

The Lutheran Visitor

GOD'S WORD, OUR RULE; CHRIST, OUR PATTERN; A PURE FAITH, OUR WATCHWORD.

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WHOLE NO. 1705

UNRELIABLE GENERAL COUNCIL FIGURES.

"But while Dr. Carroll is not a good interpreter of Lutheran statistics, he is not to be blamed for reporting losses where there were doubtless large gains. Thus the General Council is represented as having lost 9,838 members during the year, when there is every reason to believe that there was a considerable gain. As noted some time ago, three of the larger bodies of the Council, the Ministeriums of Pennsylvania and New York, and the Pittsburg Synod, are credited with losses aggregating nearly 15,000. As the secretaries of these three bodies have confessed, there was so much negligence and lack of completeness in the parochial reports as to draw from them the statement of their utter unreliability; and the Council has these Synods to thank for the impression which outsiders will have as to its seeming crab like progress. If, as the minutes show, the Pennsylvania Ministerium has lost 27 congregations, and the New York 22, where have they gone to? There was simply no such thing (with perhaps a few exceptions in New York state) as a loss in congregations or members; but the records were inaccurate and incomplete, and Dr. Carroll and all who shall read his statistics are, of course, not expected to know that. The point we wish to make is simply this: If we do not want the General Council to go on record before the country as declining or moving backward, all the Synods must take this matter of statistics carefully in hand and make them tell a true story hereafter."

The above appears in last week's "Lutheran" in connection with some discussion of Dr. Carroll's "statistics of the churches in the United States." We need but make a change in names and figures in order to apply the same to the United Synod. The carelessness manifested in the parochial reports submitted to our synods (or not submitted) can hardly be too severely censured. The most

careless among these who are responsible of these reports, true to human nature, often seek to shift the blame by finding fault with the blank form, but there is proof abundant that the fault is not there, when those who are careful fill the whole reports without trouble or confusion, and the habitually careless fail to record the simplest statistics. The blank forms may be far from the best we might have, but the real reason for our incorrect statistics is not defect in form. We can have reliable statistics. We ought to have reliable ones or none. Our shortcomings in this particular are inexcusable and sinful.

W. H. G.

CATECHIZATION.

The value and importance of catechization are admitted by all Lutheran pastors. But many have more or less difficulty in accomplishing the end desired. Doubtless, the most formidable obstacle that the average pastor has to overcome is the indifference of both parents and children.

But I venture to make a few comments upon one difficulty in catechization in large and scattered country pastorates. Many country pastors appreciate the value of catechization, but how to accomplish anything in the catechization of the children is the difficult problem. So many appointments, they say, make it impracticable to do efficient catechization. The same with equal force might be said of the public preaching of the Word, only once a month, and sometimes not that. But they continue to preach monthly, believing that one-fourth of a loaf is better than no loaf at all. And so we contend in the matter of catechization. In a pastorate of four or more congregations it is impossible to give as much catechetical instruction as in concentrated work. But may not as much catechetical instruction be given in proportion to the public preaching of the Word? The public preaching of the word is essential to the vitality of the church.

Just as essential is the instruction of the young of the church whether in the family, in the Sunday-school, in the catechetical class, or from the pulpit. But those of experience, competent to judge, tell us that nothing is so effectual in establishing the faith in the young as catechization by the pastor or some one equally as competent. If parents were always consecrated and themselves well instructed and founded, public catechization might be dispensed with without serious loss. But, alas!

But this is a diversion. If a country pastor cannot have catechization weekly six months of every year, might he not, say, have in one congregation at a time, weekly catechization for about three months? If the children were for only three months directed under the teaching of the pastor they would be vastly better off spiritually. The pastor would thus learn more fully the spiritual wants of his young people, and they would learn to know him as their friend, pastor and spiritual adviser. And they would thus learn things about the Bible and the church that they would not soon learn otherwise. There is a great deal said about the profit and even necessity of "special efforts for conversion of sinners." I for one admit that there is force in the argument. But suppose the energy expended in one of these protracted services be expended for about three months in going from house to house in gathering the young in a catechetical class once a week.

This might not be necessary in each congregation every year. There might be periods of two and three years when there would be no children needing immediate attention. This would mean more or less hard work. But is not there hard work in all successful church work?

I would suggest that more than one hour be spent in such catechetical work in the country. As in the day school, let there be one or two recesses. I have been told that one of the sainted Henkels

would begin catechetical instruction early in the morning and continue all day. This would, to some extent, be attaching to religious instruction the importance that we attach to secular instruction.

An advantage of this partial work in catechization would be that the young would grow up with the idea that catechization is the thing to be desired and aimed at. They would not have the example of their pastor against catechization.

In this difficult and desirable work church officers and parents should cooperate heartily and approvingly with the pastor.

One word more. The assertion is sometimes made that catechization is only intellectual knowledge, and has nothing to do with the heart. This is doubtless true of some pastor's work—the character of his pulpit work and his general pastoral work. The pastor who neglects the culture of the heart in catechization will be guilty of the same elsewhere. I dare say the pastor never has a better opportunity of getting at the heart than in the catechetical class. The truth sown in the heart, whether from catechization or from the pulpit, will bear its fruit.

Sigma Tau.

MEETING OF UNITED SYNOD.

The Eighth Convention of the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South will be held in St. John's Lutheran church, Charleston, S. C., Rev. J. W. Horine, pastor, beginning Wednesday, May 7, 1902. The opening of synod will take place at 11 o'clock a. m.

Reduced rates will not be asked of the railroads, as delegates can avail themselves of the Exposition rates, which will be cheaper and more convenient.

M. G. G. SCHERER,
Sec'y.

The peace of God which passeth all understanding is the heritage of believing souls.