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Pastoral Visits

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und seiner Worte schämten. Von solchen will er dann auch nichts wissen, die will und kann er, als der wahrhaftige Zeuge, nicht als die Seinen anerkennen; denn sie waren es entweder nie oder haben sich von ihm wieder losgesagt.

Gingegen alle, die hier ihn bekannten, die gerne mit ihm sich schmähen ließen, die sich weder durch Drohungen noch durch Schmeicheleien, weder durch Aussicht auf irdischen Gewinn noch durch die Furcht, als Friedensstörer, rechthaberische Leute usw. verschrien zu werden, von einem freien, fröhlichen, deutlichen Bekenntnis Jesu haben abhalten lassen: sie alle werden von ihm anerkannt werden als seine Mitgenossen an der Trübsal und an der Geduld und am Reich. Das geschieht öffentlich vor aller Welt, vor allen Engeln, vor seinem himmlischen Vater. Wer wollte da nicht mit Freuden bekennen? Lieb 282, 4. L. L.

Pastoral Visits.

Our Visit at the Hospital.

We all agree that our visits of patients in hospitals are frequently not so productive as we desire, either because other patients make such visits difficult or, at times, because of expected ridicule on the part of other patients or visitors, we are too timid in the confession or profession of our faith. But we must not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore should most cheerfully and boldly perform our pastoral duty. Such bold presentation of sacred truths of sin and grace, of admonition and of comfort, will strengthen the patient we are visiting and will have a wholesome effect on other patients that listen to what is being said. Open ridicule and antagonism will in most instances soon be silenced.

The Word of God spoken to one of my patients in a hospital exercised its power in a most wonderful manner on a Bulgarian who lay on a cot next to him, and this in spite of the fact that he was not fully familiar with the language of our country. As I came and went, I had a word of encouragement or a word of sympathy also for him. Finally the Bulgarian inquired of his neighbor who it was that came to visit him with such regularity and what his mission was. When he told him that it was his pastor and that he prayed with him, a lively discussion ensued. Our patient briefly told him that we all, especially when sick, are in need of the message which his pastor was bringing him. Being sinners, he told him, we are in need of the Savior, who shed His blood for us and who is ready and willing to listen to our prayers. The discussion led them first to Eden and then to Calvary. Finally the Bulgarian sighed, "I wish some one would pray for me, too! I do not know how to pray — I cannot pray. Will your friend pray also with me?"

This I did at my next visit. Being reared in the Greek Catholic Church, the Bulgarian had no knowledge of the truth necessary for his soul's salvation. So it was for me to present to him the very a-b-c of Christianity. A Bulgarian Bible which I presented to him was very helpful to him. The Bible-stories, especially those pertaining to Christ, His birth, suffering, and death, were eagerly read by him. By the grace of God he, too, came to the knowledge of his own sinfulness and accepted Christ as his Savior.

For about four months I was privileged to be with him two or three times each week, when finally a message reached me that his condition was serious and that he desired my presence. When I arrived at his bedside, he extended his hand to greet me, too weak to say anything. Looking at him silently, I eventually said, "Peter, do you realize that our heavenly Father will soon call you, that you will die?" He indicated that he did. "Tell me," I continued, "are you afraid to die?" "I no afraid," he responded. "Why are you not afraid?" I asked. With trembling hand he tried to locate his Bible beneath the pillow. When I gave it to him, he opened it and tried to find, as he said, "God so, God so loved —." I knew what he meant. "So you are not afraid because God loved the world and gave His only-begotten Son." "I no afraid; God loves me, forgave sin." That was his hope, his consolation. I grasped the opportunity of once more impressing this comforting Bible-truth upon his heart. With a prayer and the benediction I departed.

In the afternoon of the same day I was again at his bed. He was too weak to speak. But he folded his hands when I led him to Calvary and presented Christ and Him crucified. When I returned in the evening, he had passed away. The following day, in the presence of the church council, I delivered a sermon, praising God that He has made us worthy to be His servants and to lead men and sinners to Christ. We accompanied his body to his last resting-place.

The Door Opened for Two.

The ways of the Lord are at times mysterious indeed. If we would but perform our duty and be unafraid in spite of any obstacle confronting us, courageously doing what the Master has commanded us to do! We know that we are in the Master's service, and being in His service, He is with us wheresoever we go; indeed, He has long before prepared the way.

One day I was requested to look after the spiritual needs of a young man who, together with his young wife, made their home with her parents. The parents, however, resented the idea of a Lutheran pastor's crossing the threshold of their home, as they were Roman Catholics, and fanatical adherents, too. Their son-in-law was in the last stages of tuberculosis. He was of Lutheran parentage, and at the age of thirteen he had attended the catechumen class in one

of our Lutheran congregations of Chicago. But before the day of confirmation he had run away from home. He disappeared and was not seen for many years. He married and soon thereafter was stricken with the dread disease. A friend who knew of his deplorable condition told me about him. At my first visit the parents did not want to permit me to enter the house; but upon my continued plea I was finally admitted. The patient was a stranger to me. Will he permit me to speak to him on that one thing needful? I said to myself. And if to-day, will he request me to call again? His wife, also of the Catholic faith, sat at his bedside and listened attentively to all that I said. We went back to his boyhood days; we spoke of the home, the home he had left, of the time when he sat at Pastor U.'s feet. Did he remember the story of the prodigal son? Yes, he did. "That's me," said he, and the tears trickled down his cheek. "Yes," said I, "and the prodigal son returned, saying, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' Is that you?" And it was.—In a remarkable manner the door was opened. Though the parents tried their utmost to thwart my efforts, he prevailed, being assisted by his wife. For three months I was privileged to spend fifteen minutes three times each week at his bedside, with his wife always present. One week before his death he partook of Holy Communion. I was satisfied that God's mercy had prevailed and had rescued a perishing soul.

But this story is not concluded. After six months a little girl rapped at the door. In her hand she had a letter for me from her sister, she said. On opening it, I found that it was from the wife of the young man mentioned above. She wrote about as follows: "Dear Pastor: You will kindly excuse me and not deem it impertinent if I write you. No doubt you will remember my beloved husband and the weekly visits you paid him until he died. It is just six months ago. I, too, have now contracted the dreaded disease of tuberculosis and will die shortly. Will you kindly come and see me? You know I sat at the bedside of my husband every time you came to speak to him. It impressed me so much that I would like to die as he did. I believe that it is the only true way to salvation. But please do not tell father or mother about this letter." So ended this communication. I did not hesitate, but went at once. And again I met with the same difficulties as before. The parents of the young widow refused to admit me. But as I pleaded with them, the patient overheard the conversation going on outside the door, and after earnest remonstrances on her part with her parents I finally reached her bedside. And a wonderful confession she then made in the presence of her parents, stating that there was salvation in none other than in Christ; neither Mary nor any saint could help us. She pleaded with her parents to permit me to come again. I came repeatedly, and

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every time we dwelt upon the very things which afford a sinner true and lasting comfort. She remained faithful in spite of the visit of the Catholic priest and his anathema, in spite of parents, sisters, and friends. Three weeks after my first visit she died.

At the Bedside of a Despondent Patient.

One of the most difficult pastoral duties is no doubt the proper advising and comforting of such as are despondent because of some particular sins committed or because of an erring conscience. How often are we at a loss to know what to say after we seemingly have exhausted our array of pertinent Scripture-texts and Bible-stories, which, we feel should surely convince our patient that Jesus is *His* Savior and that His blood cleanseth us from *all* sins. One reason why we quite frequently are unable to overcome the fear or grave doubts that have filled the heart of our patient and to speak the word that will fill his heart with renewed confidence in his Lord and God and with good cheer, is that we cannot discern the real cause or reason for such despondency, which at times is so grave that physicians time and again have pronounced it to be insanity. Yet in many instances it is by no means insanity; it is rather the voice of a troubled conscience, which insists that the many and glorious promises recorded in Scripture are not meant for him, as he believes his sins to be too great.

If at any time we are in need of divine wisdom and guidance, it is at the bedside of these most unfortunate people. If we are to be pastors in the true sense of the term, it is evident that we must first know the underlying cause for such despondency before we can offer real, lasting comfort. At times it is a particular sin committed that causes such great grief. And it might be a sin which, humanly speaking, is by no means in line with the grave offenses of a criminal, but an offense which in the hour of weakness caused that person to stumble and fall, which the devil, however, holds up before him as so grave and serious that God cannot or will not forgive it. But how carefully does such an unfortunate person weigh his words in order not to reveal to his pastor the offense which causes him so much worry and grief! It is then that we must draw more closely to him to ascertain the cause of his fears and worries. True, we must never seem to be delving into his personal affairs. Grasp the opportune moment and show that your sole reason for asking this or that question is that you want to help him dispel the gloom from his troubled soul by the help of God and to regain the firm confidence that God is his Father and Jesus his Savior. If, then, finally the patient will tell what it is that is lying heavy upon his heart, we in most instances have won the battle. In Scripture we may find a story to fit the case or at least some Bible-passages that prove beyond all doubt that

Jesus came to save that which is lost, and therefore him also, and thus by the grace of God eradicate every vestige of doubt and fill the heart with hope and good cheer. — Permit me to relate the following personal experiences.

One morning at about ten o'clock there was a rap at my door. An aged man stood terrified without. Catching his breath, he exclaimed: "O pastor, hurry, come to my home at once — the devil has been seen in one of my rooms! Yes, he showed himself bodily! No, no, pastor, do not smile; it's serious, and it's true!" he added with trembling voice. "My sister-in-law from another part of the city is there, too. She will tell you everything she has seen and heard. It is impossible to describe it." I promised to come. Going with him, I tried to ease his mind, for he was visibly agitated. Among other things I also remarked that he need not feel embarrassed if the devil had already absconded before our arrival.

After a few minutes we came to his humble abode. There sat his wife and his sister-in-law, terrified, I dare say, well-nigh petrified, having their eyes fixed on the bedroom adjoining the kitchen. Finally one of them dared to speak in a whisper, "There he is, behind the door!" Without much ado I stepped into the room and gazed behind the door. As was to be expected, the devil had made his escape. "Just as I thought," said grandma; "I knew that he is afraid of the pastor!" "But, Grandma," I said, "what has happened? Was it the first time that the devil made his appearance?" Thereupon the sister-in-law, who was a member of one of our sister congregations, began to tell of all her experiences with the devil. For a full hour she spoke of the weird visits of the Prince of Darkness, of his appearance in full regalia and colors. And as she told the story, I sat and listened. An occasional plea, "O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may speak the proper word," ascended on high.

But of what nature were her experiences? In a most vivid and drastic manner she told that for a number of years the devil had personally appeared in her home. He came at all hours, by day or night, in summer as well as in winter. Once he came at midnight to her bed and sat on her chest; for hours he tormented her with his ghastly face. At another time he came and sat on her feet, reaching for her throat and trying to choke her. At still another time he came at one o'clock at night. She had heard a noise in the kitchen. When she arose to see what it was, she found the devil sitting at the table. She dared not leave the spot where she was standing. And she stood there until early morning in her nightgown, until the devil disappeared. And it was 20 degrees below zero. "Pastor, I'll never forget that night; no, never! And of late he follows me wherever I go. Yes, over in yonder corner he stood looking at me in a most frightful manner." Thus she went on.

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Finally I felt constrained to interrupt her. Looking her squarely into the face, I said, "We never met before, and I never heard of you or of your experience until just now." "O pastor," she rejoined, "please help me. I often heard that pastors can cast out devils." As she said this, she drew her chair a little closer, giving me an opportunity to edge in. Looking into her eyes, I inquiringly, in a serious tone, asked, "Lady, is it possible that this or that sin lay heavy upon your heart?" I had barely finished my question when she suddenly screamed, rose from her seat, threw up both of her arms, and exclaimed, "O pastor, you know it all, you can look into my heart, you know it all!" After I had told her that God alone can know the secrets of our hearts, I asked, "What did you do?" And now the old grandfather who had requested me to come urged her most emphatically to tell all, to clear her conscience, asserting "that the pastor would certainly cast out the devil." With quivering voice she began to relate. She stated that she lived near a railroad track and that she stole her coal supply from the cars standing there. When I asked again what else it might be that was troubling her, she rose from her chair and said, "It is really so, pastor, you know it all. You know that I fed my chickens with corn stolen from the railroad cars." Then she collapsed.

Now, this was my opportunity. Said I: "My dear lady, I am indeed not surprised that the devil follows you wherever you go inasmuch as against better knowledge and wilfully you follow his bidding and transgress the Seventh Commandment of God's holy Law. Was it not your conscience that smote you rather than the personal appearance of the devil? You tell me that you went to your pastor and asked him to pray with you, but that it was of no avail. But you never told him what sins you had committed, and you never left from your sins, how could you pray? How could you expect the Lord to hear you since you wilfully continued to transgress His holy will? Repent of your sins, leave from your evil ways, go to Jesus and seek forgiveness with Him. He stands ready to receive you if you will but come to Him." We prayed, and I left.

About three months later I again met this woman. She assured me that now all was well and that the Evil One had ceased to come.

* * *

Not always, however, it is a grave offense that causes Satan to crush the heart of him whom he is afflicting in such a manner. He delights in doing all in his power to make the sins of him whom he is harassing so sorely, of whatever nature they may be, appear at their worst and to lead him to utter despair. And not always are we successful in our efforts to comfort and uplift the unfortunate soul, even if we were successful in finding out the underlying reason for such pitiful state of affairs. Will you bear with me if I illustrate this from personal observation?

A member who for forty years had been a voting member of a Lutheran congregation (twenty-six years member of my congregation, and many years an officer in it) was stricken with illness. He soon recovered, but was unable to go to work, principally because of advanced age. During his illness already a peculiar frame of his mind had been noticeable. "My sins, O my sins!" he would cry. Thus things went on each week for seven years. "My sins, my sins!"—and at every visit he began to tell of the days of his youth and in particular of his childhood, of his father and of his mother, how they taught the children to pray, but also how they were given to drink and led the children to drink, too. "And I, think of it, pastor, when I was fourteen years of age, did as they did. And this, too, on Sundays. Every Sunday, passing the church, the parsonage, the school, we went to the inn. And there we sat and drank until late at night. Was it not terrible? My sins, my sins! What will this come to? What shall I do? I do not know!" So he would go on day by day, year after year. And he daily read his Bible and his prayer-book. But there was no change in his condition. "My sins, my sins! What will this come to?" Whenever, in reading the Bible, he would chance upon God's gracious promises, he was satisfied that these were not meant for him. And if I stressed these promises as being intended just for him, he would always end by saying: "My sins, my sins!"

A few weeks ago I again visited him. I came duly prepared, not only to hear the same story, but also to change my "attack," if I may so call it. I met his "My sins, my sins!" with the following: "Thank God, my friend, that He has led you to a knowledge of your sins. Oh, how many of our fellow-men continue in their sins and never realize that they are sinners, thus rushing to eternal perdition. How gracious is God in not permitting you to go on in your sins, but opening your eyes to see your sins. From this you can readily perceive that God loves you and does not want you to be lost. Then, too, you are *sorry* for your sins. Again you see the gracious working of the Holy Spirit within you; it is He who has caused you deeply to regret that you have sinned and that God has been offended by your sins.—But, my dear friend, do not now add this sin to those committed by you, that you reject the loving hand which Jesus extends to you, saying, 'My sins, my sins,—they are too great to be forgiven!' Jesus died for you. 'God so loved the world,' etc. 'Though your sins be as scarlet,' etc. 'If any man sin, we have,' etc. 'The blood of Jesus Christ,' etc. It is the devil that urges you on to say and believe that your sins are too great to be forgiven. First he led you to believe that the sin was not so serious and dangerous, and now he turns about to crush you. Look at Jesus as He hung there on the accursed tree. Lovingly He invites you to come unto Him that He might give you rest and peace and happiness."

Seldom was I able to present the sweetest story ever told in such richness and fulness as at the home of this one-time active member of my church. When I left, I felt assured that now the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been victorious, for the patient had quietly listened and seemingly acquiesced. The *ceterum censeo* "My sins, my sins!" did this time not conclude our conversation. Commending him into the gracious hands of our Master, I left him.

And what happened? Two days later he hanged himself. A terrible blow for all concerned! For thus came to an end a life of one who for many years had been a devout member and an active officer of the church. The verdict of the coroner's jury ruled that he died by his own hand, being irresponsible.

Chicago, Ill.

(To be continued.)

F. C. STREUFERT.

Theological Observer. — *Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches*.

I. Amerika.

Aus der Synode. Anlässlich des vierhundertjährigen Jubiläums der Augsburgerischen Konfession hat das Concordia-College in Adelaide, Australien, die Professoren Arndt, Friis und Gräbner von unserer St. Louiser Concordia zu Doktoren der Theologie honoris causa ernannt. — Bei der Eröffnung des neuen Studienjahres in unserer St. Louiser Concordia wurden zwei neue Professoren, Prof. Th. Hoyer (bisher in Winfield, Kans.) und P. E. J. Friedrich (bisher in Cleveland, O.), öffentlich in ihr Lehramt eingeführt. — Die Zahl der eingeschriebenen Studenten in unserer St. Louiser Concordia beträgt dieses Jahr 534. Davon sind etwa 80 als Vikare tätig und etwa 10 aus andern Gründen abwesend, so daß die Zahl der in diesem Jahre anwesenden Studenten etwa 446 beträgt. Die Zahlen unterliegen innerhalb des Studienjahres keinen Schwankungen, weil der eine oder andere Student der Kandidatenklasse sich noch für ein Vikariat entschließt oder aus einem andern Grunde aus der Kandidatenklasse ausscheidet. — Über die Wirkung des Krieges auf unsere Gemeinden in London, England, berichtet P. B. Koch, der früher selbst eine Reihe von Jahren in London Pastor war und dieses Jahr dort einen Besuch machte: „Leider haben die Gemeinden durch den Krieg sehr gelitten. Finanziell stehen sie sich allerdings jetzt besser als früher. P. Wattenberg arbeitet dort in sichtlichem Segen. Die Gemeinde in Kentish Town muß sich allerdings früher oder später mit der Frage eines neuen Kircheneigentums beschäftigen, da die lease des jetzigen Eigentums in einigen Jahren abläuft. Sehr leid tut es mir, daß unsere beiden Missionschulen in der Kriegszeit eingegangen sind.“ In der Kriegszeit hat ja auch unser Gemeindefschulwesen in den Vereinigten Staaten und anderswo Verluste erlitten, die noch nicht ganz wieder ersetzt sind, wie unsere synodale Schulbehörde bei der Delegatensynode 1929 berichtete. Aber durch Gottes Gnade sind wir dabei, über die Verluste hinwegzukommen, weil in manchen Gemeinden neuer Eifer für Gemeindefschulen geweckt worden ist. Das kann durch Gottes Gnade auch in London geschehen. — Über den „Hochpunkt“ des