better to wait silently before the Lord that he may speak to us, than to kneel in the attitude of prayer and go through a lifeless form?

Prayer is a reality when it expresses a felt want; without this, the best form of words is vain. You ought, indeed, to pray without ceasing, and to be ever longing for something higher and better. But if your heart is cold, go to him and say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And should a word of his be brought to your soul with living power by the Holy Spirit, the song of praise will burst from your heart with an energy that will make the courts of heaven ring again. If the sun does not pour its warm rays upon the earth, the flowers will not bloom. So your efforts may be unwarmed, but you will bring forth no fruit unto God unless you abide in Christ and his words abide in you.

I would say a few words regarding fellowship of love; but so infinite is the expanse before us, that we could not even look upon it, except as we beseech the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. The highest joy in heaven or earth is the joy of loving. He who loves most rejoices most. This is the joy of Christ, of which he says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." The things which he has spoken are words of deepest, God-like love. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love." We are prone to frustrate his design by regarding it as presumption to take home these words to our own hearts. Nay, but it is pride which brings in the question of our deserts at all. Humility, knowing that the ground of his love is all in himself, would rather say at once, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Continued in his love is not a stilted emotion, but dwelling upon the proofs and expressions of his love, sitting constantly under its shadow with great delight.

We are apt to be occupied too much with our love to him, groaning, it may be, under its littleness, as an invalid who aggravates his disease by shutting out the air of heaven, and so breathing again and again his own corrupted breath. Nothing but the love of God in Christ, known and believed, can revive our cold hearts. Satan's most cunning device to hinder the outflow of our affections is, to keep us looking downward and inward, instead of outward and heavenward. At the same time, we must not overlook the value of our love in his estimate of it