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Principles for the Development of Adult
Premembership Instruction

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from a 16th-Century Perspective

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The responsibility of preparing interested persons for membership in the congregation is a task that faces every parish pastor. In carrying out that responsibility, he needs to make decisions as to what his goals for such instruction shall be and how those goals shall be attained. There is nothing in writing in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod that will help a pastor think through what the goals of the premembership instruction process should be and what is the best way of attaining those goals. There are manuals available for the instruction of adults, but there are no studies that investigate the underlying educational and theological principles involved in such instruction.

I

INTRODUCTION

The need for a study was brought forcibly to the author's attention by his membership on a subcommittee of the Board of Parish Education of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. The responsibility of the subcommittee is to formulate principles for adult premembership instruction in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. The subcommittee could find no existing statement of principles, so it was forced to make a beginning on such a formulation.

The subcommittee on adult premembership instruction has done some preliminary work in the gathering of data pertinent to its task. The data available to the sub-

committee are appended to this article and reference will be made to them. The appended data are not presumed to be scientifically precise but are included in order to indicate the kind of data with which the subcommittee has been working. Appendix A is the questionnaire sent by the subcommittee to one thousand pastors of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod in an attempt to determine several things relevant to adult premembership instruction. Appendix B is the compiled results as reported to the subcommittee by Robert Hoyer, a member of the group. The results of the survey indicate a diversity of practice in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod in adult premembership instruction. Robert Hoyer notes in the survey report that "this seems to indicate a rather wide and scattered opinion concerning what constitutes a good course, or a widespread discontent with all available courses."¹

The phrase "adult premembership instruction" has been used consistently in this introduction. The three words of that phrase are the words commonly used to describe the preparation of adults for membership in a congregation. The words need to be defined. When the word "adult" is used, it is meant to indicate persons who are neither children nor adolescents. Adults can be defined in various ways. If defined chronologically, young adulthood comprises

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¹ *Infra*, Appendix B.

the years from 20 to 40, the middle years are those from 40 to 60, and older adults are those 60 years of age and older.² Adults can also be defined according to *status*, as is done, for example, in the Lutheran Boards material.

The title "young adult" is sometimes applied to persons in their mid-twenties through their mid-thirties, but in this discussion we do not define him so much by age as by status. He will be regarded as the young person who has established his own independent role in life.³

In many instances the determination of who qualifies as an adult for adult pre-membership instruction is made on the basis of both these factors plus others. The author knows from parish experience that many persons are included in adult pre-membership because they are older than the normal age for the confirmation instruction of children and thus are placed in an "adult" group.

The word "premembership" refers to an instruction process for persons who have not yet been formally received into communicant membership of a congregation. Admittedly such persons have a wide diversity of backgrounds. Some have had no Christian influence or training in their lives, some have been baptized, some have been members of other churches. However, since we cannot assume a Christian background for the people involved, we will have to begin from the point of view that they are non-Christian. Obviously, a

² Harry G. Coiner, *Teaching the Word to Adults* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 29—30.

³ W. Kent Gilbert, "The Age Group Objectives of Christian Education" (Board of Parish Education, Lutheran Church in America, 1958), p. 85.

pastor with only one person or a very small group of persons in premembership instruction will be able to determine where they are in their faith-relationship to God and will be able to begin at that point.

The word "instruction" is the term commonly used to designate the process of preparing people for church membership. Many adult premembership manuals use the term, especially in their subtitles.⁴ Widespread use of the term, however, does not make it the most appropriate word to describe the process of preparing adults for church membership. The word has a highly cognitive orientation. *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* gives the following definition for instruction:

1. The art of instructing; teaching; as, the instruction of youth. To teach those branches which train the intellect alone is instruction, but in no true sense education. A. MacArthur, *Education and Manual Industry*, p. 333. [A. 1888.]
2. Imparted knowledge; precept.
3. The act of giving specific directions or commands, or the directions given; as, instructions given to an agent.⁵

⁴ The word "instruction" is used in *Know the Truth: A Series of Outlines on the Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion for the Instruction of Adults for Church Membership* by Alfred Doerffler and Wm. Eifert (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962); *What Does the Bible Say? A Manual for the Instruction of Adults* by Oswald Riess (Detroit: 1956); *Christianity Is for You: A Manual of Instruction in The Lutheran Church* by Milton Rudnick (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961); *Life With God: A Manual for the Religious Instruction of Adults* by Herman Theiss (Medford, Oreg.: Morse Press, Inc., 1961).

⁵ *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1953), p. 1273.

Not only is the definition cognitive but the dictionary includes a disclaimer that instruction alone is in any true sense education. A better word to describe the process of preparing for church membership would be "teaching" as it is used in the New Testament. Richard R. Caemmerer reports his conclusions on the use of *kerygma* and *didache* (teaching) in the New Testament.

The *kerygma* affirms that the intention of God to redeem the world has been carried out. The *didache* applies that intention of God to its target now, whether that be one not yet in the orbit of the kingdom of God or whether it be a member, young or old, in the holy Christian church. For the intention of God is never merely to rescue His people from death but to employ them for the activities of rescued and rescuing people.⁶

In spite of the possible misunderstandings in the word "instruction," that word will be used in this article because it is in common use and affords a ready reference to the process of preparing adults for church membership. However, the word "instruction" is used with the meaning noted in the quotation from Caemmerer.

II

MAJOR EDUCATIONAL AND THEOLOGICAL FACTORS IN ADULT PREMEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

The Goals of Adult Premembership Instruction

The first major factor in adult premembershship instruction is that of the goals of such a process. An educator, especially a

Christian educator, does not begin teaching without having thought through the anticipated results of the process. Many things may happen when a teacher begins to teach without having goals. The first thing that may happen is that the teacher will simply do what he is told without questioning it. The result of doing merely what he is told is that he has no way of knowing when and where he has arrived. This is "treadmill" teaching. Second, the teacher may simply do what comes naturally. The consequence of doing what comes naturally is that the results achieved are purely accidental and apt to be few and far between. This is "wasteful" teaching. The third thing a teacher may do without intending to do so is to teach something other than Christianity. The establishment of goals is crucial for successful teaching. "When we are planning, they help us to decide what to do. While we are teaching, they help us to keep on the track. When we are evaluating, they help us to judge the degree of our success or failure."⁷

Outcome in Persons

More important than the considerations mentioned above is that the outcome in teaching be the outcome God desires in the lives of people. As Richard Caemmerer says, this means more than speaking the Gospel, an activity some people would judge sufficient for achieving God's outcomes in people; it means that the Gospel needs to be used toward God's ends in people.⁸ The goals of Christian

⁶ Richard R. Caemmerer, "Kerygma and Didache in Christian Education," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXII, 4 (April 1961), 202.

⁷ D. Campbell Wyckoff, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961).

⁸ Caemmerer, pp. 203—204.

education are closely in line with the purpose of the church.

While a statement of the church's purpose will stress mission and ministry, "a statement of the purpose of Christian education will stress the ways in which the person and group are . . . introduced to and inducted into that mission and ministry."⁹

Scope

A statement of goals also takes into consideration the scope of Christian education. Scope determines how far the concern of Christian education extends in the life of a man. The scope of Christian education is not limited to what a man thinks nor is it limited to a specific area of life. The scope of Christian education includes the whole man and all of his life. A statement of goals will reflect, first of all, the whole man in his cognitive, affective, and executive dimensions. One way to stress all the dimensions of man is to use the categories of "understandings," "attitudes," and "action patterns." These are the categories used in the Lutheran Boards material. As this material states, "the educator must bear in mind simultaneously both the unity of a person as well as these cognitive, affective, and executive aspects of his personality; otherwise a balanced educational approach is impossible."¹⁰

The scope of Christian education also includes all of life. Christian education has often seemed to have been concerned only with one relationship of man: his relationship to God. Statements of goal that are predominantly oriented to the faith-relationship to God ignore other vital

relationships.¹¹ The vital relationships in life have been variously identified. The six basic relationships identified in the Lutheran Boards material are: God, Christian church, Bible, fellowmen, physical world, and self.¹² In the recently adopted statement of objectives of the Board of Parish Education of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the six basic relationships are: God, the church, the world, other people, the Bible, and himself.¹³ Others identify four basic relationships. They are: God, man, nature, and history.¹⁴ The Curriculum Committee of the General Board of Education of the Methodist Church proposes three basic relationships. They are: God, man, and the world.¹⁵ This brief review of the attempts of various groups to identify the basic relationships of life serves to illustrate the concern to include all of life in the scope of Christian education. No part of life, no relationship of life, is omitted. Any statement of goal reflects the scope of Christian education as involving *all* of life's relationships.

The relationships of life involved in the scope of Christian education serve as a helpful reference for determining which of those relationships can offer a beginning

¹¹ Cf. Milton Rudnick, "Spiritual Objectives," *The Teaching of Religion*, ed. John S. Damm (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1965), pp. 83—103.

¹² Gilbert and Egbert, p. 11.

¹³ "The Objective of Christian Education" (St. Louis: Board of Parish Education, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1966 [mimeographed]).

¹⁴ Wyckoff, p. 125.

¹⁵ Curriculum Committee, General Board of Education, The Methodist Church, *Design for Methodist Curriculum* (Nashville: Graded Press, 1965), p. 15.

⁹ Wyckoff, p. 62.

¹⁰ W. Kent Gilbert and Wilson C. Egbert, *The Objectives of Christian Education* (1957), p. 12.

point for a sequence of adult premembership instruction. If, as D. Campbell Wyckoff says, "in determining the scope of Christian education, the place to begin is with the fundamental dimensions of experience, which are the categories of perception,"¹⁶ then it would also be necessary to determine which of those dimensions, or relationships, are the predominant ones for a given group of persons. Persons who are non-Christian (our starting point in adult premembership instruction) will certainly perceive their lives in the relationships of man and the world. They will not perceive life in relationship to God.

The theological formula for saying that non-Christians do not perceive life in relationship to God is that man is "unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God."¹⁷ It is not until the Spirit of God works through the Word of God that a man is related to God in faith. Some instructional manuals in use in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod begin with, or have near the beginning, the doctrine of God. Some respondents to the survey taken by the Board of Parish Education subcommittee indicated that they would begin with the doctrine of God if they were to write their own instructional material.¹⁸ In view of the categories of perception used by non-Christian persons and in view of the inability to have true fear and faith in God, the doctrine of God

does not seem to be a defensible starting point.

The doctrine of the Bible is used as a beginning point in some instructional sequences. A great percentage of the respondents to the subcommittee survey indicated that they would begin with the doctrine of the Bible if they were to write their own instructional materials.¹⁹ They would use the Bible as a beginning point because they feel that an understanding and acceptance of the nature of the Bible will assure an understanding and acceptance of God and what He says. But beginning with the Bible is not only inappropriate from the standpoint of the categories of perception mentioned above but also from a theological standpoint. Francis Pieper says that the teacher should not begin with rational arguments about the authority of the Bible because such arguments cannot be regarded as providing the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise those lack the internal testimony of the Holy Ghost as to the divine authority of Scripture who are prompted by arguments of reason or by human authority—such as the authority of the pastor, the parents, or others—to regard Scripture as the Word of God.²⁰

Anyone working with non-Christian persons should not begin with the nature of the Bible. The conviction of its authority comes after God has done His work in the Gospel.

Our missionaries in heathen countries, our home missionaries, and our institutional workers do not therefore begin with ra-

¹⁶ Wyckoff, p. 127.

¹⁷ Theodore G. Tappert, trans., ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), Augsburg Confession II, 1. Hereafter all references to the Lutheran Confessions will be from the Tappert edition and will use that volume's enumeration.

¹⁸ *Infra*, Appendix A.

¹⁹ *Infra*, Appendix A.

²⁰ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I, 312.

tional arguments for the divinity of Holy Scripture, but they preach "to one and all" (*"in den Haufen hinein"*) repentance and remission of sins. And when faith in *Christum "crucifixum"* has once been created, there is no need to worry about securing faith in the divinity of Holy Scripture.²¹

The Growing Person

Another consideration to be taken into account before a statement of goal is made is that of the growing person. A goal statement necessarily reflects the nature of persons. The Christian is not a perfect person. He will not be a perfect person even after he has completed a learning experience in Christian education. The statement of goal does not, therefore, indicate that the Christian has reached a state of perfection. The goal should be stated developmentally, not terminally. Educationally, a person is regarded as one who develops and therefore he is engaged in "developmental tasks" as he grows in his ability to relate to the various areas of his life. Theologically, the Christian is a person moved by the Holy Spirit but still plagued by the pull of evil within him. There is a lifelong struggle between flesh and spirit. The Christian is always in a state of becoming. A statement of goal for any Christian education process reflects this growing aspect of the Christian person.

Statements of Goal

A statement of goal, then, takes into consideration all of the previously mentioned factors. One attempt to reflect all the concerns is the goal statement in the Lutheran Boards material.

Inasmuch as the church, as the Body of Christ, seeks to become more effectively

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

that community of believers in which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies individuals in their relationships with God and their fellowmen, the church's central educational objective, therefore, shall be—

To assist the individual in his response and witness to the eternal and incarnate Word of God as he grows within this community of the church toward greater maturity in his Christian life through ever-deepening understandings, more wholesome attitudes and more responsible patterns of action.²²

The Board of Parish Education of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod formulates the goal of Christian education as follows:

The objective of Christian education is that everyone through Word and Spirit: know God and His seeking and forgiving love in Christ, and respond in faith and love; identify himself as a son of God, a member of Christ's Body; and as such grow in self-understanding and self-acceptance, express His love through service to fellow human beings, and relate responsibly to His whole creation; as he lives in the Christian hope.²³

It should be noted that the above statement of goal does not adequately indicate the growing nature of Christian faith and life and does not include at all the total person in his knowing, feeling, and acting.

The author's own statement of goal for Christian education and for adult premembership instruction is the following:

That each person know God, His will for men, and His saving love in Jesus Christ; more and more respond in all his thinking,

²² Gilbert and Egbert, p. 13.

²³ "The Objective of Christian Education," p. 3.

feeling, and acting as a worshiping and nurturing member of the body of Christ and be better able to carry out God's purposes to men in the world through service and witness as he lives in hope.

This statement of goal also attempts to incorporate the theological dimensions of the organizing principle and instructional sequence which will be presented in part two of this article.

The Context of Adult Premembership Instruction

After the statement of goal has been developed, other factors come to the fore. The first of these is the factor of context, or the place where Christian education happens. In public education the context is the society or community in which education takes place. As the learner participates in the society in which he lives, he is learning what it means to be and act as a member of that society. For Christian education the context is the community of Christian believers.

The context of Christian education may therefore be understood as one in which persons are confronted, quickened and transformed by the Christian Gospel and led into and nurtured within the church (the communion of saints) which believes, lives, and proclaims the Gospel. In this process the learner becomes a willing and active participant.²⁴

The members of the adult premembership group are to be "led into and nurtured within the church." The teacher of the group is the one who leads and nurtures them at the beginning of the adult pre-

membership instruction process. But the Christian community plays an important role in nurture, as well as the individual teacher. The teacher leads the adults into relationship with the Christian community so that they can be nurtured by the members of the congregation. This relationship is established as soon as possible.

The nature of the relationships that are established is important. If they are to be truly nurturing relationships between the teacher and the members of the adult group as well as between the members of the adult group and members of the congregation, such relationships must involve more than words. Persons are nurtured through what is done as well as through what is said. Two languages, the verbal and the nonverbal, are important.

In a community there are two languages, the language of relationships and the spoken language. . . . We are increasingly aware of the nonverbal elements in Christian communication: the atmosphere of the Christian home and the life of a community of Christians with a spirit of love, trust, and integrity.²⁵

The importance of the nonverbal is stressed by Reuel Howe, who places great stress on the "language of relationships."

Our need today, therefore, is to be able to speak again through the language of relationship as well as through the language of words. I need the grace to *be* in order to help my child, my wife, my friend, my student to *become*.²⁶

What is done by the teacher in the sequence of instruction and what is done by the members of the congregation affirms

²⁴ Harry G. Coiner, "The Context of Christian Education," *Lutheran Education*, XCV, 4 (April 1960), 377.

²⁵ Wyckoff, p. 118.

²⁶ *Man's Need and God's Action* (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, Inc., 1953), p. 75.

or denies what is said. The teacher needs to *be* what a Christian is and the members of the congregation need to *be* what Christians are. Despite what may be *said*, the members of the adult group will tend to become the kind of Christians that they observe the others around them to *be*. This underscores the importance of an active, believing community for the successful achievement of goals.

The Process of Adult Premembership Instruction

After context comes process. The traditional understanding is that the process of education is basically one of giving the right information to people. This definition explains the frequent emphasis in the past on what the teacher should give to the learner. The assumption has been that the information given by the teacher will make Christian people out of the members of an adult prememberships group. But learning requires the self-activity of the learner. A person learns to the extent that he is active and participates in the process and begins to live what he learns. The process of Christian education calls for the deepest participation, engagement, and involvement in the life and work of the Christian community.

The members of the adult group are to be helped to participate in the nurture and worship which Christians do as well as to be stimulated to serve and witness in all the relationships they have in the home, neighborhood, community, and occupation. They are to be encouraged to discover and carry out the will of God in every area of their lives. Some opportunity needs to be given in the meetings of the adult group to discuss the successes and failures

the members have experienced in carrying out the will of God in their lives. In this way the teacher is helping the people see God at work in their lives in Law and Gospel. Their failures are seen as failures to carry out the will of God, a function of Law. The forgiveness of failures through the Gospel pushes them right back into the relationships to carry out the will of God.

Helping persons do the will of God in their relationships can be stated in another way. Randolph Crump Miller indicates that it is helping the learner at his "growing edge."

Religious readiness in a person is what we understand by his "growing edge," the point at which he can reach out and make contact with the meaning of his world. When we confront him with the Gospel at the point where he can respond, in terms of relationships that are meaningful, in terms of concerns that are live options, in terms of answers to questions he is asking or of stimulating questions he is capable of asking, he may respond. This motivation, when supported by God's grace, leads him to grow in religious insight and feeling, involving his total personality as he participates in the life of the Christian community.²⁷

Helping the edge to grow happens also when the learner is involved in the "learning tasks." The "learning tasks" are: making contact with the field of relationships, exploring the field of relationships, discovering meaning and value in the field of relationships, appropriating that meaning and value personally, and assuming responsibility, personal and social, in the

²⁷ *Education for Christian Living* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 74.

field of relationships. These learning tasks are undertaken in the light of the Gospel. "There must be a lifelong listening, a listening with growing awareness, to the gospel, and response in faith and love."²⁸ In terms of adult premembership instruction, then, the teacher is responsible for helping the members of the group hear the Gospel, look at the relationships of life in which they are involved, explore the meaning of the will of God in those relationships, discover what the will of God is for them in the relationships, appropriate that meaning personally, and then act upon the will of God in the relationships. Again, Law and Gospel are put into action as the Gospel impels persons to act, the Law judges their failures, and the Gospel forgives, renews, and causes them to act again.

The Bible is an important means for hearing the Gospel in an adult premembership course. The members of the adult group are to use and read the Scriptures as much as possible rather than rely only on secondary sources. Some adult manuals are structured in a way that makes it possible for the members of an adult group to finish the instructional sequence with only limited use of Scripture. It is also important for the members of the group to read at least some portions of the Lutheran Confessions since they also are a witness to the Gospel. Secondarily, the Lutheran Confessions define how Lutherans confess their faith and are the symbols to which the Lutheran Church subscribes.

The Scriptures are to be used in the most effective way. The teacher is not merely to tell the members of the adult group what the Scriptures are saying. "The

most effective teaching of the Bible lies in helping the learner to discover for himself the truth of God's Word. This activity is successful to the degree in which discovery takes place and results in learning."²⁹

One way in which the learners are helped to make their own discoveries is the inductive approach to Biblical study.

The inductive method of teaching or study is the procedure by which the teacher, employing such means as assignments, questions, and class discussions, leads his students via observation (what does it say?) to interpretation (what does it mean?) and from this to application (what does it mean to me?).³⁰

The inductive method is in contrast to the deductive method of Biblical study. The deductive method states a thesis and then supports the thesis with Bible passages in the form of "proof texts." This is not the only definition of the deductive approach. Broadly defined, the deductive method means that the teacher tells the learner what some structure of thought is and why the teacher believes it to be that way. Defined in this way, the teacher cannot entirely avoid being deductive in an adult premembership class. However, insofar as the use of Scripture is concerned, there needs to be opportunity both to learn and to discover the meaning of Scripture.

Organizing Principles for Adult Premembership Instruction

After determining what the goal of adult premembership instruction shall be,

²⁹ Harry G. Coiner, *Teaching the Word to Adults* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 82.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁸ Wyckoff, pp. 133—34.

and discussing the process by which the goal is attained, an organizing principle is needed to put the process into motion and attain the goals. An organizing principle determines how the learning experience begins, proceeds, and ends. There are several factors that go into the determination of an organizing principle. Ralph Tyler says that there are three major criteria to be met in building an organized group of learning experiences.

These are: continuity, sequence, and integration. Continuity refers to the vertical reiteration of major curriculum elements. . . . Sequence is related to continuity but goes beyond it. It is possible for a major curriculum element to recur again and again but merely at the same level so that there is no progressive development of understanding or skill or attitude or some other factor. . . . Integration refers to the horizontal relationship of curriculum experiences. The organization of these experiences should be such that they help the student increasingly to get a unified view and to unify his behavior in relation to the elements dealt with.³¹

First, then, the basic curricular elements need to be decided upon. This does not mean mere items of information but basic learning experiences. The basic learning experiences need to be repeated again and again (continuity) but at a greater depth as the person grows (sequence) while, at the same time, the learner sees the basic learning experiences as meaningful for all of his life (integration).

Wyckoff has outlined the basic criteria from the perspective of Christian education in a somewhat different manner.

³¹ *Basic Problems of Curriculum and Instruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 55.

Protestant curriculum has for many years placed great emphasis upon three principles: comprehensiveness, balance, and sequence. The principle of comprehensiveness has held that the curriculum must be inclusive of every curriculum element (every aspect of life, experience, and subject matter that is of concern in the Christian life). This principle is now being interpreted in terms of the principle of scope.

The principle of balance has held that every curriculum element must be given its proper weight at each point in the curriculum. The function of this principle is now seen as being performed by the organizing principle.

The principle of sequence has held that there must be an apparent progression in content and experience. . . . This principle, still considered valid, is one of the key principles in design of curriculum.

In late years, a fourth principle has been discussed and used, the principle of flexibility. The principle of flexibility holds that the curriculum should be changeable and adaptable in terms of educational settings where it is to be used, in terms of method, and in terms of individual, community, and cultural differences. Also valid, this principle, like that of sequence, is one of the key principles in design of the curriculum.³²

Wyckoff has no category precisely like that of Tyler's "integration," but his principle of "balance" subsumes this concern. Wyckoff adds the principle of flexibility, a category Tyler does not have.

We shall use the categories of comprehensiveness, continuity, integration, and flexibility. Many implications flow from these principles for adult premembership instruction. Comprehensiveness means that the basic learning experiences essen-

³² Wyckoff, p. 112.

tial for developing the Christian faith and life need to be identified. The basic learning experience from a Lutheran point of view is that of living in the freedom of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Continuity would demand that the basic learning experiences be repeated again and again in greater depth as persons grow. This means that persons actively seek to do the will of God again and again while experiencing both His judgment and His grace in their failures and successes. The principle of integration would say that what is learned in an adult premembership class should have meaning for every relationship of life. The principle of flexibility would demand that the basic learning experiences be helpful to people no matter what their status or situation. For example, the sequence presented in the next section of this article attempts to be flexible by beginning with the life situation of the persons involved by helping them first to see the demands in their relationships, second, to acknowledge these demands as the demands of God, and finally to believe that God has changed their situation from wrath to grace through Jesus Christ and has put them back into their situation with a new impulse to do His will.

The organizing principle, then, is that principle which will effectively incorporate the factors of comprehensiveness, continuity, integration, and flexibility. In determining the organizing principle, a major decision has to be made. If it is believed that the content of the Christian faith is the most important thing, the organizing principle will tend to be logical. If the development of the learner is the most important thing, the organizing principle will

be psychological.³³ An analysis of the material used in the past for adult premembership instruction indicates that the content of the Christian faith was generally deemed the most important thing and thus the material was logically arranged. It is true that, by the very nature of the case, any instructional sequence prepared by a given person for use in many different situations will tend to be logical in its continuity. The only person who can operate with an entirely psychological organizing principle is the teacher in a local situation. He would determine the continuity as the needs, interests, and problems of the learners came into focus. This demands much of a teacher, perhaps more than many teachers are capable of producing.

The best that can be expected of any instructional sequence prepared by one person for use in many possible situations is a sequence that takes into account both the content of the church's teaching and the personal situation of the learner. Such an organizing principle would incorporate what Robert Clemmons calls "the principle of intersection." Clemmons defines this principle as "the intersection of the persistent lifelong concerns of the individual and the disclosure of God in the Gospel."³⁴ In terms of the Law-Gospel principle, the sequence would take into consideration the life situations and failures of the learners, proclaim the action of God in the Gospel for help in overcoming failure, and help the learners understand what God's action means for their situations. Such a sequence combines both the

³³ Wyckoff, p. 140.

³⁴ *Education for Churchmanship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 65.

content of the church's belief and the situation of the learner. It is both logical and psychological.

Many organizing principles have been used in adult premembership instruction. It is sometimes difficult to define what organizing principle has been used in a premembership course.

The categories of definition are not always mutually exclusive, and there is considerable variation within categories. However, it is useful for any person desiring to use adult premembership material to be able to determine the organizing principle and make some judgment as to its validity.

The first category of organizing principles is "systematic." For our purposes the primary definition of systematic is that it follows the sequence of Luther's Small Catechism. Such a sequence, for instance, is used in the version of Luther's Small Catechism used in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and commonly referred to as "The Synodical Catechism." Secondly, a systematic organizing principle is any principle embodying a logical system of thought. When such a sequence is given the systematic label, the label will have to be qualified in order to show what the system is. For example, the organizing principle and sequence to be presented in the next section can be called "systematic," but then it must be qualified by saying that Law and Gospel provide the controlling principle.

A second category can be called "topical." This category involves a system of thought, but the core of the system is a concept such as "life," for example, *Life with God* by Herman C. Theiss. Again, the label would have to be qualified in order to show what the central concept is.

A third category is that of *Heilsgeschichte*. It has been used on the child confirmation level in *Thy Kingdom Come* and *Thy Will Be Done* by Thomas Mails. He follows a sequence of creation, covenant, Christ, Christianity, and consumation in the two books.

A fourth category can be called "creedal." This means that the organizing principle is offered by one of the three ecumenical creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, or the Athanasian. An example of a manual using this organizing principle is *Perspective* by William Backus and Paul Malte, which uses the Nicene Creed.

A fifth category is the "liturgical." This indicates a sequence governed by the order of worship and/or the church year. *The Doctrine in the Liturgy* by Donald Deffner is an example of a manual using this organizing principle.

Whatever the organizing principle, it should incorporate both the situation of the adults in the class and the content of faith. The other principles to be taken into account in an adult premembership sequence are the statement of goals, the awareness of the Christian community as context, and the vitality of the learning process.

III

A THEOLOGICAL ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE AND LEARNING SEQUENCE FOR ADULT PREMEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

A Theological Organizing Principle

Law and Gospel in their proper distinction and use are central for Lutheranism and thus an investigation into their use in adult premembership instruction is vital. Such an investigation begins with Article IV of the Augsburg Confession.

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.³⁵

Though the words "Law and Gospel" are not used in Article IV, it becomes readily apparent that a proper distinction and use of Law and Gospel is in the background, especially when Article IV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is read. The first concern of Article IV of the Apology is to make a distinction between Law and Gospel.

All Scripture should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the law and the promises. In some places it presents the law. In others it presents the promise of Christ; this it does either when it promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life for his sake, or when, in the New Testament, the Christ who came promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life.³⁶

Immediately after the distinction between Law and promises (or Gospel) is made, the Apology points out that the "opponents select the law and by it they seek forgiveness of sins and justification."³⁷ Thus it is in the improper distinction and

use of Law and Gospel that the Apology sees the error of the opposition.

It is in the light of the Apology that a central concern for the proper distinction and use of Law and Gospel is justified. Lutherans affirm that the proper distinction of Law and Gospel is the center of the Confessions.

Definition of Law

The term "Law" can be understood in more than one sense.

Scripture and theologians use the term "Law" in various ways. It is the name for the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly the books of Moses (Rom. 3:21b). It is the term for the full thrust of God upon the human heart, the life principle of God (cf. Ps. 19:7; 119:18; 37:31; Jer. 31:33). It is a statement of God's plans for His people, His goals for their lives (Rom. 13:8) . . . it is used to describe God's written and preached indictment of sin. The Law from Sinai served that purpose (cf. Gal. 3:10—4:5) and still functions in convincing that sin is under the condemnation of God and is the sign of death. (Rom. 7:5-12)³⁸

The Lutheran Confessions also use the term "Law" in more than one sense. In Part III of the Smalcald Articles, Article II, it is stated that "the law was given by God first of all to restrain sins by threats and fear of punishment."³⁹ The article goes on to state that some people react against the Law and its constraints and thus become all the worse in their actions, while others presume that they can keep the

³⁵ Augsburg Confession, IV, 1—3. (Hereafter AC)

³⁶ Apology IV, 5. (Hereafter Ap.)

³⁷ Ap. IV, 7.

³⁸ Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 24.

³⁹ Smalcald Articles III, II, 1. (Hereafter SA)

Law by their own powers. This is a reference to the "first" use of the Law. The same article in the Smalcald Articles goes on to say:

However, the chief function or power of the law is to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become. So the law must tell him that he neither has nor cares for God or that he worships strange gods—something that he would not have believed before without a knowledge of the law. Thus he is terror-stricken and humbled, becomes despondent and despairing, anxiously desires help but does not know where to find it, and begins to be alienated from God, to murmur, etc.⁴⁰

For this "second" use of the Law to properly do its work, though, the "consoling promise of grace in the Gospel" must immediately be added⁴¹ or else there "is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul and Judas."⁴² In the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord the first use of the Law is "to maintain external discipline and decency against dissolute and disobedient people," while the second use is that which serves "to bring people to a knowledge of their sin through the law."⁴³ A third use of the Law as the will of God for His people is discussed in the Solid Declaration, Article VI.

The thought of Luther lies behind the statements of the Confessions on the uses of the Law.

The two uses of the law are set forth most fully in Luther's *Large Commentary on*

Galatians. Its first function is to hold coarse and dangerous people in check. Here the law appears as earthly government. . . . The second use of the law is to cause anguish and to increase the sense of sin in the conscience, to crush all security. . . . This is the spiritual or theological use of the law, the terror of conscience which is not an end in itself but a preparation for the entry of the gospel into the conscience, and the retreat of the law to the body. Grace would not be grace without prior terror of conscience.⁴⁴

From the preceding discussion it is obvious that the Lutheran Confessions define the term "Law" in three senses with the third to be carefully defined. However, it is necessary to note that it is the same God who operates in all and thus all are actions of God. In reality, in whatever way the Law functions, it is but an expression of the "immutable will of God according to which man is to conduct himself in this life."⁴⁵ The difference in function lies in the impact the Law has in the life of the person.

The Definition of Gospel

The term "Gospel" also has a variety of meanings. The Epitome of the Formula of Concord states:

The word "Gospel" is not used in a single sense in Holy Scripture . . . we believe, teach, and confess that when the word "Gospel" means the entire doctrine of Christ which he proclaimed personally in his teaching ministry and which his apostles also set forth (examples of this mean-

⁴⁴ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 60. Cf. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians of 1535* (*Luther's Works*, American Edition, 26, 314).

⁴⁵ SD VI, 15.

⁴⁰ SA III, II, 4.

⁴¹ SA III, III, 4.

⁴² SA III, III, 7.

⁴³ Solid Declaration VI, 1. (Hereafter SD)

ing occur in Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:24), then it is correct to say or write that the Gospel is a proclamation both of repentance and of forgiveness of sins.⁴⁶

However, the Epitome goes on to note that when Law and Gospel are opposed to each other, then

we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a proclamation of contrition and reproof but is, strictly speaking, precisely a comforting and joyful message which does not reprove or terrify but comforts consciences that are frightened by the law, directs them solely to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the delightful proclamation of God's grace and favor through the merits of Christ.⁴⁷

It is in the latter sense that the Gospel is to be understood when speaking of the use of Law and Gospel as an organizing principle and instructional sequence. The Gospel content has been precisely defined in the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally.⁴⁸

The Gospel, then, is what God has done in Christ to give a man a restored relationship to God.

The Hazard of Using Law and Gospel

There is a hazard in using Law and Gos-

pel as an organizing principle and constructing an instructional sequence for it. It involves the use of a threefold dialectic.

In the first place, the two sides of the pair of contrasts appear as elements of a dialectical procedure based on the will of God. The one element is always the content of the divine plan; the other is the means. "Of him whom He wants to make pious He makes a despairing sinner. Of him whom He wants to make wise He makes a fool." . . . All God's deeds are done in this paradoxical manner. Everything God does is contrary to reason.⁴⁹

The second way in which there is a dialectic and a paradox is in the way God looks at the situation and the way man looks at it. "The two look at the same facts from opposite sides. Consequently, they also arrive at opposite judgments."⁵⁰ The third series of thoughts that indicate the dialectic are as follows:

To faith Luther ascribes the power of mediation. "It (faith) mediates between life and death"; it "reconciles the opposites." One opposite consists, in the first place, in the judgment of God, whose Law declares the sinner to be a sinner; whose Gospel, however, declares him to be righteous.⁵¹

There is a further difficulty in using Law and Gospel as an organizing principle and structuring a sequence of instruction on that basis.

The church cannot have and possess the distinction between law and Gospel, but can only receive it again and again. . . . So also the proper distinction of law and

⁴⁹ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Epitome, V, 6. (Hereafter Ep.)

⁴⁷ Ep. V, 7.

⁴⁸ SD V, 20.

Gospel takes place not in formal theology but by experience alone, that is, through a believing appropriation. The distinction between law and Gospel is possible only in the act of accepting by faith the gifts which the Gospel promises.⁵²

Thus the essential elements in a proper use of Law and Gospel in an adult pre-membership sequence would not be merely the materials used but the committed, faithful Christian instructor. Even this will not guarantee that the outcome in the lives of the persons in the class will be that which is desired, for it is God alone who will work what He will through the Christian instructor in the lives of the people. Nevertheless, the Lutheran Christian cannot escape the responsibility of distinguishing properly between Law and Gospel and of using them in bringing the judgment and the grace of God to bear in the lives of people.

A Sequence of Instruction

An instructional sequence using Law and Gospel as the organizing principle is affected by two factors. The first is that, as was stated in Part I, we are starting with the viewpoint of the non-Christian people in the adult pre-membership group. The second is that the use of Law and Gospel as an organizing principle demands that the instructional sequence begin with Law.

An examination of the best-known and most widely used instructional sequence, Luther's *Small Catechism*, shows that Luther begins with the Law, with the Decalog. However, it becomes obvious that Luther is using the Decalog in the sense of

the second and third uses of the Law (God's will for His people) since he addresses himself only to Christians. In the Large Catechism Luther says in the Preface:

As for the common people, however, we should be satisfied if they learned the three parts which have been the heritage of Christendom from ancient times, though they were rarely taught and treated correctly, so that all who wish to be Christians in fact as well as in name, both young and old, may be well-trained in them and familiar with them.⁵³

Thus the people whom Luther was addressing in his Catechism were at least nominal Christians who would be ready to acknowledge that the Law is *God's* law, an assumption that cannot be made immediately with those who are non-Christian.

Martin Marty deplores the tendency to turn away from Luther's order and to revert to the medieval sequence. Marty lists the medieval sequence as:

1. *credo* (The Creed)
2. *oratio Dominica* (The Lord's Prayer)
3. Decalog (Ten Commandments)
4. *Ave Maria* (Hail, Mary)

Number four Luther dismissed for obvious reasons. The other points he reordered thus:

1. Decalog
2. *credo*
3. *oratio Dominica*

To [these] he appended Baptism-Confession and the Lord's Supper-Confession to make five parts (in the Large Catechism) or six (in the Small). The argument is heard that one must begin with the creed, begin with Christ and all his benefits. Lu-

⁵² Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, translated by Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 136.

⁵³ Large Catechism, p. 362, 6 (Hereafter LC)

ther believed that man must first know what he should or should not do; then, when he is at a loss, he must know where to turn; third, he must have a means of seeking, finding, and enlarging on his strength. Decalog must come first in the hidden discipline. Whatever may be a good means on a mission to a non-Christian culture, our own culture has been promised so much, has been so overcomforted, overgraced, that we must begin with the demand and judgment of God in order then to participate in the joy of the Gospel.⁵⁴

The order is Law and then Gospel, judgment and then grace. However, to begin with the Decalog is to begin with the second use of the Law, with the demand recognized as God's demand. A sequence for the instruction of non-Christian adults in premembership groups would not begin with the second use of the Law.

First Use of the Law

The beginning point for the instructional sequence is the first use of the Law. The first use has previously been defined as the maintenance of external discipline and decency among dissolute and disobedient people. The definition of the first use of the Law can be broadened to include the demands which society makes on a person as God acts through that society. "Through co-operation the existing order, i.e., society, can become an expression of the law. Through his masks, God meets us with his demands in outward relationships."⁵⁵ Luther points out many relationships where demands are made on a

man. God makes His demands through parents, rulers, neighbors, wives, children, and many other people.

Non-Christian people are aware of the demands made on them by the people around them but they do not recognize that it is a demand which God is making on them for the good of others. The non-Christian sees things on a horizontal level without discerning God's action through it all.

For such a man the demand is unrecognized, and is expressed in the requirements made by his fellowmen and in the external needs which press upon him. It is the duty of every individual to give of any goodness he has to those around him.⁵⁶

There is no escaping the human demands made on every person who is born into this world. A man can be helped to recognize the inescapable demands made on him through those who surround him, but there is a limitation to the "unrecognized demand." "Natural man, then, knows God's law 'to some extent' (Ap. IV, 7 f.), but he misunderstands it in its most decisive aspect, namely, as the law of God."⁵⁷

Despite the limitation, the first use of the Law affords a beginning point for the instructional sequence. It is a beginning point that focuses on the present situation of the people involved in the instructional sequence, and it enables the teacher to start with where the people are. The teacher's responsibility is to help the people become painfully aware of the human demands made on them in the many relationships they have in life. The people

⁵⁴ Martin Marty, *The Hidden Discipline* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. xv—xvi.

⁵⁵ Wingren, p. 140.

⁵⁶ Gustaf Wingren, *Creation and Law*, translated by Ross McKenzie (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 62.

⁵⁷ Schlink, p. 51.

must be led to acknowledge their failures to meet the many demands which are made on them. Central to this failure is the tendency of people to be self-centered and concerned only for their own welfare. A realization of self-centeredness and its effects can be discovered and discussed by the people in the adult group. The teacher can also use the acute diagnoses of the human condition afforded by artists, novelists, political analysts, and any other observers of the human condition that will help his group. It is in connection with such a use that Martin Marty says: "The Christian has a great stake in the development of the imaginative literature and the arts of his time; which is to say, in better diagnoses of the human situation. When the imagination atrophies, confession subsides."⁵⁸

Second Use of the Law

The first use of the Law moves on to the second use. The instructional sequence next identifies the demands experienced in human relationships as being the demands of God. This identification sharpens the focus and brings men under the judgment of God. Werner Elert says that, "according to Luther, it is precisely the identification of God with the creatures round about us, that is, with our environment . . . which depresses man without Christ, yes, intensifies his fear."⁵⁹ Such an identification is no fantasy but part of the reality of being.

If, therefore, God's sovereign power over destiny actually embraces all relationships in our life, it is no fantasy of Luther's but

an undeniable fact that all creatures, too, must, in their relationship to us, serve to execute his inscrutable judgment on us. To us, "all creatures are death, for they all have a connection with God" (WA 24, 578, 5).⁶⁰

It is at this point that the use of Law moves on from the first use to the second as the people in the premembership instruction are helped to realize that the failure involved in not meeting human demands brings the judgment of God since the demands are God's demands.

The identification of demands as God's demands does not, however, take place until the Word of God is brought into the instructional situation. The revealed will of God is introduced as His demand. The Decalog can be introduced, beginning with the Second Table, to show that the demands in human relationships are the demands of God. The First Table is then brought in to show that failure in meeting the demands in human relationships has its roots in alienation from God. It is when the Word of God is brought into the situation that the human condition is most sharply seen. Up to this point the situation can be viewed as a human problem, but after this point it is a theological problem.

Thus the theological problem begins for us human beings, who are at once creature and sinner, only after we have been confronted by the Word of God. Not only the theological solutions, but also the theological problems arise only under the Word of God. For I recognize my sins only from the Word of God: ". . . sin terrifies consciences; this happens through the law,

⁵⁸ Marty, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Elert, p. 27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

which shows God's wrath against sin" (Ap. IV, 79).⁶¹

It is God's action that works on people to bring them to a conviction of His judgment and their sin.

Nature of Man

The reason for the failure of man to meet the demands of God lies in the nature of man. Man simply cannot meet the demands nor can he understand by his own reason that he is under the judgment of God. Article II of the Augsburg Confession speaks of the way man is.

It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers' wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin [Erbsünde] is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.⁶²

The instructional sequence at this point includes a presentation of the nature of man in his present condition. The teacher helps the group not only to understand the nature of man but also to understand that the inability of man still does not erase the demand of God for obedience. The demand is still there even if human beings cannot fulfill it. The dilemma of man is portrayed by Werner Elert.

This God, who holds us responsible for demands we cannot fulfill, who asks us questions we cannot answer, who created us for that which is good and, in spite of

this, leaves us no choice but to do that which is evil—this is the "hidden God" (*Deus absconditus*). It is the God of absolute predestination.⁶³

The result of man's condition is that he is under the wrath of God. He is alienated from God. He is dead.

"To be dead' means to be under the wrath of God. . . . God's wrath means His withdrawal. . . . The ultimate and everlasting judgment of God upon man's sin is His everlasting withdrawal, the 'outer darkness.' (Matt. 8:12)"⁶⁴

Though the result of such a realization for the people in the adult premembership instruction is intended to help them acknowledge the judgment of God and their sinful human condition in order to open the way for the grace of the Gospel, this result cannot be taken for granted by the instructor. The second use of the Law can produce open rebellion, work-righteousness, or even a despair that leaves a man in his critical situation.⁶⁵ The latter despair is that of Judas for whom despair only meant self-destruction. The Law may have any of the three results and may not, in a particular person, open the way for the Gospel. But that the use of the Law to prepare the way for the Gospel is the reason for its use cannot be disputed. The Law points beyond itself.

The second use of the Law in all its expressions points beyond the Law itself, and even within the reign of the Law states that the Law cannot be an end, but must serve some other purpose. In the purely negative function of stopping every mouth and holding the world accountable to God

⁶¹ Schlink, p. 55.

⁶² AC II, 1—2.

⁶³ Elert, p. 22.

⁶⁴ Caemmerer, p. 23.

⁶⁵ SA III, II and III.

(Rom. 3:19) we see that the Law can never be more than a means to an end.⁶⁶

The Gospel

The Law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. The Law indicts a man and shows him to be under the wrath of God. The Gospel announces the opposite to him. The announcement of the Gospel that God reverses the situation of a man through Christ is made in the words of the Second Article. Thus the instructional sequence introduces the Second Article at this point. But the Gospel, as contained and proclaimed through Scripture, the Second Article, and the teacher, does more than inform the members of the group about what Christ has done. "The Gospel not only gives information concerning the new relationship between him who hears it and God; but it brings this relationship about—only, however, by calling attention to Christ."⁶⁷ The new relationship changes a man's relationship to God in several ways. God is no longer a concealed God; He is a revealed God. In Christ, God becomes incarnate and reveals Himself to be a God who desires to save men. God is no longer a God of wrath; He is a God of grace. The God of wrath who seemed strange or "alien" in His work of judgment is seen to be a God of mercy, and this work is "proper" for Him and true to His nature.

In order that this new relationship to God may come about for a man, faith is necessary. Faith is, first of all, a way of appropriating the work of Christ. Each person needs to have for himself that which

Christ did for all the world. This was a strong emphasis of Luther's.

The godless and the demons believe that Christ died only for other saints. But the Christian is *certain* that Christ is for *him*. He who does not believe this is not a Christian. This is why Luther always puts such "strong emphasis" (*magna emphasis*) on the words *pro me, pro nobis*.⁶⁸

Luther's emphasis indicates that what is given through faith is not simply information about Christ but Christ Himself. Just as being under the wrath of God means that God removes Himself from a person, so being under the grace of God means that God gives Himself to a person. What is given to faith is Christ.

"Christ" and "faith" are interchanged, because faith lives from him in whom it believes and is all things through Christ but nothing without him. Christ and faith are so intimately united that *propter fidem* may be said for *propter Christum*, and *per Christum* for *per fidem*. . . . "For these two belong together, faith and God," and nothing can separate them (LCI, 3).⁶⁹

Since it is God who has reversed the situation of man through what He has done in giving Christ for all the world and to the believing person, the man of faith realizes that his own role is passive in relation to this saving action of God. Luther came to this conviction on the basis of Rom. 1:17.

Here Paul is speaking about the righteousness "by which, as a gift of God, the righteous man lives, namely, by faith, and that this means that the righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, namely, a passive righteousness, by virtue of which a merciful God justifies as through faith,

⁶⁶ Wingren, *Creation and Law*, p. 95.

⁶⁷ Elert, p. 65.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶⁹ Schlink, p. 100.

as is written: "The righteous man lives by faith." ⁷⁰

Living in Law and Gospel

The receiving and passive nature of faith does not mean that God leaves a man in a passive state. The Gospel calls a man to work for other people. The Christian man is called into the church and there he first helps other Christians, lives in a relationship with Christian people in which he is strengthened by them in nurture and worship and helped to live a life of service and witness in all the other relationships of his life outside the Christian fellowship. He helps fellow Christians do the same. In all relationships of life he lives in love toward others, serving their needs. Some of the relationships in which a Christian lives and acts are identified by Luther in his Table of Duties.⁷¹ Paul identifies some of them in Colossians 3 and 4 and in Ephesians 5 and 6. These relationships, as well as any others that a Christian may have, are the places in which he does the will of God in love to people.

In considering how Law and Gospel, judgment and grace, play a part in the Christian's life, Article VI of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord is helpful. The authors of the article say that there is an "immutable will of God according to which man is to conduct himself in this life."⁷² This will of God can be called "law" as Paul calls it in Romans 13:9. And this "law" as the will of God for His people includes the Decalog, as Paul also points out.⁷³ Thus Christians

are persons who, moved by the Spirit of God, are "never without the law, they are not under, but in the law, they live and walk in the law of the Lord, and yet do nothing by the compulsion of the law."⁷⁴ In other words, Christians carry out the will of God as they live in faith toward their God and in love toward their neighbors. The Christian seeks to meet the neighbor's need and in so doing is carrying out the will of God.

He who inquires effectively into his neighbor's real welfare has faith, and he is a child of God. This is precisely what is commanded, to inquire about one's neighbor. The gospel (faith in God) and the command (service to the neighbor) are in line with each other. Both are parts of a single reality.⁷⁵

However, Christians are not people who are perfect and unaffected by the pull of evil within them. They are not always helpful loving people. They have usually selfish motives and sinful desires which cause them to cut themselves off from God, to hurt and harm others, and, in short, to come under the judgment of God. Article VI of the Solid Declaration recognizes this.

Since, however, believers are not fully renewed in this life but the Old Adam clings to them down to the grave, the conflict between spirit and flesh continues in them. . . . As far as the Old Adam who still adheres to them is concerned, he must be coerced not only with the law but also with miseries, for he does everything against his will and by coercion, just as the unconverted are driven and coerced

⁷⁰ Elert, p. 77.

⁷¹ Small Catechism, IX. (Hereafter SC)

⁷² SD VI, 15.

⁷³ SD VI, 21.

⁷⁴ SD VI, 18.

⁷⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, p. 73.

into obedience by the threats of the law (1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 7:18, 19).⁷⁶

The Christian who fails to carry out the will of God toward others as he is moved by the Spirit of God thus falls back under the Law in its condemning and judging sense. This is the Law in its second use as has been previously discussed. The Christian sees his failure, acknowledges his guilt, seeks forgiveness, and is restored again to do the will of God. This movement in Law and Gospel is very succinctly described in Article VI: "As often, therefore, as Christians trip, they are rebuked through the Spirit of God out of the law. But the same Spirit raises them up again and comforts them with the preaching of the holy Gospel."⁷⁷ The will of God comes through the need of the neighbor as a demand of God upon the Christian, a need and demand to be met in love. This could be interpreted to mean that the Christian must meet every demand. This would mean that the Christian could become involved in impossible situations in which conflicting demands lead only to an impasse. But the Christian is not totally bound and without freedom to choose and act. Luther saw a freedom in the decisions which the Christian makes for the good of others. "There is freedom to do, if love to another requires it, and freedom not to do, if that is what love to one's neighbor requires."⁷⁸ The Christian, then, makes his decisions in the light of what love for the neighbor requires.

The preaching of the Gospel in the world of the law makes it possible for us, how-

ever, to discriminate among the multitude of demands made upon us by those among whom we live and releases us from the obligation to do what is requested of us, ostensibly because love of neighbor requires it but in fact because such demands have been prompted by lust for power or wounded pride. It would actually be unloving on our part to assent to such demands.⁷⁹

The Christian must discriminate among the many demands upon him as he is impelled by the Gospel to act, but the necessity of making such judgments does not cause him to be passive and motionless.

Living in Law and Gospel is not an endless cycle of failure and forgiveness, judgment and grace. The Christian lives in hope, the hope given by his Lord. His Lord suffered seeming failure and defeat. He "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." But that was not the whole story, for "the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of God, the Father almighty, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead."⁸⁰ The Christian suffers defeat and failure, is forgiven and restored, suffers defeat and failure again. But "on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ."⁸¹

We await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. Now we

⁷⁶ SD VI, 18—19.

⁷⁷ SD VI, 14.

⁷⁸ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ Gustaf Wingren, *Gospel and Church*, trans. Ross McKenzie (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 113.

⁸⁰ SC II, 3.

⁸¹ SC II, 6.

are only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life are only perfectly pure and holy people, full of goodness and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all evil, living in new, immortal, and glorified bodies.⁸²

It is at this place that the instructional sequence includes the hope in which all Christians live, the hope of the resurrection.

Scripture

In revealing the will of God both in Law and in Gospel, Holy Scripture plays the definitive part. This nature and purpose of Scripture is brought into the instructional sequence at this point. In the Lutheran Confessions the importance of Scripture derives primarily from its witness to the Gospel. Holy Scripture is the norm because it is the prophetic and apostolic witness to the Gospel. Scripture is thus viewed as the primary witness to what God has done in Christ. The Lutheran Confessions also view Scripture as the primary source of that which the church believes and teaches.

We pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated.⁸³

The writers of the Formula of Concord repeat their conviction that Scripture is the source and norm of the church's belief

and teaching when they concur with Luther as "he expressly asserts by way of distinction that the Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine, and that no human being's writings dare be put on a par with it, but that everything must be subjected to it."⁸⁴

The teacher in an adult premembership sequence needs to be aware of the fact that he plays an important part as a witnessing Christian in proclaiming the Gospel. He should not simply assume that the Gospel is only words in a book. The Gospel is essentially that which is proclaimed rather than that which is written. Edmund Schlink says:

The Gospel, moreover, is not a book existing of and for itself, but it is the voice of God addressing us; it is not doctrine of and for itself, but it is proclamation. We do not have the Gospel, but we hear it. We do not know it as we know other concepts, but we receive it anew again and again, spoken to us through the voice of man which proclaims the grace of God and through which God's very voice from heaven resounds among us today. In the most real sense of the term the Gospel is the word of absolution, and *doctrina evangelii* in our Confessions is essentially proclaimed doctrine.⁸⁵

Luther held firmly that the Gospel, the Word of God, must be proclaimed by men. In the Large Catechism, the Third Commandment, Luther speaks of God's Word that is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered.⁸⁶ He is not primarily referring to the Bible. In fact, as Elert points out, Luther felt that putting the Gospel

⁸² LC II, 57—58.

⁸³ Summary Formulation of the Solid Declaration, 3. (Hereafter SF SD)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁵ Schlink, p. 7.

⁸⁶ LC I, 92.

in the form of a book was already a sign of deterioration.

Luther even found that it is "not at all in conformity with the New Testament to write books about Christian doctrine." "Before they wrote," he said, the apostles had "previously preached to and converted the people with the physical voice, which was also their real apostolic and New Testament work" (WA 10 I, 1, p. 625, 15 ff.). "But since it became necessary to write books, there is already a great loss, and there is uncertainty as to what is meant."⁸⁷

Luther's conviction about the proclaimed Gospel only serves to firm up the fact that the teacher in the premembership situation is a proclaiming, witnessing Christian.

The Spirit of God is at work through that activity to create and strengthen faith in the people who are reading, hearing, pondering the Word of God. As Luther says in the explanation to the Third Article:

I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith.⁸⁸

It is at this point in the instructional sequence that the work of the Spirit in reaching men is brought in. The Spirit uses the Word of God to convict a man (as He does in the second use of the Law), but especially to convince a man of God's reversal of the situation in the Gospel.

The Lutheran Confessions

The instructional sequence for adult premembership instruction includes informa-

tion about the Lutheran Confessions and helps people become acquainted with the contents of some sections of the Confessions. The Confessions are introduced at this point because of their relationship to Scripture. The Confessions are important, but secondary. They are authoritative, but not in the same sense as Scripture. Scripture is the primary witness to the Gospel. The Confessions are a secondary witness to it. "The Confessions are authoritative only because of their agreement with the Gospel as witnessed in the Holy Scripture."⁸⁹ The writers of the Augsburg Confession also claimed that "nothing is taught in our churches concerning articles of faith that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures or what is common to the Christian church."⁹⁰ Thus it is necessary for the members of an adult premembership group to become acquainted with at least a portion of the Lutheran Confessions since they are a witness to the Gospel and the church's belief.

The members of an adult premembership class are to be helped to understand that the Lutheran Confessions may not be entirely consistent in all of their statements and that historical conditions caused some accents and inconsistencies. In view of the inconsistencies, for example, in the statements concerning the number of sacraments or those concerning the pope, it is necessary to fix attention on that which is the center of all the statements of the Confessions, "the identity of the Gospel to which they all bear witness."⁹¹ But, in spite of some of the inconsistencies, the

⁸⁹ Schlink, p. 25.

⁹⁰ AC XXII.

⁹¹ Schlink, p. xxv.

⁸⁷ Elert, p. 188.

⁸⁸ SC II, 6.

writers of the Confessions understood the writings to be of value to generations other than their own. The Formula of Concord says:

This agreement we have set forth as a certain and public testimony, not only to our contemporaries but also to our posterity, of that which our churches believe and accept with one accord as the correct and abiding answer in the controverted issues."⁹²

The portions of the Confessions that should especially be brought to the attention of the members of the group are the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. The Augsburg Confession is important because it was regarded by the Lutheran Confessors themselves as their symbol in the epoch in which they lived, and it was constantly referred to as the basic confessional writing.⁹³ The Small Catechism is important because it was written for use in the households of plain people.⁹⁴ The contents of these confessional writings need not be studied at this same time in the course but can be woven into the instructional sequence at the points where they help in understanding Christian belief.

Creation

The written and proclaimed Gospel, which brings Christ to a man and gives him Christ Himself, changes another situation for that man. The God who came

⁹² SF SD, 16. The extent of the binding nature of the Confessions is differently interpreted by Schlink, who makes them binding on all future generations (cf., Schlink, p. 24), and Elert, who claims for them a historical relativity (cf. Elert, pp. 207, 210).

⁹³ SF SD, 5.

⁹⁴ Introduction to the Small Catechism.

in Jesus Christ is seen to be not only the Father of Jesus Christ but also the Father of the believing person. He is no longer a judge standing against a man in wrath but a loving Father. When God is seen as Father, He can then also be acknowledged as Creator and Preserver. He becomes for the believing man his Creator and Preserver. It is at this point that the believing person in the adult premembership group can confess the First Article. Therefore the First Article is introduced into the sequence at this point. The necessity of waiting to introduce and confess the First Article until this time is based on the following analysis.

"God the Father" in the first article was understood by Luther not by analogy with earthly begetting as synonymous with "Creator." "Luther never put the idea of creation into the concept 'Father,' but rather he views 'Father' in contrast to 'Judge.'" J. Meyer, *Hist. Kommentar*, p. 274. Therefore *Christ* is for us "not only the means of knowing the paternal love of God, but also the true basis for our real status as God's children." Meyer rightly declares that "the comfort derived from the thought that God is the Creator . . . rests in the last analysis on the thought that God is the Father." *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 277.⁹⁵

The confession of God as Father means that a man has been freed from His alienation to God and his tendency to be his own god. He is not only freed from that sort of idolatry but his confession of God as Creator also frees him from an idolatrous worship that makes any part of creation, any creature, his idol. Freed from an idolatry of creatures, man is free to use creation for the purposes of God to the good of others.

⁹⁵ Schlink, p. 56, n. 14.

The object of idolatry is not usually something evil, but rather something good, something created by God. The fault is not in the world, but in man who worships the creature. When faith brings false worship of the creature to an end, it does not reject the creature, which is good, and has been given by God, but simply the idolatrous worship. Faith means that man now has dominion over the creature of which he previously made an idol. It means unhindered control of Creation by man, and therefore new opportunities of serving his neighbor.⁹⁶

The instructor tries to help the people see that after they have confessed God as Father and Creator, any reversal to the idolatrous use of creation means that they have placed themselves under the judgment of God and need to return to Him through repentance and forgiveness. This is one example of the constant cycle of Law and Gospel under which Christians live.

Baptism

The instructional sequence includes Baptism next because it is Baptism that is used by God to relate a man to Himself, to give him the benefits which the Gospel gives, and to put him into the Christian community. Baptism is the application of the Gospel to the person since it gives what the Gospel gives and thus is as important as the Gospel in relating a man to God. This can be seen by comparing the "benefit" of Baptism with what is given through Christ, as Luther outlines it in the explanation to the Second Article. Luther describes the benefits of Baptism as follows: "It effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal sal-

vation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare."⁹⁷ In the explanation to the Second Article he writes that Christ "has redeemed me . . . from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil . . . that I may . . . live under him in his kingdom."⁹⁸ The parallel is unmistakable. Baptism gives what the Gospel gives. Baptism is a "visible" Word, giving Christ to a man. And again, it is faith that receives the grace of God offered in Baptism. Luther says in the Large Catechism: "Without faith Baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure."⁹⁹

However, there is another aspect of Baptism in addition to the individual emphasis, for Baptism also relates the person to the corporate community of Christians. Luther says that it is through Baptism that a person is received into the Christian community.¹⁰⁰ The importance of the Christian community to the baptized person is especially highlighted in Luther's discussion of infant baptism. In the Large Catechism Luther struggles with the necessity of faith in connection with Baptism and the difficulty in determining whether or not infants have faith. Luther's final statement on the subject is: "We bring the child with the purpose and hope that he may believe, and we pray God to grant him faith. But we do not baptize him on that account, but solely on the command of God."¹⁰¹ Thus Luther resorts to the command of God to baptize, and in so

⁹⁶ Wingren, *Creation and Law*, p. 91.

⁹⁷ SC IV, 6.

⁹⁸ SC II, 4.

⁹⁹ LC IV, 34.

¹⁰⁰ LC IV, 2.

¹⁰¹ LC IV, 57.

doing he indicates the responsibility of the Christian community to bring the child to Baptism and to nurture the child after Baptism, for that is the way God has chosen to create and maintain faith.

For faith is not so much required as permitted, enticed, aroused, and strengthened. For the rest, these statements obligate the congregation to offer up the most sincere intercession for every baptized child and to provide faithful instruction for those baptized, that they may in faith make use of their Baptism.¹⁰²

Incorporation into the Christian community is important because of the nurture the community provides the newly baptized child or adult. As the baptized person grows in faith within the nurturing community, he becomes aware of his faith and begins to feel responsible for nurturing other baptized persons.

Confession and Absolution

Both Baptism and nurture are related to confession and absolution. Baptism has a connection because of its daily significance. Concerning the significance of Baptism, Luther states:

It signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence.¹⁰³

In the Large Catechism Luther explains further the continuing importance of Baptism and its connection with confession or repentance.

Here you see that Baptism, both by its

¹⁰² Schlink, p. 154.

¹⁰³ SC IV, 12.

power and by its signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, formerly called Penance, which is really nothing else than Baptism. What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old man and an entering upon a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and promotes it. In Baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new may come forth and grow strong.¹⁰⁴

Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned.¹⁰⁵

The repentance of which Luther speaks can take place in several ways. It can take place in the individual's relationship to God without any other human being involved. It can take place before other human beings as a public confession, when the called and ordained minister speaks the word of public absolution. And it can take place in the secret confession of a man to a single brother. All three of these types of confession are recognized by Luther in the Large Catechism. Important to the process of confession is the word of absolution spoken by another Christian.

Note, then, as I have often said, that confession consists of two parts. The first is my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work which God does, when he absolves me of my sins through a word placed in the mouth of a man.¹⁰⁶

The importance of the word of forgive-

¹⁰⁴ LC IV, 74—76.

¹⁰⁵ LC IV, 79.

¹⁰⁶ LC, Exhortation to Confession, 15.

ness, or absolution, spoken by Christians to one another prompted the framers of the Lutheran Confessions to include an article on confession in the Augsburg Confession.

It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse. However, in confession it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins, for this is impossible. Ps. 19:12, "Who can discern his errors?"¹⁰⁷

The important thing about confession is not the enumeration of sins but the word of absolution. It is so important that in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, confession is called a sacrament.¹⁰⁸ In the light of this importance the teacher of an adult premembership class not only needs to help people understand the continuing significance of Baptism in constant repentance, confession, and absolution, but also to make it possible for them to begin such confession, to cherish the absolution that is normally spoken by the pastor, and to be able to hear the confession of a brother and speak to him the word of forgiveness. The latter is part of the responsibility toward the brother which a Christian has in view of his Baptism. The baptized Christian and his baptized brothers and sisters live in constant need of confession and have a continual responsibility both to receive and to speak the word of forgiveness. This is another way of saying that the Christian lives in Law and Gospel.

His whole life is repentance in obedience to the law and the Gospel, in contrition and faith, in the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new man. This

must now be said also in this way: the total life is a "return" to Holy Baptism and an approach to the Lord's Supper.¹⁰⁹

The Lord's Supper

The Christian participates in the Lord's Supper to receive the benefits which were given him by Christ in his Baptism and in the spoken Word. There is a close relationship between the Gospel (absolution), Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Again, this can be seen in the parallels that exist between Luther's explanation to the Second Article, his explanation of Baptism's "benefits," and his explanation of the "benefits" of the Lord's Supper. Concerning the latter he says in the Small Catechism:

We are told in the words "for you" and "for the forgiveness of sins." By these words the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.¹¹⁰

The forgiveness of sins is so important for Luther that it is repeated twice in his answer. We find a close parallel to what Baptism gives. What is omitted from the explanation to the Lord's Supper is the phrase "delivers from death and the devil," and what is added is "life." Baptism is the deliverance from death and the beginning of new life while the Lord's Supper is the sustaining of that new life in Christ. This becomes clear from Luther's words in the Large Catechism.

Therefore, it is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man. While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not

¹⁰⁷ AC XI.

¹⁰⁸ Ap. XI, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Schlink, p. 143.

¹¹⁰ SC VI, 6.

lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, at times even stumble. The Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses.¹¹¹

While properly stressing the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in the Lord's Supper, the Lutheran Confessions do not emphasize other significant New Testament aspects of the Sacrament. In Matt. 26:28 there is a stress on the new covenant. In 1 Cor. 11:24 there is a stress on "remembrance." In 1 Cor. 10:17 and in all of 1 Cor. 11 there is stress on the body of Christ as the Christian community. In 1 Cor. 11:26 there is a stress on witness to the death of Christ. And, finally, there is also a stress on *eucharistia*, or thanksgiving, in 1 Cor. 10:16. None of these aspects of the Lord's Supper are developed in the Catechisms. It is not until the Formula of Concord that some of them are referred to. For example, it is stated that the Lord's Supper

was to be an abiding memorial of his bitter passion and death and of all his blessings, a seal of the new covenant, a comfort for all sorrowing hearts, and a true bond and union of Christians with Christ their head and with one another.¹¹²

In analyzing why the Confessions are silent on some aspects of the Lord's Supper, Schlink says:

They show no interest in supporting the proclamation of the Lord's death by the

demonstrative symbolism of breaking the bread, or to enliven the memory of Jesus' last meal in a representative repetition of this meal, or in the symbolic emphasis on the fellowship of the communicants. From beginning to end attention is focused in both the Lord's Supper and Baptism on the Word and thereby on the gift of God. Accordingly, both sacraments in their real essence are not "signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christian"—this they are also—but "they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us." (A.C. XIII, 1).¹¹³

Since the overriding concern is for the gift of God, the stress on "remembrance" or "memorial" is in connection with remembrance of the Word, not on the remembering that man does.¹¹⁴ The same concern for the gift of God leads to the stress that the church is the body of Christ, because Christians receive Christ's body in the Lord's Supper rather than that the Lord's Supper becomes the true body of Christ since the church is the body of Christ.¹¹⁵ The instructional sequence needs to include the full richness of the New Testament meaning of the Lord's Supper, and the teacher is to help the people see it in all its richness and variety.

The Church

The action of God in the Gospel that reverses the situation of man both in relation to God and the world, the action of God in giving Himself in grace through Baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper, is the same action that is accented in the Lutheran Confessions in regard to the church. It is the action of God that calls

¹¹³ Schlink, pp. 156—57.

¹¹⁴ Elert, p. 317.

¹¹⁵ Schlink, pp. 162—63.

¹¹¹ LC V, 23—24.

¹¹² SD VII, 44.

the church into being and sustains it. Luther, in the explanation to the Third Article, says that it is the Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers.¹¹⁶

The Augsburg Confession has the same emphasis when it speaks of the church.

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church shall be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.¹¹⁷

The concern of the writers of the Confessions to emphasize the action of God in calling the church into being and sustaining it through Word and Sacrament leads them to locate the church wherever these "marks" exist.

The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.¹¹⁸

In the light of this conception of the "marks" of the church, it is not strange

that the Confessions say very little about what the church does and what its functions are in the world.

The reason for the reluctance to identify the church with any outward form lies in the historical circumstances of the 16th century. The church had been so thoroughly identified with the empirical organization of the Roman Catholic Church that the Lutheran confessors placed their emphasis strongly on the spiritual, non-institutional nature of the church.

"In contrast to the medieval conception of the church Luther stressed that it is essentially spiritual, an eternal city of God beyond all appearance and under the headship of Christ."¹¹⁹ That this had its effect on acknowledging a concrete reality for the church is pointed out by Werner Elert when he says: "Luther, it is true, did not absolutely destroy the church as a supra-individual unity; but he spiritualized it in such a way that when one pursues these thoughts to their logical conclusion, it is eliminated as a formative energy of history."¹²⁰ This spiritualizing tendency led some of the opponents of the Lutherans to claim that Lutherans believed in a church that did not actually exist. The reply to this is given in the Apology.

We are not dreaming about some Platonic republic, as has been slanderously alleged, but we teach that this church actually exists, made up of true believers and righteous men scattered throughout the world.¹²¹

In the Large Catechism Luther indicates

¹¹⁹ Richard R. Caemmerer and Erwin L. Lueker, *Church and Ministry in Transition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 38.

¹²⁰ Elert, p. 258.

¹²¹ Ap. VII, 20.

¹¹⁶ SC II, 6.

¹¹⁷ AC VII, 1—2.

¹¹⁸ Ap. VII, 5.

that he believes this church actually to exist and that it is made up of actual people.

I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism.¹²²

Luther's definition, it will be noted, is still very cautious about identifying the church by anything that *it* does but rather emphasizes what *God* does.

Ministry

The sustaining of the life with God in the members of the church centers in the action of ministry. In their consideration of the office of the ministry, the Lutheran Confessions again stress the action of God through the Word and sacraments. Article V of the Augsburg Confession says:

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.¹²³

The above article identifies "ministry" as an office, a function of Word and sacraments to be performed. This article and Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, which defines the church as those among whom the Gospel is preached and the sacraments administered, speak only of a specific function centered in the Word and the sacraments. There is no implication that the function is restricted to a certain group of people. It can well be

understood as a function to be performed by all those in the church. However, Article XIV adds another dimension to the Confessional view of the ministry. It is an article that probably arose out of the disorder created by the Peasant's Revolt and the agitation of the enthusiasts.¹²⁴ Article XIV states: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."¹²⁵ This article would seem to restrict the function of ministry to the clergy. Schlink, however, states that this article does not deny the royal priesthood of all believers.

"Ministerial," then, means that in the congregation the preacher of the Gospel serves the priestly commission which God has given the whole congregation. Under no circumstances therefore may the right of every believer to forgive the brother's sins be treated as nonexistent, or as provided only for a case of emergency, or only as done in trust for the public ministry. The call into the public ministry and the activity in this office at all times presupposes the royal priesthood of all believers and does not abolish it.¹²⁶

The office of the ministry is both a divinely commissioned office that must be carried on in the midst of the believers and a practical necessity. Since all believers cannot publicly preach at the same time, it is necessary to select and ordain a person from their midst to fulfill this function.¹²⁷ A teacher in an adult pre-membership sequence is to help the people see ministry as a function of all the people.

¹²⁴ Caemmerer and Lueker, p. 71.

¹²⁵ AC XIV.

¹²⁶ Schlink, p. 243.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 241—43.

¹²² LC II, 51.

¹²³ AC V, 1—2.

The "called and ordained" minister is there to minister to people himself and to help the people minister to each other and to the world. A reliance on the clergy to carry out all the functions of ministry is to be avoided. Luther opposed the clericalism that tended to identify the church with the priestly-sacramental clergy. He emphasized that every Christian is a minister of the Word while he also insisted on the office of the sacred ministry in the midst of the congregation.¹²⁸ "All share in a common ministry for edification of the church. The special ones are distinguished from the ministry of all saints in that they are a gift of Christ and of the Spirit to the rest, for the good of all."¹²⁹

Functions of the Church

The common ministry for edification that all Christians have is often called "nurture" today. The Smalcald Articles come close to the contemporary understanding of nurture when they say:

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered," etc.¹³⁰

It is the "mutual conversation and consolation of brethren" that is closely akin to

the ministry of nurture. It is true that the Confessions do not say much about this activity of the members of the church toward one another. It is not merely a function by which Christian people become more thoroughly acquainted with Christian teachings. It is, first of all, the application to persons of the act of God through Jesus Christ by which they have been restored to life with God. But this application of the Gospel is pointed toward results in the life of people. The results are that the rule of Satan is more and more pushed out of the life of the people and they are more and more willing to invest their lives in service to their fellowmen, particularly in the increasing of the spiritual life of fellow Christians.¹³¹ A primary responsibility of the called minister is to minister the grace of God to people in order that they might be more and more able to carry on a ministry of nurture to one another. The teacher in a premembership sequence also has the responsibility of bringing the grace of God to bear on the people in the group so that they are helped to begin to minister to one another. It also means that they need to be related to the members of the congregation in order that those members may begin to nurture them and be nurtured by them. Further opportunities for nurture need to be structured so that when the instructional sequence is completed, the nurture continues. Such an activity is a key program of the church.

The basic operation of the church is that its members bring to the remembrance of one another the redeeming work of Jesus

¹²⁸ Caemmerer and Lueker, p. 70.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

¹³⁰ SA III, IV.

¹³¹ Richard R. Caemmerer, *Feeding and Leading* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 37.

Christ. They do this by reviewing Biblical materials (note 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:12-21), through mutual exhortation and reminders in hymns and psalms (Col. 3:12-16), and through Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:26).¹³²

The ministry of nurture also includes the worship life of the congregation. Worship should be included as an instructional sequence. Worship, however, includes not only the praise of God but also the help that Christians offer to one another. In his comment on the Third Commandment in the Large Catechism, Luther includes the latter aspect.

Secondly and most especially, we keep holy days so that people may have opportunity, which otherwise would not be available, to participate in public worship, that is, that they may assemble to hear and discuss God's Word and then praise God with song and prayer.¹³³

Luther's words include that which is commonly called the "sacramental" in worship when he says that Christians hear God's Word. He includes the "sacrificial" aspect when he speaks of the praise of God in song and prayer.¹³⁴ He includes the nurturing aspect when he mentions the discussion of God's Word. The instructional sequence is to include content that aids the people in understanding these aspects of worship. There is to be help not only for meaningful corporate worship when the congregation assembles but for meaningful family and private worship.

Prayer is involved in worship. Prayer

contains both praise and petition. The instructional sequence includes prayer at this point. Luther makes the Lord's Prayer a major section of each of his catechisms. Help is to be given to the people for their use of prayer in corporate worship, family worship, and private devotion.

A third function of the church, beyond those of nurture and worship, is that of service. Nurture and worship are the things that Christians do for and with one another in the Christian community. The power of God which is mediated to them through the channels we have been describing, enables them to serve and witness in all the places and relationships in which they find themselves. Service, then, is the help that Christians give to men in the world as they meet the needs of men. The Lutheran Confessions contain discussions on the works of love (service) that flow from faith. However, the statements concerning works of love are usually carefully circumscribed as having nothing to do with a saving relation to God, which is the realm of faith alone. In fact, the Lutherans were accused of being so concerned about faith that their teaching had nothing to say about works. Articles VI and XX of the Augsburg Confession sought to negate this objection. The last portion of Article XX says:

Consequently this teaching concerning faith is not to be accused of forbidding good works but is rather to be praised for teaching that good works are to be done and for offering help as to how they may be done. For without faith and without Christ human nature and human strength are much too weak to do good works, call upon God, have patience in suffering, love one's neighbor, diligently engage in callings which are commanded, render obedi-

¹³² Caemmerer and Lueker, p. 25.

¹³³ LC I, 84.

¹³⁴ Cf. Caemmerer, *Feeding and Leading*, pp. 22—23, for a discussion on the sacramental and sacrificial aspects of worship.

ence, avoid evil lusts, etc. Such great and genuine works cannot be done without the help of Christ, as he himself says in John 15:5, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

Luther's own writings contain strong injunctions to good works. The works which a Christian does are spelled out in the explanations of the Fourth through Tenth Commandments in both the Small and Large Catechisms.

If you find yourself in a work by which you accomplish something good for God, or the holy, or yourself, but not for your neighbor alone, then you should know that that work is not a good work. For each one ought to live, speak, act, hear, suffer, and die in love and service for another, even for one's enemies, a husband for his wife and children, a wife for her husband, children for their parents, servants for their masters, masters for their servants, rulers for their subjects and subjects for their rulers, so that one's hand, mouth, eye, foot, heart and desire is for others; these are a Christian's works, good in nature. (WA 10 I 2, 41 Advents-postille, 1522).¹³⁵

The Confessions have little to say about the Christian's responsibility to witness to his neighbors.

It remains the mark of Christian people and of the body of Christ that they concern themselves in service, first for one another (Galatians 6:10) and then for all men. This service is concern for the practical needs of men, beginning with their simplest physical necessities and with fellow Christians themselves (1 Tim. 5:8; Matt. 25). But the Christian is a person who has insight into the fact that the real and everlasting life is the life in God's dimension and that therefore his service

must ultimately convey this everlasting sort of life; the great directive is First John and its thrust to love men as God first loved us in Christ.¹³⁶

This dimension of the Christian life is commonly called witness. Witness can be understood in both an individual and a corporate sense; that is, witnessing is a function both of the individual Christian and of the entire church. Though the Lutheran Confessions say little about either aspect, Werner Elert says that "for Luther the mobilization of the idea of missions is a summons to Christians to proclaim the Gospel to those who live near them and have not yet heard it."¹³⁷ When it comes to the corporate responsibility of the church as its members witness in the world, however, Elert says that "Luther does not think of the idea of missions as individualistic. He thinks of it as pertaining to the church; that is, he thinks in terms of 'Christendom' as a whole as well as of the world of nations and its history."¹³⁸ With that point of view dominating his thought and with the added factor that the church became shaped in the medieval pattern of the state church, mission and witness to the world were hampered.¹³⁹ An instructional sequence for adult premembership instruction must contain an understanding of both the individual and the corporate responsibility of Christians for service and witness in and to the world. At this point the teacher can help the members of the group become alert to their service and witness opportunities. He can also inform

¹³⁶ Caemmerer, *Feeding and Leading*, p. 95.

¹³⁷ Elert, p. 393.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

¹³⁵ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, p. 120.

them of what the corporate church is doing to carry out this responsibility.

The Church has an obligation to fulfill in regard to creation, and this obligation is divided into the two parts of word (mission) and action (diaconate). The specific biblical basis of the Church's mission is the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations which followed Christ's resurrection. . . . The specific biblical basis for the Church's diaconate or ministry of service is the healing of the sick which from the beginning was a regular part of both Jesus' own messianic activity and the mission of the apostles.¹⁴⁰

SUMMARY AND OUTLINE

Christians are impelled by the Gospel to word and action, to witness and service in the world. They help one another with God's own help within the Christian community through nurture and worship. All of these functions are the way in which God's will is done by His people. Their failures to do His will bring His judgment. Judgment brings them back to forgiveness and restoration through the Gospel. The Gospel moves them back into the relationships they have in church and world and enables them there to carry out the will of God. The Christian lives his life in Law and Gospel.

Outline of the Instructional Sequence

For the benefit of the reader, an outline of the suggested instructional sequence is given.

First Use of the Law:

The demands made by men upon men as they live together in society. The failure of men to meet the demands made upon them.

Second Use of the Law:

The demands are God's demands and God judges those who fail to meet the demands. The Second Table of the Decalog and, then, the First Table.

The Nature of Man:

The failure of man in his relationship to God and men is due to his nature.

The Gospel:

God's action in Jesus Christ changes the situation of a man from judgment to acceptance. The Second Article. Faith in God's act necessary.

Living in the Tension of Law and Gospel:

The Gospel moves men to do the will of God in every relationship of life. Failures are judged by God, but God forgives and restores through the Gospel. The Christian lives in hope even in the tension of Law and Gospel.

Scripture and Confessions:

Scripture is the primary witness to the Gospel, the Confessions secondary. The Christian is a proclaimer of the Gospel. The Spirit works faith through the Gospel. Third Article.

Creation:

The Gospel causes a man to call God "Father" and thus acknowledge Him also as "Creator." First Article.

Baptism:

God causes new life with Him through Baptism. Also causes new relationship and responsibility with other baptized persons in the church.

Confession and Absolution:

A continuance of the significance of

¹⁴⁰ Wingren, *Gospel and Church*, p. 155.

- Baptism. Living in Law and Gospel. Ministry:
An approach to the Lord's Supper. Ministry is the function of Word and sacraments to be carried out among and by the members of the church.
- The Lord's Supper: Functions of the Church:
Sustains the new life in God within the Christian community. Nurture and worship are functions done within the Christian community which enable Christians to serve and witness in the world.
- The Church: God calls it into being and sustains it through Gospel and sacraments. St. Louis, Mo.

APPENDIX A

Survey on the Nature, Scope, and Quality of Adult Membership Instruction in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

1. Method of instruction. (Check only one)
 - Primarily with individuals
 - Primarily in class sessions
2. The amount of instruction given
 - Number of sessions with the class (or individual)
 - Hours per session
 - Average additional hours of individual consultation with each prospective member
3. Average number of adults confirmed annually in the last five years.
 - under 10; 10—20;
 - 20—30; over 30
4. For whom is the course required?
 - Unchurched prospects
 - Members of non-Lutheran bodies
 - Transfers from other Lutheran bodies
 - All who wish to join, regardless of prior affiliation
5. The nature of your community
 - Stable residential; changing;
 - interracial; transient
6. The structure of your congregation
 - Principally one class
 - University Farm
 - Labor Professional
 - Multi-classed
7. What text or workbook did you use in your last class?
 - Luther's Small Catechism
 - What Does the Bible Say?* O. Riess
 - Christianity Is for You.* M. Rudnick
 - Life with God.* H. Theiss.
 - Catechetical Helps.* E. Kurth
 - Light from Above.* A. W. Koehler
 - Your own course, mimeographed or printed
 - Other. Specify: _____
8. If you were to prepare your own course or modify existing material, what would be your organizing principle, which provides the outline of the course?
 - Bible History
 - The Apostles' Creed
 - The Small Catechism
 - The Order of Worship
 - Other. Specify _____

9. With what subject would you begin your course?
- The doctrine of the Bible
 - The nature of God
 - The Ten Commandments
 - The nature of man
 - Creation
 - The doctrine of the church
 - Other. Specify: _____
-
10. How many hours in your instruction period are devoted to:
- The nature and the work of your congregation and Synod?
 - Church history?
 - The meaning and conduct of worship?
11. How do you determine acceptability for church membership?
- By examination
 - Written
 - Oral
 - Before officers of the congregation
 - Personal interview
 - Completion of the course
12. How many years have you served as a parish pastor? _____
13. How many hours of formal academic course work have you taken since your graduation from the seminary? _____

March 1963

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Report on the Survey on the Nature, Scope, and Quality
of Adult Membership Instruction in The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod*

One thousand 3-page mimeographed questionnaires were sent to a carefully selected list of pastors. Selection was made from information provided by the statistical department to insure a valid cross section of the Synod. Seven hundred seventeen returns were made. This is a 75 percent return. Josiah Levi Person, our former systems analyst, indicates that with this number of questionnaires and high percentage of returns, whatever information we receive from the survey will at least be indisputable.

All information gained from the questionnaire has been coded and placed on IBM machine cards. In this preliminary report we are including some correlations between the

various questions. The cards are in our possession, and a nearly infinite number of further correlations can easily be made. This report is a brief summary of the findings. It is not intended to be an exhaustive report.

The first question concerned the method of instruction for adult membership. 16% stated that their instruction was primarily with individuals, 84% was primarily in class sessions.

The second question concerned the amount of instruction given. The number of sessions varies widely. One pastor reported three sessions, two reported 90. The average number of sessions was 16.42. In a graph of the number of sessions, the highest peak was reached at 12 sessions, the second peak at 15 sessions. Other peaks were reached at 10, 18, 20, and 24 sessions. Apparently, the

* This summary was prepared by the Rev. Robert Hoyer of the Board of Parish Education staff in the fall of 1964.

number of sessions was determined by calendar concerns as much as by subject concerns.

We did not code the question concerning the number of hours per session, since these almost universally fell between 1½ and 2 hours.

We also asked for the average number of additional hours of individual consultation with each prospective member. 32% of the pastors did not respond to this question, and 9% reported that they spent less than one hour. 27% stated they spent one hour, and 32% spent over one hour in individual consultation.

The third question concerned the average number of adults confirmed annually in the last five years. 61% of the pastors reported an average class of less than 10 members. 28% reported average classes between 10 and 20. 10% reported average classes of more than 20.

The fourth question asked: For whom is the course required? 10% required the course only for unchurched prospects. 73% required the course for unchurched prospects and for members of non-Lutheran church bodies. 3% required those who transferred from other Lutheran bodies to take the course. 13% instructed all who wished to join regardless of their prior affiliation.

Questions 5 and 6 concerned the physical situation of the congregation and the community. 59% of the pastors worked in a stable residential area. 24% were in a changing community. 15% were in an interracial or transient community. 39% stated that their congregation was composed principally of one class of people. Three congregations were university centered. 39% consisted principally of the laboring class, and 44% reported that their members came principally from farm communities. 61% of the pastors responding had multi-classed congregations.

The next four questions concerned the content of the course of instruction. Ques-

tion 7 asked what text or workbook was currently being used. 13% used Luther's Small Catechism. 32% used *What Does the Bible Say?* by O. Riess. 10% used *Know the Truth* by A. Doerffler and W. Eifert. 17% mimeographed or printed their own course, and 15% specified some courses not listed by us. This seems to indicate a rather wide and scattered opinion concerning what constitutes a good course, or a widespread discontent with all available courses.

Question 8 asked: If you were to prepare your own course, or modify existing material, what would be your organizing principle, which provides the outline of the course? 6% of the pastors would organize their course with a Bible history outline. 18% would use the Apostles' Creed. 58% would use the Small Catechism. 5% would use the Order of Worship, and 8% specified some other organizing principle.

Question 9 asked: With what subject would you begin your course? 46% answered that they would begin with the doctrine of the Bible, 30% would begin with the nature of God, 4% would begin with the Ten Commandments, 7% with the nature of man, 3% with creation, 1% with the doctrine of the church, and 6% specified some other topic as a beginning.

Question 10 was divided into three parts. 94% of the pastors reported that they spend some instruction time on the nature and the work of their congregation and Synod. Of these, roughly 60% spent one hour or less, 40% over one hour. 70% of the pastors spent instruction time on church history. Of these, 70% spent less than an hour and 30% more than an hour. 91% of the pastors spent instruction time on the meaning and conduct of worship. Of these, 70% spent less than an hour and 30% more than an hour.

Question 11 is: How do you determine acceptability for church membership? 5%

of the pastors required a written examination and 8% an oral examination, presumably with the pastor alone. 30% examined their prospective members before officers of the congregation. 35% accepted members after instruction through a personal interview, and 19% required only completion of the course of instruction.

The final two questions, which concerned the ministry of the pastor who answered the questionnaire, were included chiefly for their value in correlating some of the other answers. For question 12: How many years

have you served as a parish pastor? we set up four categories—1 to 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 10 to 20 years, and over 20 years. The number was about equal (120—150) for the first three categories, from 1 to 20 years; 295 of the pastors have served for more than 20 years. We categorized in multiples of 10 for the number of hours of formal academic course work taken since graduation from the seminary. 65% of the pastors answered that they had taken none, 15% had taken up to 10 hours, and 7% had taken more than 30 hours of formal course work.