

The Lutheran Visitor

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

VOL. XXXVI—No. 7.

NEWBERRY, S. C., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1902.

WHOLE No. 1706

Investigation has developed the pleasing fact that more young men attend church than is generally supposed. In the rural districts one in two young men go to church regularly; one in three occasionally, and one in fourteen not at all. In city life, one in four regularly, one in two occasionally, and one in seven not at all. This is cheering indeed, and speaks well for the young men and for the growing influence of religion.

Another hopeful fact is that the absence of the few who remain away from the house of God is the result of indifference or thoughtlessness rather than of infidelity. Certainly such indifference is a sin against themselves and God, but at the same time there is more hope of success in winning them to Christ than would be possible were they confirmed sceptics. Many of them are drawn away from religion by the attractions of this pleasure-loving age and have no special objection to Christianity itself.

There is a mistaken idea among non-church-goers which must be corrected, and which sober reflection would show to be false and ruinous. Some of them tell us that they can be as good Christians out of the church as in it. Were this true then the founding of the church by our Lord would have been unnecessary—a thought not to be entertained even for a moment. All attempts to set aside the Church of God, claiming that it is not necessary to the salvation of men, is an impeachment of the wisdom of God Himself and a strike at the very foundations of our holy religion; and to say, as some do, that the church has failed in any measure in the accomplishment of her great mission is to say that Jesus was mistaken when He said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Such opposition to the church is simply blasphemous, no matter from what source it emanates. And yet many people will hang entranced upon the ministry of men whose chief stock in trade is

abuse of the church, her holy institutions, and her divinely ordained ministry. Whenever any man goes out in the capacity of a religious teacher and says the church is wrong and that all preachers are wrong, he is a religious anarchist and the enemy of God. Nor will it avail to argue in extenuation of his guilt that he is honest, sincere, and conscientious in his views, for if he be a man of any intelligence whatever he knows that God established His church, ordained a living ministry, and provided for the perpetuation of His church, her ministry, and her sacraments. True some preachers may be in error—there was a Judas among the twelve and an apostate Julian among the early Christians—but that by no means proves that all are wrong. Generally men who go out in opposition to the established forms of religion are apostates themselves and are simply seeking to justify their own mistakes, or to gain mercenary ends. Jesus said, "Go work in my vineyard and whatsoever is right I will pay thee;" and in Acts it is written, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." From these divine premises the conclusion follows that no salvation, no reward is promised outside of the Church and apart from her holy sacraments. As the blood on the lentils was life to the Jew so these are life to us through our blessed Lord.

Conditions have so changed in these latter days that our young men have no valid excuse for remaining out of the church, if indeed any such excuse ever existed. Religion is now esteemed and professed by the great leaders of thought in almost every department of life, and men who oppose it are looked upon with some degree of suspicion if not indeed with positive distrust. Even in ancient times it was argued that no obligation would bind a man who did not believe in a Supreme Being to whom men must finally account for all their acts, and the ancients were nearer the truth than many supposed. The notion

seemed to be this: If there is no God and no reality in Religion then eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die; if there be no such thing as accountability after death then gratify the fleshly appetite, for death erases all. This is good logic and clearly evidences the fact that those who scoff at religion and God are walking in a dangerous way. We know that it is possible for them, amid the moral influences of this Christian age, to live honorably before men, but the chances are largely against them. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!" This is pertinent. If it be hard for those who live daily under the restraints of religion to walk humbly and rightly before God how much more difficult must it be for those who feel none of these restraints and who repudiate the notion of moral responsibility before an infinite God. And, hence, young men make a fatal mistake when they ignore the church, religion and God.

A suggestive fact has recently come into notice in this connection, to wit: Where both parents belong to the same church seventy-eight per cent of the young men are members, showing the power of example and of parental influence. It is therefore obvious that no parent can afford to neglect the church of God. How blessed it will be when parents can come up to God at Heaven's gate and say, "Here am I and the children whom Thou gavest me."

"Collier's Weekly"

A Negative usually portrays matters in a fine pictorial manner and faithful

to the text, but in an editorial note last week about Miss Stone's captivity among the brigands of Bulgaria it holds up to view a faintly defined negative of such a grand picture of missionary effort as that heroic woman presents to the world. What a dwarfed, one-sided opinion of missionary work is embraced in the remarks of the "Weekly" that in view of the release of Miss

Stone, "nearly everybody is equally sorry that she placed herself in a position where her capture was possible," and that "perhaps, now, she will return to this country, where energetic missionary work is needed and where it is not so perilous as it seems to be among more primitive Christians." This suggestion is threadbare and without effective argument. It is the same old selfish, one-sided view of Christian missions, in which no progress in any period of the church's history has ever been made, since the persecution of the early Christians at Jerusalem, unless the heralds of the cross possessed the spirit of self-sacrifice such as the case of Miss Stone presents. The Christian church does not hold such a one-sided view that its mission work is only to be carried on in easy stages at home to the neglect of other lands where perils must be confronted.

Elsewhere in this Second Lutheran issue of The Visitor will be found some important

announcements in regard to the Second Lutheran General Conference, which will meet in Philadelphia during the week following Easter. The program is an interesting one, and the range of subjects bears evidence of thought in its preparation, and keeping in view the aim of the coming together of representatives of the three general bodies under whose auspices the conference is held, a fuller co-operation of Lutherans for the prosperity of our great church in America. While Dr. Hamma issues the program as secretary of the conference committee, the statement by Rev. L. L. Smith, the United Synod's representative on the committee, has some points which claim the special and prompt attention of our district synods. The suggestions made by our representative should be all that is necessary to obtain the funds assigned to the United Synod as its part of the expenses of the conference, and we call attention to it now that our congregations may readily respond to the aid of the cause.