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AN EXPERIMENTAL COURSE FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

REQUIREMENTS OF THE BOARD OF

SHORT TITLE

A COURSE FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

A course presented to the Faculty
of Theological Education, the United
Methodist Church, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

Paul H. [Name]

June 1965

72155

Approved by [Signature]

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1958
no. 5

AN EXPERIMENTAL COURSE FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION
STRUCTURED BY THE NICENE CREED

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
Paul Richard Malte
June 1958

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVE

During the past decade a whelming wave of popularity for religion has been sweeping across the United States. For the past twenty years Protestantism has felt a resurgence of theological concern. Coupled with the uneasiness of an anxious age, this renaissance of religious interest has gained for the Church a multitude of attentive hearers. Today the Church stands challenged, for the Christian faith has been ushered into an age of heightened potential either for progress or deterioration.

Parishes of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, square in the path of this driving religious restlessness, have been effectively confronting this challenge. Utilizing the outreach of mass communication and the lay evangelistic push of the individual congregation, this denomination has been vigorously integrating new "converts" into its membership. This large influx of adult confirmands has even led observers to suggest that the total complexion of this Church body has been radically altered.

To this incoming tide of awakening faith the whole Church must speak convincingly in order to realize the potentiality of the times. The Missouri Synod, as part of this larger Christian fellowship and as a major group dealing with the numerous "shoppers" looking into its window, presently faces a tremendous opportunity for the proclamation of a full Gospel.

Crowded churches simply mean that many people are "just looking," a reporter has remarked, "and if they do not find something to buy, one of these days there is going to be the greatest falling away from the Church that we have seen in many a year." Communication of the Gospel, then, that is rigorously faithful to the central biblical themes of creation, judgment, redemption, and resurrection, is one of the primary needs of the American Church. Starting with thorough biblical familiarity, and with all the imagination it can muster, the Church needs to break open these mentioned themes at the points where honest "seekers" can feed on them. Every entering catechumen has to be involved in careful orientation and stimulating study before he may be honestly absorbed into the ongoing and outworking life of the Church.

The Church dare not hold out a shoddy and easily-grasped Gospel in its over-eagerness to add members to an already bulging membership roll. A confirmand's pressured, verbal assent to a few doctrinal formulations is an affront to the Christ who lovingly calls men to carry a cross. Somehow the unequivocal shock of the Gospel--the news that the resurrected Lord Christ has died for the sin of all men--has to break through and prompt a reaction.

To provide a framework for this meeting with the Lord Christ, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has traditionally structured a sturdy course of study for its adult confirmands. Persistent efforts have been made to teach something specific about God, man and the future, belief and ethics. The Missouri

Synod, generally has endeavored to acquaint its catechumens with the "separateness" and mission responsibility of membership in the Church. The written word of God has been relatively basic and central in this training.

Through involvement as an instructor in the adult confirmation process of the Missouri Synod, and being aware of the obvious openness of the American citizen to religious conversation, the writer has undertaken a study of the needs and opportunities in this area. Specifically, the research and creative activity embodied in this thesis has been worked out in the direction of materials and course outlines for the adult confirmation process. An attempt has been made to survey representative courses shaped by pastors in the Missouri Synod and popular presentations of the basic Gospel written by men of other denominations. This exploration has led to a thinking through of the primary aims of adult confirmation and an analyzation of the confirmand's condition apposite to these goals.

In order to converge these investigations and actualize the writer's personal concern for an adequate course of study, an experimental course plan, based on the Nicene Creed, has been blueprinted as the bulk of the thesis. This course proposes to incorporate the following major components for a particular unit: an interest-catching text section, a review quiz to be used as an outline for class discussion, guidelines for inductive Bible study, pertinent excerpts from the Lutheran Confessions, a brief witness by a living Lutheran, and an opportunity for personal worship through prayer.

The chapters following discuss the objectives and specifications of a confirmation course, sketch the proposed course in its wholeness, and include five "pilot lessons" which concretize the suggested course ingredients. Due to the dearth of available research material, and because of the creative intent of the writer, the thesis actually concentrates on no precise problem or question and terminates with no tight conclusion. For the reason that the effort is largely creative, each of the five, final chapters packages the "conclusion" in itself.

Since the goals of adult confirmation are of a piece with the aims of the Church, the objectives of both merge. The process of confirmation meshes with the total strategy of the Church. Therefore, to envision the confirmation objectives for adults, we look first at the God-intended purpose of the Church.

The task of the Church involves the world. The business of the Church is to strengthen its members in their unity with each other and with their Lord, in view of the fact that the world threatens this unity and tends to break off members of Christ to become members of the world. The task of the Church lies furthermore in this, that the Church is commissioned to invade the world and capture members of the world for membership in the body of Christ.

The work of the Church centers in edification and evangelism—defense against the encroachment of the world and

¹Richard A. Coe, The Church in the World (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1949), p. 6.

CHAPTER II

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ADULT CONFIRMATION PROCESS

The Objective Precisely Stated

The shaping of pointed goals for adult confirmation is essential in plotting the strategy of this process. Once patterned and accepted by the instructor-guide, the objectives determine the teaching and learning thrusts of the course. They provide anchored and objectively measurable bases for the evaluation of progress.

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The task of the Church involves the world. The business of the Church is to strengthen its members in their unity with each other and with their Head, in view of the fact that the world threatens this unity and tends to break off members of Christ to become members of the world. The task of the Church lies furthermore in this, that the Church is commissioned to invade the world and capture members of the world for membership in the body of Christ.¹

The work of the Church centers in edification and evangelism--defense against the encroachment of the world and

¹Richard R. Caemmerer, The Church in the World (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1949), p. 8.

advance to capture the people of the world for God. The adult in the confirmation course, as he willingly responds to the intensive interior building and extensive outreach of the Church, becomes a functioning member of the body of Christ. Prior to involvement with the Church, as a person totally controlled by the world complex, he presents a target for evangelism; as a growing Church member the adult needs the nurture of the Church-fellowship. The context of adult confirmation, then, is the Church, as it advances in outreach and "upbuilds itself in love."

But what are the focused and pivotal confirmation-goals of the Church as it confronts the individual adult? What, within the total perspective of God's revealed purpose, are His ends-in-view for His created individuals? To hold out a compact and realistic objective for adult confirmation, the following objective is proposed: that each adult participating in the confirmation process lives out a maturing love of God and the neighbor--bolstered and nurtured within the community of the Church. Not intricate or finespun, this overture-goal intends to focus the revealed will of God as He deals with people in their completeness.

The whole of God's biblically disclosed concern for man is encompassed here. Love of God and neighbor comprehends the Old Covenant relationship between God and His chosen people: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your

heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."²

And "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."³

Jesus made this His "new" imperative by giving it fresh force and emphasis, by lighting it with the radiance of His works and words, and by activating it with His self-sacrificing death. "The conquering sanction of the 'new commandment' is in its last phrase: 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.'"⁴

The New Testament Church concurred in this aim. The missionary Paul encouraged the pastor Timothy: "the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith."⁵ And Paul's well-known "hymn of love" in I Corinthians 13 throbs with the same polarity.

Love of God and neighbor pinpoints man's ultimate purpose and God's whole revelation. Richard Niebuhr observes:

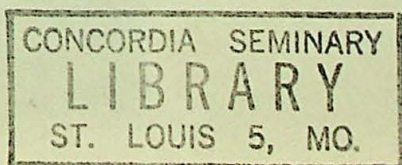
In the language of Christianity love of God and neighbor is both "law" and "gospel"; it is both the requirement laid on man by the Determiner of all things and the gift given, albeit in incompleteness, by the self-giving of the Beloved. It is the demand inscribed into infinitely aspiring human nature by the Creator; its perversion in idolatry, hostility, and self-centeredness is the heart of man's tragedy; its reconstruction, redirection and empowerment is redemption from evil. Love of God and neighbor is the gift given through Jesus Christ by the

²Deuteronomy 6:5

³Leviticus 19:18

⁴George A. Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1928), p. XIV.

⁵I Timothy 1:5



demonstration in incarnation, words, deed, death and resurrection that God is love--a demonstration we but poorly apprehend yet sufficiently discern to be moved to a faltering response of reciprocal love. The purpose of the gospel is not simply that we should believe in the love of God; it is that we should love him and neighbor. Faith in God's love toward man is perfected in man's love to God and neighbor.⁶

The meaning of this love Niebuhr interprets and tersely characterizes thus:

By love we mean at least these attitudes and actions: rejoicing in the presence of the beloved, gratitude, reverence and loyalty toward him. Love is rejoicing over the existence of the beloved one; it is the desire that he be rather than not be; it is longing for his presence when he is absent; it is happiness in the thought of him; it is profound satisfaction over everything that makes him great and glorious.⁷

Projecting this in terms of the desired relationship of an adult with God, a threefold profile emerges. To love God with heart and mind and soul means to worship Him in "holy fear"; to be trustfully and joyously aware of His presence, and to glorify Him through verbal communication. Joyous worship, confident trust, and energetic witness are embraced in love toward God.

The first three covenant-commandments given at Sinai correspond to the pattern. The covenant-people were to count on God alone. They were to radiate and not selfishly eclipse their given revelation (the "Name") of God. And the family of God was to worship Him faithfully.

⁶H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1955), p. 32.

⁷Ibid., p. 34.

The object of adoring, trusting, and communicating love is God--the living God who has crucially disclosed His nature and purpose for people by acting decisively in human history. The command is to love the God who is the Source and Center of all Being, the Determiner of destiny, the Universal One-- God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. Love does not fall in love with itself. The affirmation that God is love does not mean that love is God. God is the "wholly other" Loved One. In the words of the Large Catechism, God is the One "from whom we are to expect all good and to whom we are to take refuge in all distress."⁸ He alone is "eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."⁹ This is God's oneness, His uniqueness. He alone is God, the ultimate object of love.

The Human Condition Apposite to the Stated Objective

Apposite to God's intention that men love Him totally is man's perversion and oblique misdirection of love. The person in the confirmation course tends to respond to God by worshipping false gods, by dreading the close presence of

⁸Book of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), p. 169.

⁹Ibid., p. 12.

God, and by "blasphemy." His attitude toward God--without God's intervention through Word and Sacrament--would turn 180° in the opposite direction.

The man-on-the-street who becomes involved in the confirmation process will be struggling unconsciously to retain his involvement with the world surrounding. Probably, as an American, he will have had at least a second-hand contact with the Christian gospel; for the atmosphere of Christianity permeates his culture. But usually his overarching loyalty will not be directed toward a wholly committed worship of the living God of human history. The typical John Q. Public tends to live for family,

business, nation, social position, comfort, assorted other things, and God--all at the same time, with varying degrees of interest and concern in various situations. When Father is pulling off a big business deal, the outcome is a life-and-death matter and nothing is quite so important as success. When vacation time rolls around, or when there is sickness in the family, all interest centers on family affairs. When the cold war threatens to become hot, a tremor of fear and anxiety runs through the heart and everything seems to depend on national and international affairs. When all these things are happening simultaneously, there is confusion, and "going to church" does not necessarily bring order out of chaos . . . the pattern of living is blurred. To put it in religious language, they worship many gods instead of bringing themselves and all of their concerns under the guidance and power of one god.¹⁰

Even religiosity is apt to be a tainted, "make the most of yourself" Christianity; in reality the liturgy expressed retains a "glory to man in the highest" undertone.

¹⁰Cornelius Loew, Modern Rivals to Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1955), p. 12.

Without the living God as the controlling Center of life the "double-minded man" is "unstable in all his ways": An anxious dread cankers his whole being. Stressing the Church's commission to speak to the contemporary, dread-ridden man, Bishop Lilje states:

For the moment in which we set forth our confession of the living God is the present moment, the immediate world in whose fascinating spectrum of longing and dread, technical triumphs and world-wide catastrophes we have been placed.

We must face this world realistically. There can be no doubt that its most conspicuous characteristic is "dread" (Angst). Our world, rent asunder by countless, almost insuperable tensions, is nowhere as united as here. The memory of the tragedies which have filled the first half of this fateful century hovers over mankind like a torturing, everpresent shadow. Racial and religious, political and economic differences disappear wherever there arise the dark clouds of fear, the dread of a new war, the horror a catastrophe the consequences of which would be beyond reckoning. There is in our world today an Internationale of dread which embraces more men than do any of the great political ideologies.¹¹

That ours is the "age of anxiety" has also been repeatedly accented in recent works of pastoral theology and personal help. One of the most penetrating of these is James A. Pike's Beyond Anxiety, which sympathetically analyzes the principal marks of human anxiety--"fear, guilt, inhibition, frustration, indecision, loneliness and despair."¹² And underneath these haunting symptoms of dread and anxiety, unrecognized at times, there lurks the enslaving fear of death.

¹¹Messages of the Third Assembly, The Lutheran World Federation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1957), p. 12.

¹²James A. Pike, Beyond Anxiety (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1954), p. 2.

The third trait of the man failing to love God is "blasphemy"--the failure to witness, "using" God only for self-centered advantage and prestige. This the nation-centered Israelites did when they failed to "make God's name great among the nations." And this the adult confirmand is apt to do as he neglects to make a reciprocal response of witness to God's proffered love in Christ. God is "used" for self. The adult does not "receive profound satisfaction over everything that makes Him great and glorious" for other people.

These, then, are the apparent characteristics, conditions, or "attitude-sets" of the adult in the confirmation group--the failure to worship God totally, anxious dread rather than trust, complacent blasphemy in the place of vibrant witness.

These maladies are overcome, and the positive objective of love for God is accomplished by God Himself, not by dint of human effort. By His acts in human history--climaxed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ--God has revealed that He is indeed worthy of total worship. By manifesting His personal concern for the individual through the "signs" and words of Jesus, God elicits the response of trust from men. By revealing His judgment upon the lost condition of men and by demonstrating His concern that men might not meet this judgment, God in Christ detonates the chain-reaction of witness and love. Existentially, the confirmand will develop love for God as the Word of God's love is channeled to him through the ministrations of the Church.

The Objective of Love for the Neighbor

The horizontal dimension of the adult confirmation objective is pointed in the direction of development of love for the neighbor. Love for God is fused with love for the people of God in the family, at work, and in society. Devotion to God in worship, trust, and witness necessarily determines and activates loyalty to the human community.

Reconciliation to God is reconciliation to life itself; love to the Creator is love of being, rejoicing in existence, in its source, totality and particularity. Love to God is more than that, however, great as this demand and promise are. It is loyalty to the idea of God when the actuality of God is mystery; it is the affirmation of a universe and the devoted will to maintain a universal community at whatever cost to the self. It is the patriotism of the universal commonwealth, the kingdom of God, as a commonwealth of justice and love, the reality of which is sure to become evident. There is . . . the will to be loyal to everything God and His kingdom stand for.¹³

The highest human loyalty--love for God with heart and mind and soul--unites men as neighbors. This ultimate allegiance gives men common cause even above closed societies and in-groups disloyal to each other.

As with love toward God, love toward the neighbor has a definite object. Neighbor-love is not mere emotion or attitude; it is always dynamic action. For God's own prompting love toward men is not sentiment--even expressed sentiment--but dynamic action. "But God shows His love for us in that

¹³Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 37.

while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."¹⁴ Human love imitates the incarnate love of God for the individual person in his need. Christ-like love is activated only by the concrete love of God in Christ and not by the nature of its object; it does not seek worth but brings worth into being. As Jesus stresses in the Sermon on the Mount, our love is to be patterned after God's own heart and therefore shows the same disregard for fences as do sunshine and rain.

The direct object of active and concrete neighbor-love is:

the near one and the far one; the one beside the road I travel here and now; the one removed from me by distance in time and space, in convictions and loyalties. He is my friend, the one who has shown compassion toward me; and my enemy, who fights against me. He is the one in need, in whose hunger, nakedness, imprisonment and illness I see or ought to see the universal suffering servant. He is the oppressed one who has not risen in rebellion against my oppression nor regarded me according to my deserts as an individual or member of a heedlessly exploiting group. He is the compassionate one who ministers to my needs: the stranger who takes me in; the father and mother, sister and brother. In him the image of the universal redeemer is seen as in a glass darkly. Christ is my neighbor, but the Christ in my neighbor is not Jesus; it is rather the eternal Son of God incarnate in Jesus, revealed in Jesus Christ. The neighbor is in past and present and future, yet he is not simply mankind in its totality but rather in its articulation, the community of individuals and individuals in community.¹⁵

But a dark shadow of this love for the neighbor tends to move in when combative human loyalties strive against total

¹⁴Romans 5:8.

¹⁵Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 38.

love for God. When a person is caught in a web of lesser loyalties than God--to self and country and family--he is unable to fulfill his destiny of active concern for the needy person nearest. As John's First Epistle repeatedly emphasizes, the man who does not love people does not love God. When a person short-circuits God's energizing love by failing to respond in worship, simultaneously he cuts off love for the human community.

The perversions of worship, trust, and witness effect also all human relationships. In proportion to a man's dullness of worship-response is his lack of perception of the "Christ in the neighbor." Trust in self and the resultant anxiety produces a vicious, spiraling, inward drive for self-help at the expense of others. "Blasphemy," or religious complacency, is evidenced in the desire to dominate rather than to witness to God's glory for the benefit of another person.

The opposite symptoms of lovelessness have been aptly described by St. Paul. He contrasts the outworking of "agape-love" with the manifestations of false love. The person who lacks love is quick to lose patience, seeking ways to be destructive. He is possessive, anxious to impress, nursing inflated ideas of his own importance. Lovelessness pursues selfish advantage and is touchy and ill-mannered. The loveless man compiles statistics of evil and gloats over the wickedness of other people. Perverted love quickly gives up, is quick to condemn, and soon flickers out. The man who fails

to love is churlish and childish, not even on the way to full maturity in Christ.¹⁶

For this reason God goes into action to activate love for the neighbor. God gives His Son to remove the guilt of lovelessness and to create the impulse of love for people:

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.¹⁷

Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the living Creator of love; and as Model Man He is the pattern for love. As the Fulfiller of God's total purpose--which is selfless love for God and neighbor--Jesus Christ Himself fulfills the desired objective of the Church, and the objective of adult confirmation. All-out love and "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" are one.¹⁸ The worshipping, witnessing, loving Christ Himself is the concretion of the objectives for adult confirmation.

The Objectives Expanded

The capsuled objective of love for God and neighbor can now be amplified and delineated in wider outline. The blueprint of objectives following may serve more specifically in

¹⁶ I Corinthians 13.

¹⁷ I John 4:10-12.

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:12-16.

plotting the scope of adult confirmation and in evaluating growth.

Following participation in the process of adult confirmation, it is desirable that:

1. Each adult member of the Body of Christ possess:
 - a. Deepening love for the Triune God expressed through joyous and regular worship--within the fellowship of the church; and
 - b. Firming confidence in God's personal care, even in the face of suffering and death; and
 - c. An intensifying joy in the glorification of God through personal witness--trained and sustained within the fellowship of the Church; and
2. The confirmand be equipped for:
 - a. A recognition and sensitivity to the "Christ in the neighbor" as an object of love;
 - b. Full participation in the worship and sacramental life of the Church for purposes of mutual help and for personal growth in faith; and
 - c. Active and loving participation in the life of the family and community--as God intends.

The diagram on the page following plots this objective graphically. In Christ God's activating love is directed toward the individual. The individual makes the vertical response of love toward God through worship, trust, and witness in each of the regions of human life--family, church, daily work, and community. At the same time the person reciprocating God's love moves out with Christ-like love into the societal areas surrounding.

GOD

The objective implicit in several currently used study courses

Only one of the available courses offered a clear-cut statement of objective. For his "Preaching and Teaching"

1. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

2. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

3. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

4. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

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8. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

9. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

10. To help the learner understand the meaning of the Christian faith and to place it in the context of the Christian life.

In a guide which is intended to be used by the National Lutheran Council, the objectives are set out, but a general objective is given with guidelines for the teacher.

We must not only convey the idea of the scope of Christianity, in general, and of the program doctrine in particular, we also should aim to evangelize and bring men to Christ, but the work of the church and Jesus Christ who has done this for us.

Perhaps the aim for the individual lessons in this handbook are expressed more often in terms of means rather than ends.

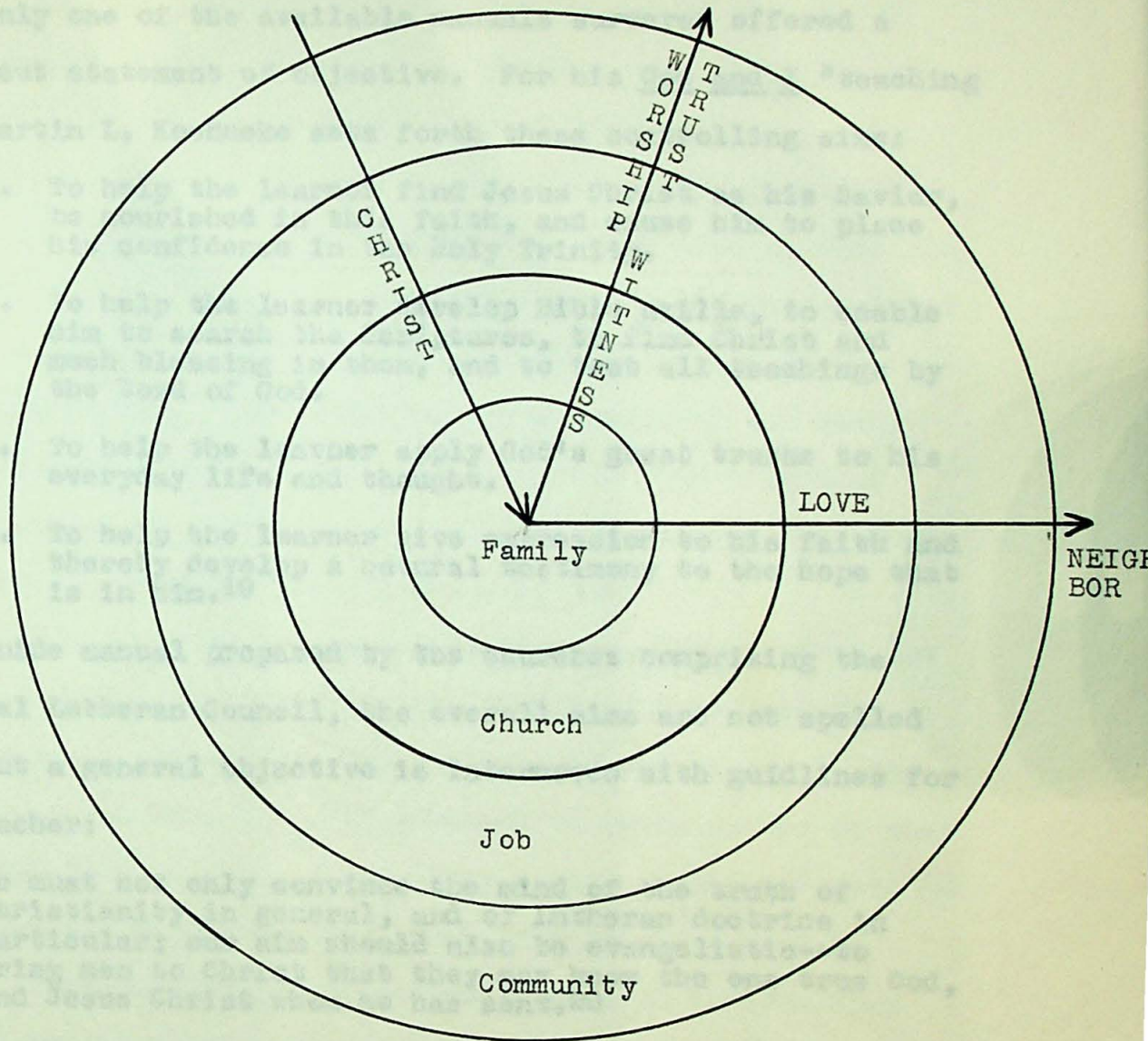


Figure 1. The Objectives of Adult Confirmation Plotted Graphically

¹⁰Martin L. Kocher, *Preaching and Teaching* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 3.

¹¹William Albert Meyer, *Preaching for Church Membership*, a Pastor's Guide (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 10.

The Objectives Implicit in Several Currently Used Study Courses

Only one of the available manuals surveyed offered a clear-cut statement of objective. For his God and I "teaching aid" Martin L. Koehnke sets forth these controlling aims:

1. To help the learner find Jesus Christ as his Savior, be nourished in this faith, and cause him to place his confidence in the Holy Trinity.
2. To help the learner develop Bible skills, to enable him to search the Scriptures, to find Christ and much blessing in them, and to test all teachings by the Word of God.
3. To help the learner apply God's great truths to his everyday life and thought.
4. To help the learner give expression to his faith and thereby develop a natural testimony to the hope that is in him.¹⁹

In a guide manual prepared by the churches comprising the National Lutheran Council, the overall aims are not spelled out, but a general objective is interwoven with guidelines for the teacher:

We must not only convince the mind of the truth of Christianity in general, and of Lutheran doctrine in particular; our aim should also be evangelistic--to bring men to Christ that they may know the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.²⁰

Perhaps the aims for the individual lessons in this handbook are expressed more often in terms of means rather than ends; and objectives are more implicitly than explicitly expressed.

¹⁹Martin L. Koehnke, God and I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 3.

²⁰Milton Albert Baker, Preparing for Church Membership, a Pastor's Guide (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1956), p. 10.

However, the end result of a confirmand's participation in the course might approximate the objectives stated in this thesis. For the course is life-related; and it strives to equip the confirmand for worship, witness, family life, and for participation in the wider life of the church.

Pastor Herman C. Theiss' home-produced Life With God²¹ shapes objectives by tone and content rather than by specific statement. This manual is structured around the core-concept of "life," thoroughly moving through the basics of the Christian gospel. While theologically excellent and carefully prepared, perhaps the course suffers from a lack of precise objective; this is especially evidenced by the sometimes overly detailed lesson presentations.

Martin Heinecken's Basic Christian Teachings, while not a course planned for confirmation, could well be used for this purpose. One of the primary aims of the course is "to help church workers . . . be prepared to guide others so that they also will be able to say, 'Now I know what I believe!'"²²

Each of the courses mentioned, forged and tested in parish situations, would be generally helpful in attaining the objectives elucidated earlier in this chapter. The all-controlling objective of total love for God and neighbor approximates the aims implicit in manuals currently employed

²¹Herman C. Theiss, "Life With God" (San Leandro, California: St. Peter's Lutheran Church, mimeographed).

²²Martin J. Heinecken, A Leadership Guide for Basic Christian Teachings (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House), p. 1.

by the Church. The proposed objective climaxes God's revealed imperative, and it should meet the test of flexible workability.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR A PROPOSED COURSE OF STUDY

FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

The Value of Using the Doctrinal Outline of the Nicene Creed

For the accomplishment of the objective accepted in the previous chapter the writer suggests that a course of study be constructed around the framework of the Nicene Creed. This study and historic confession possesses intrinsic value as a central document.

Since the confirmed's maturing love for God will be energized only as the love of God in Christ is communicated effectively, it will be necessary that the confirmed be acquainted by the acts of God in history which reveal this love. The confirmed's developing life of love needs to be grounded in the concrete, redemptive acts of God which are historically recognizable. The confirmed must not be absorbed into the Church without solid preparation and personal involvement with the five fundamentals of historic Christianity. He must not be integrated into the Church "upon confession of faith." In turn, the Church must not content itself with dispensing "cheap grace" to the confirmed.¹

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Company, c.1940), pp. 207.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFICATIONS FOR A PROPOSED COURSE OF STUDY

FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

The Value of Using the Doctrinal Outline of the Nicene Creed

For the accomplishment of the objectives accented in the previous chapter the writer suggests that a course of study be constructed around the framework of the Nicene Creed. This sturdy and historic confession possesses intrinsic value as a course blueprint.

Since the confirmand's maturing love for God will be energized only as the news of God's love in Christ is communicated effectively, it will be necessary that the confirmand be confronted by the acts of God in history which reveal this love. The confirmand's developing life of love needs to be grounded in the concrete, redemptive acts of God which are historically recognizable. The confirmand must not be absorbed into the Church without solid preparation and personal involvement with the firm fundamentals of historic Christianity. He must not be integrated into the Church "upon confusion of faith." In turn, the Church must not content itself with dispensing "cheap grace" to the confirmand.¹

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan Company, c.1953), pp. 37f.

Dogma and clear-cut theology--as capsuled in the Nicene Creed--ought to undergird and shape the entire confirmation process. This is essential for the honest presentation of Christian belief, as Dorothy Sayers perceptively comments,

It is a lie to say that dogma does not matter; it matters enormously. It is fatal to let people suppose that Christianity is only a mode of feeling. . . . It is hopeless to offer Christianity as a vaguely idealistic aspiration of a simple and consoling kind; it is, on the contrary, a hard, tough, exacting, and complex doctrine, steeped in a drastic and uncompromising realism. And it is fatal to imagine that everybody knows quite well what Christianity is and needs only a little encouragement to practise it. The brutal fact is that in this Christian country not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion what the Church teaches about God or man or society or the person of Jesus Christ.²

The Nicene Creed embodies this muscular theology in its doctrinal emphases. The forceful Christological thrusts of this creed are especially relevant to the modern era, pervaded by indifferentism, relativism, and hedonism. The atmosphere of the mid-century is evidently permeated by the same vapid vagueness about God and Christ as characterized the Nicene era.

There are the frank and open heathen, whose notions of Christianity are a dreadful jumble of rags and tags of Bible anecdote and clotted mythological nonsense. There are the ignorant Christians, who combine a mild gentle-Jesus sentimentality with vaguely humanistic ethics--most of these are Arian heretics.³

Therefore the confirmand must be led to an intelligent recognition of the "oneness" of God--His uniqueness and the

²Dorothy Sayers, Creed or Chaos? (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 29.

necessary response on the part of men. The full, either-or claims of Christ must be sharply set forth.

We cannot blink the fact that gentle Jesus meek and mild was so still in His opinions and so inflammatory in His language that He was thrown out of church, stoned, hunted from place to place, and finally gibbeted as a firebrand and a public danger. Whatever His peace was, it was not the peace of an amiable indifference.⁴

The Nicene Creed epitomizes the decisive words and works of Christ; its robust phrases, when understood, leave no room for a half-way choice concerning Christ.

This creed, furthermore, offers an emphatic and clear-cut witness to the Church's total faith. As tersely and as explicitly as possible the creed attempts to put into words what the Church believes about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

But there is nothing harder to put into words. God is a great mystery. A three-year-old child can say the word "cat" and know more or less what he means by it. But that child would have a hard time if you asked him for a full description of a cat. A man can easily say the word "God," but it is hard for him to say what he means by it. One of the greatest minds that ever served the Church, St. Augustine, once said that we say some of the things we do about God simply in order that we should not remain silent. The creeds are not that in which we believe; they are symbols that point beyond themselves to the Father and the Son and the Spirit.⁵

The Nicene Creed does not intend to detail the full scope of Christian theology; its function is to provide an operative center around which faith may crystallize and increase. Its purpose is more confessionally practical than definitive.

⁴Ibid., p. 36.

⁵Angus Dun, We Believe (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, c.1954), p. 7.

The creed is valuable, too, in that the Church repeatedly experiences it in its worship life. The creed rhythmically recurs as the Church participates in the Eucharistic liturgy. The creed, as a vital part of this common worship form, can serve to finalize the confirmand's recognition of Christian truth.

The experience of life in the Church precedes both the formulation and the understanding of Christian doctrine. That is why few people come to the recognition of Christian truth by means of an abstract study of theology; the normal approach is through the fellowship of a Christian congregation. The Church's life of faith and worship is the source of Christian belief and theology. Faith and worship are inseparably connected.⁶

Finally, the Nicene Creed may be conveniently parceled into sixteen sections, each centered by a key doctrine. The breadth of the confirmation course is thus insured; for the only major doctrinal area not specified is the Lord's Supper, and this may readily be integrated into the course. The full range of Christian theology is encompassed, and ample time is allotted for thorough instruction and guidance.

The Scope and Purpose of the Text Section

To stir interest in the specific doctrinal units and to awaken anticipation for the actual class session, a guidebook for the participant is proposed, for use primarily outside of class. A text section would be included to point the mind in the direction of the individual unit. Not a tight

⁶Alan Richardson, The Gospel and Modern Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 124.

summary or digest of doctrine, the text should serve primarily to condition the confirmand for energetic and lively conversation within the class-group.

Sympathetically and patiently, the text section should sketch out the teaching thrust of the unit. Rapport must be established through the use of apt and life-contacting language. An expert communicator reminds us,

If there is any connection between the Cross and the common man, that connection must surely be expressible in language which the common man can understand. If the Cross of Christ has any relevance to the ordinary man in his office or at his workbench, or to the ordinary woman in her home, that relevance can surely be put into words to which the ears of ordinary people have become accustomed.⁷

Therefore the written content of the text section will endeavor to move in close to the needs and experiences of the reader, to engage his mind and help him confront the Christian message which alone can produce the desired outcome of love for God and neighbor.

Appended to the text will be a check-quiz of varied construction. This will attempt to review the written discussion, jelling the impressions gained. The check-quiz will also serve as a starter and a scaffolding for class conversation.

The Provision for Inductive Bible Study

The obvious advantages of personal and group Bible study are readily accepted. The effective use of the inductive

⁷Herman W. Gockel, The Cross and the Common Man (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1955), p. 3.

process of Bible study increases spiritual growth toward God, equips for competent witness, and prompts the outworking of love.⁸

An adult confirmation course, then, can well provide a training ground for the absorption of the Word. However, this Word must be permitted to sound through in accord with its original intention. The Word must "have free course" and authenticate itself to the modern hearer. It must not be manhandled or forced to fit a superimposed mold of thought.

Our purpose in teaching the Bible is that God may speak through it now into the life of the world. . . . Our handling of the Bible must always be with this expectation, that somehow the miracle may happen that God should make his word come alive with the same power in our twentieth century that it had when it was first spoken. For that to happen, we must accept the responsibility of interpreting the ancient word in the modern situation, or hearing the word as it originally sounded in the ears of men, and of speaking it in whatever form will bring it home to living persons today.⁹

Inductive Bible study, which attempts to break the time barrier and make the Word contemporary, can help the confirmand receive the Word in its pristine force.

Equipment for such study may well be fabricated into the guidebook. Larger sections of Scripture, coinciding with the unit keynote, may be analyzed and made relevant through the inclusion of pertinent guide-questions. The confirmand would

⁸Albert G. Merrens, "Learning Can Be a Pleasure," Advance, (October, 1957), p. 1.

⁹James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1954), p. 152.

be encouraged to work through these exercises at home, preferably with another person. And in the actual class meeting the sections surveyed could be imaginatively amplified, creatively discussed, and decisively summarized. This use of the Word would be in keeping with the intention of many biblical writers, for most of the Bible books were written to be read by churches, and not by isolated individuals.

The Function of Confessional Excerpts in the Course

The Lutheran Confessions are the traditional response of the Lutheran Church to the Word of God, the echo of faith to God's revelation. Even though the confessions are not a constitutive factor in the Gospel proclamation of the Lutheran Church, these symbolical writings are the guiding standard of doctrine, life, and practice.

But, in keeping with the intention of the confessions themselves, this "echo of faith" must be heard above the "sound and fury" today.

Fidelity to the Lutheran confession today does not demand a formalistic recitation and repetition of the sayings of the fathers, but rather their responsible and actualized exposition and application. If we want to speak today of a genuine loyalty to the Lutheran confession, then we are obligated to address ourselves to the contemporary situation of the year . . . in saying what we confess when we confess together with the fathers.¹⁰

For the purpose of acquainting the confirmand with the witness-response condensed in the confessions, the guidebook

¹⁰The Unity of the Church, edited by The Department of Theology, Lutheran World Federation (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, c.1957), p. 99.

might well incorporate excerpts from the Symbolical Books parallel to the unit themes. Each quotation would fulfill a multiple role: it would acquaint the reader with the historic depth of the Lutheran Church, serve as a concise compendium of doctrine for further reference, and provide a pivot for discussion and summary in class.

Used in this manner, the confessions will not remain silent and static; they would be activated, partially at least, in the direction of the Church's life and doctrine. As Prof. Ernst Kinder comments,

It is not a matter of the worth of a confession but rather its real, vital application in the realms of preaching, the strengthening of faith, and pastoral and other work of the church. Do we in fact really do that, or do we pay respect to an honorable relic preserved under glass? When one really makes a vital application of the confession in the way described, then one first notices the rich, deep and living treasures that are contained in them: treasures not yet fully exhausted. We ought to speak not so much about the confession, but more happily to speak from it and to use it.¹¹

The Advantage of a Written Witness by a Living Lutheran

The specifications also propose that the guidebook embody a "testimony" by a living Lutheran on the subject of the unit. This one-page witness would reinforce the doctrinal impact in a personal way and would awaken a realization of the Church's larger fellowship. As the confirmand is exposed to the evident action of God in the lives of others, he would begin to feel

¹¹Ibid., p. 112.

his own need, and the resources of the Christian Gospel would appear more relevant.

The Rev. Samuel M. Shoemaker, an Episcopalian who has pioneered in the involvement of people with the Church, stresses the value of witness by a convinced Christian in each of his helpful books.

There is another thing that may arouse a spiritual interest, and that is seeing what genuine faith is doing for somebody else. If we were crossing a desert and thirsty for water, and somebody told us where we might find a grove of palm trees and a well, we would be mighty fools not to ask where it was. When one is confronted by an unmanageable personal life, or an inflammable inter-nation situation, or a mysterious universe, or by all three together, he would be a stupidly obdurate skeptic not to turn to religion to ask whether it might hold an answer for him. But this search would come to an immediate focus if some friend of ours who previously had not faith began finding it, and deriving satisfaction from it. Like an alcoholic with a pal who has found the answer in Alcoholics Anonymous, he is drawn to seek the same answer for himself.¹²

As the confirmand would confront the theologically well grounded witness of another human being--with the same evident needs and misgivings--he would be led further into saying, "I'll buy that." He would be more decisively committed.

The Practical Value of a Personal Reaction Section

In order to provide a worship outlet for the faith-response generated by the total unit, a pertinent collect or liturgy excerpt would be added to each unit. Although not carrying out a major purpose, these brief worship forms would

¹²Samuel M. Shoemaker, The Experiment of Faith (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1957), p. 20.

crystallize the thought of the lesson. They would clinch and make firm the decisions which should be called forth in the class meeting. Space might also be included for the notation of personal comment and question, primarily as a convenience for further clarification in class.

Each of the discussed specifications in this chapter is given further perspective in the chart following. Here the overall pattern for the completion of a unit is visualized, and the relationships of the various ingredients may be seen. The scope of the confirmand's participation is indicated by the shaping lines.

The class participant would be contacted in his present life situation by an interest-arousing discussion in class, usually constructed around a vital problem or life concern. He would be encouraged to read the text section at home and complete the check-quiz, talking over the material with another person if at all possible. The instructor would be careful to guide the confirmand's "Bible Exploration" by fostering a proper attitude of eagerness. The participant would read through the witness of the Confessions and the "Living Witness," and he would be conditioned to respond in worship.

The class session itself, as diagramed, would utilize all previous preparation and awareness to bring about a personal decision affecting the confirmand's present life. In each lesson unit the confirmand would be led to the objective of active love for God and spontaneously working love for the neighbor.

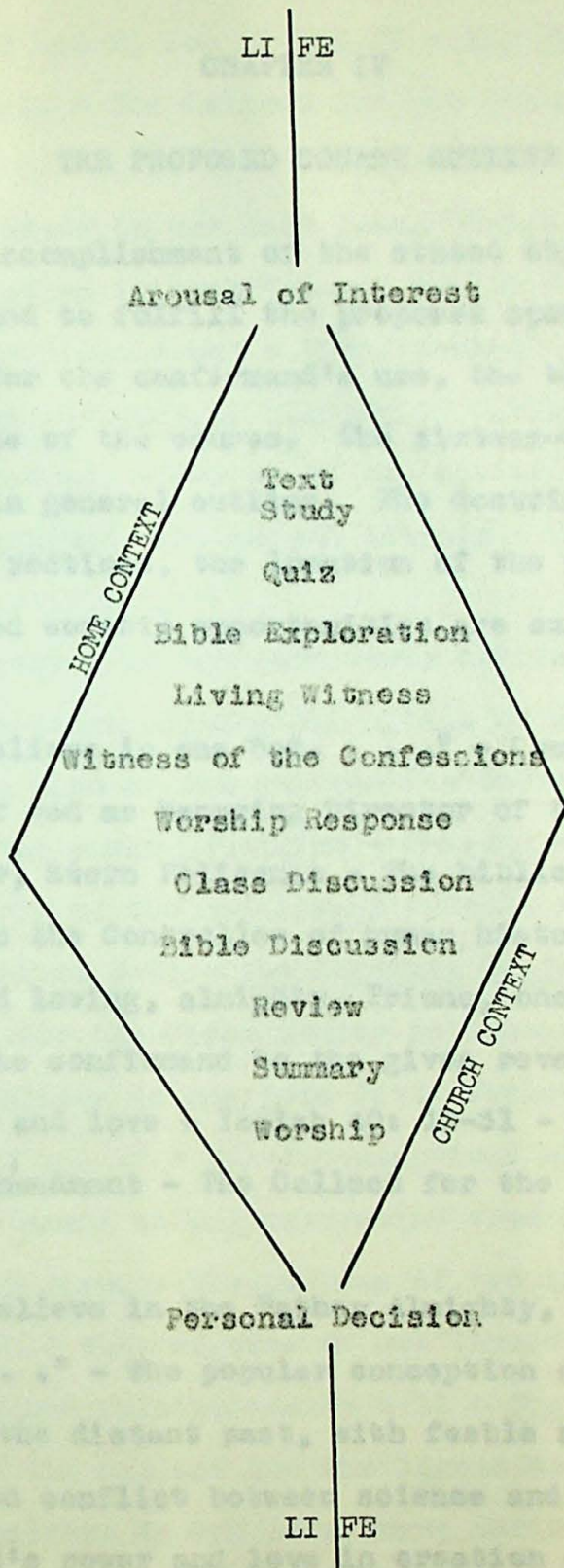


Figure 2. The Proposed Pattern of Procedure for a Course Unit

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPOSED COURSE OUTLINE

For the accomplishment of the stated objectives of adult confirmation and to fulfill the proposed specifications of a course guide for the confirmand's use, the blueprint following plots the scope of the course. The sixteen-unit structure is drafted here in general outline. The doctrinal emphases, the related Bible sections, the location of the confessional excerpts, and the printed worship opportunities are suggested for each lesson.

1. "I believe in one God. . . ." - Common religiosity - Conceptions of God as Managing Director of the Universe, Heavenly Grandfather, Stern Policeman - The biblically revealed concept of God as the Controller of human history and destiny - The living and loving, almighty, Triune, one God - The ongoing response of the confirmand to the given revelation of the one God - Worship and love - Isaiah 40: 12-31 - The Large Catechism: The First Commandment - The Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

2. "I believe in the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth. . . ." - The popular conception of creation as happening in the distant past, with feeble relevance for today - The supposed conflict between science and Genesis - The revelation of God's power and love in creation - God's present control and ongoing creation - The ethical response of stewardship of physical property, the use of the body, and the daily

Job - Genesis 1 and 2, Job 38 and 39 - The Small Catechism:

The First Article - The Collect for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

3. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ. . . ." - God's intended revelation in creation and Christ - God's focused revelation in the Man Jesus - The either-or claims of Christ - The either-or response of history to Christ - The invitation to follow Christ now - Survey of the entire Gospel of Mark - The Small Catechism: The Second Article - The Gloria in Excelsis.

4. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, who for us men. . . ." - The evident paradoxical nature of man - Man as the "glory and the scum of the universe" - The creation of man in the image of God - Our rebellion - Present evidences of sin - The original sin of the confirmand - God's redemption in Christ - Romans 2: 9-24 - The Augsburg Confession: Article XIX - The Collect for the First Sunday in Advent.

5. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ--who came down and was incarnate. . . ." - False conceptions of the remoteness of God caused by man's actual separation from God. The human personality of Jesus - The purpose of the incarnation for reconciliation - The response of awe toward the incarnation - Luke 1: 26-38 and Philipians 2: 5-11 - The Augsburg Confession: Article III - The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.

6. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ--who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. . . ." The human predicament--the clutching power of sin, death, and the devil - The inability

of man to free himself through any process of self-righteousness
 - The entrance of God into humanity through Christ - Christ's
 involvement in the human predicament - His death, the driving
 victory which breaks sin, death, and the devil's power - The
 working out of this victory through the resurrection, the pre-
 sent reign of Christ, and the final completion of this redemp-
 tion - Isaiah 53 - The Small Catechism: The Second Article -
 The Agnus Dei.

7. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ--who rose again
 the third day according to the Scriptures. . . ." - The fact
 of the resurrection and the necessary response involved - The
 resurrection as authenticating the work of Jesus - The resur-
 rection as the key interpretive point for the working out of
 God's plan of redemption - The resurrection as the beginning
 of the "new creation," manifested now in the Church, completed
 at the second coming of Christ - John 20 and 21 - The Large
 Catechism: Excerpts from Article II - The Collect for Easter.

8. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ--who ascended
 into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and
 He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the
 dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. . . ." - The present
 accessibility of Christ - His present control of history -
 Distortions of the second coming of Christ, the false idea of
 upward progress - The certainty of the second coming - The
 watchfulness of the Christian, looking forward to Christ's
 coming - Judgment as separation - The everlasting reign of
 Christ - I Thessalonians 4: 13-5: 11 - The Augsburg Confession:

Article XVII - The Collect for the Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.

9. "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life. . . ." - Our inability to believe in God-in-Christ without the Spirit, our moral helplessness without the Spirit, our inter-personal separation without the Spirit - The enabling and empowering work of the Holy Spirit - This work the creative work of God Himself - Vague notions about the Holy Spirit - The promises of Christ and the Father to send the Spirit in response to persistent prayer - Acts 2 - The Small Catechism: The Third Article - The Collect for Pentecost.

10. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified. . . ." - The difficulties associated with the doctrine of the Trinity - The history of the doctrine - The implications of the doctrine --the extreme manifestation of God's concern for us - The Trinity in us - John 3: 1-21 - The Augsburg Confession: Article I - The Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

11. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified. . . ." - The comfortable dangers of spectator religion - The call to participate and the opportunity for participation in worship - The how of corporate worship, private worship, family worship - Review of the liturgy - Overview of the church year - Assignment to survey the liturgy noting sacramental and sacrificial aspects - The Collect for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

12. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, who spake by the prophets. . . ." - The need for revelation - God's revelation in Christ and the interpretative work of the Spirit - The parallel to this New Testament work of the Spirit in the Old Testament - The unity of the Bible in Christ - The structure of the Bible - The use of the Bible - Structured opportunity for browsing in various translations, study aids - The Collect for the Word.

13. "I believe in the one holy Christian and Apostolic Church. . . ." - The calling action of God in creating the Church - The holy separateness of the Church - The oneness of the Church in Christ and the responsibility to actualize this oneness - The Church as the family of God - The worship, Sacramental life, and outreach of the Church - Ephesians 4: 1-16 - The Augsburg Confession: Article VII - The Collect for Good Friday.

14. "I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. . . ." - The need for forgiveness - The assurance of forgiveness in Baptism - Baptism into the Church - Infant Baptism and the implications for nurture - The ongoing use of Baptism by the Christian - The Small Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - The Collect for Ash Wednesday.

15. "I believe . . . in the remission of sins. . . ." - The Sacramental principle - Holy Communion as instituted by Christ, His effective promise, - The presence of Christ in Communion - Communion as the pledge of forgiveness, a fellowship meal - The Small Catechism: How the Unlearned Should be Taught to Confess.

16. "I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. . . ." - The utter reality of death as the ultimate human contradiction - The inevitability of death within a corrupt creation - Popular platonic conceptions of automatic immortality - The resurrection power of God decisively at work in His new creation - The hope for the resurrection activated only by the resurrection of Christ - The living hope now - Excerpts from I Corinthians 15 - The Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity.

Pilot lessons for five of these patterned units are included in the chapters following. Each chapter offers a complete sample of an individual lesson as it would be presented for the confirmand's use, with the exception of the personal witness section. Representative personal witnesses by living Lutherans are appended at the close of the thesis proper.

In the twentieth century you hear modern men talking much about "finding" God, almost as if He were lost. The word "God" is familiar to all of us.

But to many of us the word "God" stands for a foggy, "obscure" thing. "God" is not a very natural word. You feel rather awkward in using it. It is often a colorless and queer word--representing a vague and distant somebody.

We fit right in the group of college students who were asked these twin questions: "How many of us believe in God? To how many of us is God a living reality?" At the first question almost every hand went up. At the second, scarcely a

CHAPTER V

PILOT LESSON I: I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD

"What is God like? Who made God?"

Probably you have heard children blurt out these quick questions. And you have possibly overheard your own mind making the same inquiries. We seem to be "incurably religious."

Not that we have always acted so very religiously, but we humans have always shown at least a spectator's interest in religion. "If God did not exist, then man would have to invent Him," observed the skeptic Voltaire. Plutarch the ancient Greek commented, "You may see states without walls, without laws, without coins, without writings; but a people without a god, without prayers, without religious exercises and sacrifices has no man seen." On and on goes the quest for God. In the twentieth century you hear modern man talking much about "finding" God, almost as if He were lost. The word "God" is familiar to all of us.

But to many of us the word "God" stands for a foggy, "oblong Blur." "God" is not a very natural word. You feel rather awkward in using it. It is often a colorless and queer word--representing a vague and distant Somebody.

We fit right in the group of college students who were asked these twin questions: "How many of us believe in God? To how many of us is God a living reality?" At the first question almost every hand went up. At the second scarcely a

hesitant hand was raised. And a Gallup Poll reveals that 99 per cent of the American population believes that God exists. But for many--as far as their workaday routine is concerned--God might as well be non-existent. God is optional.

This does not mean that God is never talked about. Most of us have our own pet pictures of God filed away for ready reference when an argument heats up. If you would conduct a man-on-the-street interview on the subject of God, the responses might come back like this:

Q.: "What do you think God is like?"

A.: "Well, uh, God, why I never really thought too much about Him. He never did seem very real to me, especially in this space age. God--He must be some sort of "President of the United Galaxies." At least I hope someone is still in charge of this dizzy universe. But God is probably a long way off and can't trouble Himself with this planet, least of all He doesn't interfere with my problems. He has enough to do keeping the wheels of the universe turning. He may be at home in His own inaccessible heaven, but apparently He's not at home with us poor mortals. Frankly, I rather like it this way, as long as God lets me alone I can do all right by myself. I'm a rugged individual."

Q.: (Addressed to a bow-tied collegian) "Sir, could you give us your opinion about God?"

A.: "God, I think, must be a pretty nice guy. This statement is not meant to be funny or facetious. It is simply my conception of the Creator. He gave life to man. Man tries

to do what He wants. And God continues to shower blessings on the beings He has created. The earth keeps turning; the sun still shines. God is rather like a Man Upstairs, a chummy sort of fellow, a Cosmic Companion. If we men 'deal Him in' right, He pretty well goes along with us."

(Note: The kind of cuddly God this fellow adheres to is characterized in W. H. Auden's "Christmas Oratorio" thus:

O God, put away justice and truth for we cannot understand them and do not want them. Eternity would bore us dreadfully. Leave the heavens and come down to our earth of water locks and hedges, become our uncle, look after baby, amuse grandfather, escort madam to the opera, help Willie with his homework, introduce Muriel to a handsome naval officer, be interesting and weak like us, and we will love you as we love ourselves.)¹

To round out the picture, our question could be asked again. This time suppose that a rather neck-and-mild person replies:

A.: "God--He is a hard person to get along with. He always insists that His rules be obeyed, and I guess we had better go along with him. He knows best. Usually I picture God as a giant Policeman. Mind you, we need Someone like that around to keep control, especially of the younger generation. God certainly wants us to do our duty!"

(Note: Perhaps this Henpecked Henry comes from a fiery-furnace home dominated by religion. God was the stern and invisible guest at every meal. His name was invoked to keep our friend from doing the things he wanted to do. God seemed

¹Quoted by Donald MacLeod, "The God We Want Versus the God We Need," The Pulpit, XXIX (February, 1958), 14.

like the private Gestapo of his parents. God was like an overhanging glacier, a ruthless force grinding all the joy out of life.)

There are many varieties of "gods" on the market today. You can push along your supermarket cart and take your pick. But the pictures of God as "The President of the United Galaxies," a "Cosmic Companion," or a "Giant Policeman" appear to be the most common. These three ideas capsule the religious thinking of many moderns.

So the problem for most is not whether God exists or not. The crucial questions are: what difference does it make that God exists? where am I going? who am I? Today there are few live atheists running around; even at a recent atheist convention a man said, "I am a real atheist, thank God!" Yet there are many for whom God is a distant Blur, a Man Upstairs, a Cruel Taskmaster--many for whom God has no meaning for life, many who would like to be introduced to God.

If you are such a person, what you read next can be vital and life-changing for you.

You have likely heard Christians speak the words of the Nicene Creed--"I believe in one God. . . ." Now notice that church members do not say: "I believe that God exists." The midget word "in" makes all the difference. If I say "I believe that democracy exists," I mean more than this--that I see evidence that a political system called "democracy" is at work in certain countries. Stalin could easily have said, "I

believe that democracy exists." But he would never have said, "I believe in democracy."

You can believe that God exists, yet not make Him central in your life. You may even unconsciously regard God as a personal Enemy and unknowingly resist Him day and night. Or you may consider the existence of God an idle question for men in ivory towers and react to Him with a totally detached mind and heart.

The word "in" is the key! You may believe that an elevator exists, but until you get in and allow it to lift you to the fortieth floor you cannot say, "I believe in this elevator." When you say, "I believe in God," you are saying in effect: "I believe that God is the most important fact in the universe. I intend to put my complete trust in Him, to love and obey Him. From now on, God will be the Center around which my life revolves." Then you are committed. You have jumped down from the spectator's balcony onto the playing floor of real life.

However, to say you believe in God, you first need to know what kind of God you believe in, just as you need to have fair assurance that the elevator cables will carry your weight. It is terribly essential to know something about God, so you can be sure what sort of Lord you are trying to love and obey.

For this precise purpose God has provided a revelation of Himself. How? By authoring a biography and parachuting it down to earth? By allowing men to examine Him under an electron-microscope? Hardly. No, God has disclosed something of His nature and purpose by acting in our human history, by dealing

with men where they are, by "laying bare His mighty arm" to reach down and contact men. We come to believe in God, then, by re-tracing His "footsteps" on the "sands of time." We cannot dissect, bisect, or trisect God, or chart His personality with formulas and graphs. Obviously we cannot capture God in any searchlight beam. God stands above us, beyond the reach of any human invention, beyond our self-made ideas about Him, beyond our deepest feelings, beyond all human attainment.

God is always acting, on the move, shaping and controlling the course of human events for His vast and sweeping purposes. The story of this controlling action is the scope of the Bible; the Bible, like a slow motion movie on a Cinerama screen, pictures for us the dynamic activity of God with men. The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God, for God does not need to be proved by argument any more than the existence of these printed words needs to be proved. God is! And the only way He can be proved to you is for you to hear what He has done!

The action of God described in the Old and New Testaments might be compared to a tremendous symphony. Back in the distant stretches of eternity God planned a "symphony of creation." He created all the things that we can see--the earth, the stars and planets--and He made everything in the vast world of the unseen. Now you can take a piece of paper, some ink, a pen and write some music; but you cannot make music out of the clear blue. God alone can create out of nothing. And this He did at the beginning of time--set into motion a vast

symphony of creation. The people, plants and planets all blended in close harmony with each other. The Maker's "New World Symphony" echoed and resounded throughout the universe.

Today the entire creation still depends upon its Composer and Conductor to keep it going. To put it another way, God could exist without the universe, but this universe minus God would be nothing. The universe is real (if you stub your toe against a brick, the brick is really there), but its reality is derived from the reality of God. The universe is real because He created it and sustains it minute-by-minute. If God were to take Himself away from you right at this instant--if the Conductor would step down from the podium--you would "vaporize," like the light in the refrigerator when you slam shut the door. God did not just wind up the world like a gigantic music box and then sit back on the sidelines to watch us "sweat it out." God is still at work in creation.

However, something horrible has broken into the symphony. Men have tried to climb up on the podium and take over for God. Men try to direct the symphony themselves, elbowing God to the side. Right at the beginning, the first people persisted in attempting to "be like God"; they tried to tell God which notes were good and bad. They refused to count on the Conductor for direction and support. And as a result--because men are poorly equipped to be directing the "whole show"--disharmony has nearly wrecked the symphony. The first sin was the first sour, screechy note; it ruined the entire symphony. So like a squeaky dresser drawer which does not fit properly, man now

is a misfit in a world out of kilter. Even our best efforts sound screechy in the ears of God.

However, God has not slammed shut His book of music; He has not called off the symphony as He rightfully could have done. Instead He decides to rewrite the symphony, using the bad note as the first note in a new masterpiece. God promises to visit the world in Person and take it upon Himself to repair the far-reaching damage of the sour disharmony.

The Old Testament tells us how God begins and accomplishes this plan of promise. He calls a desert chieftain named Abraham to be His special representative in a world of pride and intrigue. Through Abraham God promises to bless the rest of mankind. Centuries later, after the descendants of Abraham were enslaved in Egypt, God rolls up the sleeves of His mighty arm to break these bonds of slavery. God Himself leads the Jews out from this Egyptian concentration camp as a conquering General. And He rehabilitates these "D. P.'s" in a new land.

But often the people rebel against the God who had called them. Like lusty adulterers they go after pagan gods. Yet God sticks with them and educates them so that they get a clearer idea of the Conductor and the "music" He wants played.

"How odd of God to chose the Jews," we say. It is strange, is it not--God loving this tiny, despised clan in Asia Minor, God never swerving, God keeping His centuries-long loyalty?

Finally--even though most of the chosen people had forsaken the God who had done so much for them--comes the long-looked-for personal visit, the re-creation of the symphony.

There appears a Man who acts as if He were God. He goes around forgiving people's sins, and everybody knows that only God can do that. He brings dead people back to life. And when He is killed, He does not stay dead. He is crucified on Friday, and the following Sunday He is alive again with His disciples. These followers then go out and die for their proclamation, "The Man you have killed is God's Son! But God has raised Him up! He has taken upon Himself the sourness of sin! The symphony has been climaxed! Soon it will be all over, over for good for those players who do not want help in following the music!"

Mind you, some unlearned fishermen with no apparent ulterior motive, go out and lay down their lives for their "Lord Jesus." These men are so effective with their message that they "turn the world upside down." They travel all over the Roman Empire and nothing stops them, not even lions in the arena. And it is the same way today. The Christian Church is busy all over the world radiating the good news of Jesus Christ. Hardly a week goes by that some Christian does not give up life somewhere in the world because he will not abandon his faith in the living Christ.

There must be something to all of this. What if Jesus really did rise from the dead and re-work the symphony? What if the old symphony will be over soon? Where will you be?

From this quick survey of God's "conducting" action in centuries of human history we gain something of an understanding of God's "personality," as a symphony conductor's

personality is evidenced by his interaction with the players and music. Reacting to God's creative work with men on the stage of the world, we can describe God with four key words. We believe in the God who is living, almighty, Triune, and one.

GOD IS THE LIVING GOD

It is clear that a God who is revealed through his activity in history must be living and personal. Not an indifferent Managing Director, too busy handling the universe, the God of the Bible does intervene in the course of events. He is not cold and aloof, impersonal and distant, like a force such as electricity.

God's personal concern was supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. In contrast to the attitude of the girl who prayed, "Our Father who art in New Haven, how do you know my name," Jesus, God's personal Representative, would say that God has even counted the hairs on our heads. God-in-Christ was willing to go all the way to the cross in order to enter fully into human life; He is not a Conductor who stands solidly on the podium and does not bother Himself about the players.

To illustrate, perhaps you have seen pictures of deaf children learning to speak by placing their hands on the lips and throats of their teachers. With their sensitive fingertips the children catch the sound-wave pulsations and the muscular movements of the instructor. Then a silent world comes vibrantly alive. In parallel fashion "God in the Highest" has bent down in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth to

allow us to touch Him and to permit us to feel the sound-waves of His personal love. In Christ, God has gone to great lengths to establish a personal relationship between Himself and us.

God's closeness and concern for each of us has been beautifully described by Blaise Pascal (easily one of history's most brilliant men) in these words, worthy of pondering. . . .

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
 not of philosophers and scholars.
 Certitude. Joy. Peace.
 God of Jesus Christ,
 My God and your God.
 Thy God will be my God.
 He is found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.
 Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee;
 but I have known thee. . . .
 This is life eternal, that they might know thee,
 the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent!²

GOD IS ALMIGHTY

We admire strength. We admire the strength of atomic power, we thrill to the power of those who can drive a golf ball farther than the rest of us, and we wonder at the "strong mountains."

But we are not quite sure how to feel about God's power. You would not want your father or mother or husband or the President of the United States to be almighty, would you? When a man is given too much power, it usually goes to his head and the strength is misused. So wisely we have included a system of "checks and balances" in our government.

²Quoted by Karl H. A. Rest, Put Your Faith to Work (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1956), p. 21.

However, God is not checked or controlled by anything outside Himself. We do not elect Him as God. Even if two and a half billion people passed a law telling God what to do, this ruling would be worse than worthless. The almighty God takes orders from no one. He alone determines and dominates.

But this does not mean that God's actions are cruel, clumsy, or wildly done on the spur of the moment, so that no one can guess what He will do next. No, God's power is carefully controlled by Himself, by His own nature and by His love.

For this reason there are some things that God cannot or will not do. For example, neither God nor anyone else can make sense out of nonsense. He cannot create a stone which is bigger than He can lift. He cannot alter the multiplication table. God is not a magician. He is merely God almighty and is capable of doing everything that can be done. Because He is a loving and personal God, He cannot compel a human being to believe in Him, for human love cannot be forced. Otherwise we would be puppets and not people. So too, Jesus Christ could not come down from His cross--as the people dared Him--because He was carrying out the loving purpose of God. Because God is love, He does not use His power like a heavy machine to hammer things into shape.

Niagara Falls has power to sweep a man to destruction or to turn giant turbines, but it has no power to love, to forgive sins, or to teach a child to pray. In contrast God is powerful and loving at the same time. Therefore He is utterly

reliable and dependable. While it is true that we cannot forecast exactly the things He will do, we can know the purpose of His actions. Whatever God does, no matter how startling and painful it may be, is done out of His goodness and love. In love God abides by the rules of the game. He is not a wishy-washy, over-sentimental Man Upstairs, nor is He a cruel Taskmaster who likes to throw His weight around. God is like an all-wise, all-loving Father, who uses only a part of the boundless power He possesses, and who prefers to work quietly and steadily for the greatest good of His children.

GOD IS TRINE

Heads start shaking when the doctrine of the Trinity is brought up. People with minds like IBM machines have said that God cannot be three-in-one--it is arithmetically impossible. And there is even a lot of bewilderment and confusion on the part of some Christians on the subject of the Trinity.

Actually, this teaching of the Church about God is most meaningful and relevant to life. The Trinity is not a puzzling problem in higher mathematics or a blueprint explaining the inner working of God.

The whole idea of the threeness of God is a result of the impact of Christ's life. In a very simple, non-bookish way the men and women who followed Jesus became convinced that in some way He was "one" with God. But they also knew that he prayed to His "Father in heaven" and was constantly aware of being guided from above. So, "If Jesus is God, there must be some sort of multiplicity within God," they thought.

After the resurrection of Christ--at Pentecost--the first disciples recognized what they called the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost--God fully active among them right then and there. This was a third way of experiencing God. Their leader Christ was now invisible; yet He was still directing them like an unseen Conductor through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Such was the conviction of God-believing people who had been struck by the impact of Jesus Christ, who had experienced the work of the Holy Spirit. God was three-in-one--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so the Church believes that there is one God and only one God. But God is not rigidly one like a giant stone. Within His oneness there are three living Centers, or Persons, or whatever word you wish to use.

For a human analogy of the Trinity we can refer back to the symphony picture. The full production of a symphony involves a trinitarian process. There is first of all the idea of the symphony, in the "heaven" of the composer's mind. The idea takes shape when the composer sits down and converts the thoughts into notes on sheets of paper. And then someone has to interpret the notes so that they produce an effect upon the hearer. For our purposes the parallels would be:

Idea	God the Father
Music	God the Son
Effect	God the Holy Spirit

God the Father plans and envisions the symphony of creation. God the Son, who was the Agent of creation and who became Man in Jesus, puts the plan into operation. He gives

the symphony form and meaning. God the Holy Spirit interprets the symphony for each individual; He makes it come alive; He creates faith in Christ.

The idea, the notes, and the effect are one, each equally in itself the whole symphony. The idea is the whole symphony. The music is the whole symphony. The effect is the whole symphony too. Yet a single part cannot exist without the other. In like manner the Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. And yet the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are one. None exists without the other.

The concept of the Trinity involves an extra dimension too large for human mentality to grasp. But what is important--this teaching tells us that God is not remote and distant, that He has acted for us by becoming Man in Jesus Christ. He is personally involved with the world! The doctrine of the Trinity, then, is not as confusing as it is comforting. It tells us God cares. If Christ had never come we would not have this teaching--but we would also be unaware of God's personal love toward us.

GOD IS ONE

"Of course God is one," you say; "it complicates matters to say that God is Triune--but to say that He is one is really making much of an obvious fact. Well, when God's Old Testament people first went out into the neighboring nations with their news about God's concern for them, this was good news, the oneness of God. Many people were sick and tired of the old

religions, and this was one of the splendid things about the message the Jews brought--instead of a whole army of gods they spoke of the one true God.

Today if you have more than one God, you never know where you are. If you divide your heart between different loyalties, if you pin your faith on many gadgets and things, if you believe both in Providence and blind Fate, and in lucky numbers and charms, and in the Almighty Dollar above all--then life for you is distracted. Your heart is torn asunder because you have too many counterfeit gods. Whatever you love, that is your god. And if you love many things--like home and comfort and prestige and job and self--then you are like the ancient pagans with their chaos of "gods many." You mount your gods and ride off in all directions. This causes the split personalities psychiatrists talk about; anything more than one is too many.

The Bible points you to the one and only God, the Center of all creation. If God has gone to the trouble of dying for men--decisively in Christ--then He is indeed worthy of worship and all-out loyalty. He alone is God! No other god--your cash or car or career--has created you. No other God has overcome the problem of your lostness in a world gone wrong. No other god is reliable enough to give solid hope for life beyond the grave. Only the one Creator-God can bring wholeness to your life and keep you from flying to pieces.

No aloof Managing Director, or Peeble Grandfather, or Growling Policeman is God. He is one--worthy of all-out worship!

He is Triune--concerned enough to send His Son to become Man!
 He is almighty--in control of the destiny of men and nations!
 And God is living--at this moment working out His plan for all
 people--including you!

It all comes down to this: the firm fact that God is living and almighty, Triune and one, has life-and-death meaning for you here and now. We could go on and defend the statements about God which we have made, but religion, like good music, needs not defense but rendition. A wrangling controversy in support of the Christian faith would be like members of an orchestra beating folks over the head with violins to prove that music is beautiful. The procedure to prove that music is beautiful is to play it! Music cannot be argued. The procedure to prove that God is real and active and powerful is to believe in Him and follow the Conductor's directions.

At this point the job for you is not to read up about God in a dry-as-dust encyclopedia. Your job now is to move down from the audience into the orchestra--to pick up the instrument of your life and play in tune with God as well as you can, with the music you have already been given. Your job is to step down from the bleachers onto the playing field of real life.

This you can do right now in two ways.

You can participate fully in the worship life of your church. You will not understand everything that is going on at first, but gradually the meaning of worship will come into clearer focus for you. As two lovers get to know each

other by sharing good times and conversation, so you will get to know God as you worship Him in the company of other Christians. At first your worship will be awkward, like riding a bicycle, but if you stay with it and allow others to help, soon worship will be the biggest thing in life for you. And your whole life will be worship.

You can also begin to plan in tune with God and His orchestra-church by serving Him where you are, by helping and loving the people nearest you. You may feel that there is nothing that you can do for God, especially now, as you move out more fully into the Christian life. True, you are not President of the United States or chairman of the board of U. S. Steel, or the Pulitzer Prize winner of the current year. But you are not a feeble nobody. Remember? God is just as concerned about you as He is about anyone else--so concerned, in fact, that He gave His only Son to live out an obedient life for you, die on the cross for you, and shatter death for you by His resurrection.

What God wants, then, is that you simply serve Him now with your given abilities and opportunities. He does not ask a married woman with seven small children to leave husband and family to serve as a medical missionary in Burma. A working-man may not be expected to preach a sermon. But you do have a home which you can make a radiant house of God. You do have a daily job where you can work honestly and heartily, where you can in some small way help God in His creative work of running the universe. You do have neighbors and friends who do not

know Christ and the church--you can talk a few words about Christ to them, even if it does sound awkward and like Christian baby talk. You do have a church which needs your abilities. Within the narrow horizons of your life there is something you are privileged to do for the Almighty God--right now!

So, will you take the time and trouble to. . . .

STOP and ask yourself the life-and-death questions:

"Where am I going?" and "What does God have to do with me?"

LOOK closely at what God has done and is now doing in this world.

AND LISTEN quietly and openly to what He has to say to

you.

4. If the claims of Christ to be God are really true, then the events of His life are probably the most important happenings of all time.

5. "God is living." This means that God is involved with the world and that He is personally concerned about each person.

6. The fact that God is almighty and loving at the same time means that we can do pretty well what we please. God will take care of things. "He will always forgive."

7. "God is Trine." The doctrine of the Trinity resulted from the impact of Christ's life and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Thinking It Through

The statements following are either true or false according to the section you have just read. Respond to these sentences, please, by circling the "T" for true or the "F" for false. If the sentence is false, jot down a few words explaining why.

- T F 1. Christians would be overjoyed if some famous physicist on the Einstein level would prove conclusively that God exists.
- T F 2. Before you can believe in God, you need "faith."
- T F 3. God has disclosed and revealed Himself through His action in human history. It follows, then, that in order to believe in God you have to be a good person and lift yourself up to Him.
- T F 4. If the claims of Christ to be God are really true, then the events of His life are probably the most important happenings of all time.
- T F 5. "God is living." This means that God is involved with the world and that He is personally concerned about each person.
- T F 6. The fact that God is almighty and loving at the same time means that we can do pretty well what we please. God will take care of things. "He will always forgive."
- T F 7. "God is Triune." The doctrine of the Trinity resulted from the impact of Christ's life and the work of the Holy Spirit.

T F 9. Because God is one, He has the right to expect every person to respond to Him.

T F 10. You will have to wait until the end of this course before you can begin to serve God in worship and witness.

The Witness of the Word

Read over the majestic words of Isaiah 40: 12-31. Then to warm up for discussion in class, jot down your replies to the following guide-questions.

1. List the dynamic actions of God described in vv. 12-17.
For example: "weighed the mountains". . .
2. Think about the meaning of v. 17 for the current scene of international unrest.
3. Verses 18-25 describe the folly of rejecting the Creator who commands the stars like a general directing his army. Therefore, to manufacture and trust in an idol--even as powerful as atomic energy--is sheer stupidity. Can you suggest other man-made idols and images which we tend to worship and count on for help?
4. According to vv. 28-31, how does God make use of His power? Is God's power available to the individual?
5. The sentences coming up next are either true or false, according to the Bible text. Indicate your reactions, please.

T F God creates the universe as easily as your grocer performs the simple operation of weighing meat.

T F The God of creation is the God of human history. God has not cruelly abandoned His creation like a baby on a doorstep.

T F If God would allow men to advise Him on human affairs, the world would be better off. For we are closer to the situation than God.

T F Our way of life is hid from God. He does not see
 or especially care what becomes of us.

T F God helps those who help themselves.

Answer: A god whom we trust from which we are to expect all good
 and to which we are to take refuge in all distress,
 we must have a God is nothing else than to trust and
 believe Him from the whole heart. . . .
 These two belong together, faith and God. . . .
 That upon which you set your heart and put your trust
 is properly your god. . . .

No, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he possesses great
 skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor has also
 a god, but not this true and only God.
 This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure,
 and proud people are because of such possessions,
 and how despondent when they no longer exist or are withdrawn.

--The Large Catechism, the First Commandment

The Witness of Your Own Reaction

Toward God in person-to-person worship. . . .

Lord of all power and might,
 who art the Author and Giver of all good things,
 graft in our hearts the love of Thy name,
 increase in us true religion,
 enlighten us with all goodness,
 and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same;
 through Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Lord,
 who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit,
 ever one God, world without end. Amen.

--The Collect (Prayer) for the Sixth Sunday
 after Trinity

The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions

What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God?

Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the whole heart. . . .

These two belong together, faith and God. . . .

That upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god. . . .

So, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he possesses great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor has also a god, but not this true and only God.

This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent when they no longer exist or are withdrawn.

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Lord of all power and might,
 who art the Author and Giver of all good things,
 graft in our hearts the love of Thy name,
 increase in us true religion,
 nourish us with all goodness,
 and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same;
 through Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Lord,
 who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit,
 ever one God, world without end. Amen.

--The Collect (Prayer) for the Sixth Sunday
 after Trinity

CHAPTER VI

PILOT LESSON II: US MEN

And God saw that it was good!

With each dramatic episode of creation (in Genesis I) we have this splendid concluding punctuation--and God saw that it was good! Well then, if the universe was created good and perfect, why do we have obvious imperfection, disharmony, evil, and death in the world today? "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you," asks St. James.

And what causes men to miss the meaning of Jesus Christ? Why do men fail to have a sharp "sense of humor" (previous lesson) when Jesus stands right up and claims, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father"? If this Man was God, why did we men pound Him to a cross? Why?

First of all, in responding to these forthright questions, let us make one thing clear. God cannot be held responsible for the presence of these problems, for evil in the universe! The problem lies on our doorstep. We cannot blame God for the apparent mixed up state of affairs any more than you could blame a watchmaker for damaging your watch when you deliberately drop it under a steamroller.

"Man has always been his own most vexing problem" (Reinhold Niebuhr). "Much there is that is weird," said the Greek Sophocles, "but nothing that is weirder than man." "What is man," Hebrew King David asks of God, "that thou art mindful of him?"

Problem Number One of our century--as in every century--is the problem of man. Roman Catholic Bishop Sheen observes: "We used to study the problem of man (philosophy); now we study man as a problem (psychiatry)."

This problem is all the more acute now because we have unleashed the power to destroy ourselves--and we are afraid that we will. There hovers the grim possibility that all men will be "cremated equal."

But scientists do not fear the "bomb" as much as the men who wield it. Two of our nation's leading atomic scientists-- Drs. Harold Urey and Arthur Compton--have challenged a group of clergymen with these terror-striking words:

Gentlemen, we are frankly frightened. In finally achieving nuclear fission, we have either discovered something that will greatly bless our culture or thoroughly blast it. The threat is not in the explosive powers of the atom. We can control that. What we cannot explain is the explosive power of human nature. . . . The plain fact is that man's skills have outdistanced his morals. His engineering has leaped ahead of his wisdom. We cannot stop or cancel scientific advance. But we can--and must, if this world is to survive--help men to close the terrific gap between man's morals and his cleverness. In God's Name --if you still believe in God--tell us what you can do to help. Otherwise we perish.¹

Sooner or later, as we recognize the awesome potential for good and evil in man, we realize what a baffling piece of equipment man is. He is strangely put together.

Shakespeare gives expression to the puzzling human contradictions in Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

¹Quoted by Wayne Saffen, "Bible Forum Adult Instruction Series," (Oberlin, Ohio: mimeographed), Number II, p. 1.

What a piece of work is man!
 How noble in reason!
 How infinite in faculty!
 in form, in moving, how express and admirable!
 in action how like an angel!
 in mental skill how like a god!
 the beauty of the world!
 and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?
 Man delights not me. . . .²

"Man, the stumbler and finder, goes on, man the dreamer of deep dreams, man the shaper and maker, man the answerer" (Carl Sandburg). But man is also the fighter and the engineer of wholesale slaughter, the deviser of devilish shames and outrages, the violator of human dignity, the dumbfounded, the loveless and hate-filled.

We isolate bacteria and new health and happiness are insured; but somewhere tanks full of death threaten to burst in the madness of bacteriological war. The Wright brothers give us wings and so create a tight-linked world community; but what destruction can also be airborne? Sight and sound leap across continents and seas so truth can be seen and heard as never before; and lies go around the world as well.

"What a puzzle is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things and imbecile earthworm, depository of truth and sink of error and uncertainty, glory and scum of the universe!"³

²Quoted by Alan Richardson, The Gospel and Modern Thought (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 145.

³Ibid., p. 146.

But how do we men come by this glory-scum nature? Is it God's fault? Has God created man as an experimental toy? Is it God who makes men so that one discovers radiotherapy for cancer and another devises radioactive explosives? Is it a devilish God who gives one man the skill to build cathedrals and another the ability to bombard them? Is it God who is amused by all this nonsense? Let's look toward the Bible and see.

The biblical and Christian view of man starts from a frank recognition of our baffling nature. The Christian Church realizes that we are both the glory and the scum of the universe. This may be illustrated by quotations from the Psalms:

What is man that thou art mindful of him,
 And the son of man that thou dost care for him?
 For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
 And dost crown him with glory and honor.
 Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
 thou has put all things under his feet,
 all sheep and oxen,
 and also the beasts of the field,
 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
 whatever passes along the paths of the sea.⁴

This is our status in creation--we are "little lower than God." The great difference between us and the beasts is indicated by our dominion over nature. We men are the crown of God's creation. We have the "image of God" built right into us.

But what is the "image of God" which we hear about so often? One way of interpreting "the image of God" is to think

⁴Psalm 8:1-8.

of a reflection, such as you see in a mirror. When you look at your reflection in a mirror, it is something like you, and yet it is not truly you, even though it can give you a pretty good idea of what you look like. Furthermore, the image is completely dependent upon you. If you move away from the mirror--no more image. It cannot exist independently. This reminds us of an important fact about our relationship with God. We are dependent upon him just as the image in the mirror is dependent upon us. If God were to depart completely from us, we would cease to be, just as the image in the mirror ceases to be if you go into another room.

In addition, because you and I are made in the image of God, we are responsible for responding to Him in active worship and love--in much the same way as your TV screen responds to the electron rays contacting it. But if the screen fails to light when the beams strike it, the tube is out of order. It is dead.

The human fact is that we have not responded to God; we have usually chosen to "declare our independence" from God. And this has worked out disastrously. We have destroyed the image of God. Instead of having full dominion over nature, we are controlled by it; and we succumb to the forces of disease and physical power. We die. Instead of loving God and responding warmly to Him we turn away in sluggish indifference. Instead of loving, honoring, and obeying Him we love, honor, and obey our own selves. We suffer from "I" strain.

As a direct result we are blindly ignorant, you and I, about our purpose on this planet. Really, we do not know just why we are here. We do not know what on earth we are doing. The basic questions about our lives are riddles--why are we born? Where do we journey? What is the nature of that Mystery from whom we come, to whom we go? We are like the hillbilly lad who learned arithmetic but never learned to read. And whenever he came to a road sign he could always tell "how fur" it was to the next town. But he had no idea "where to."

Now education and science can tell us how far we are going and take us there, but they cannot tell "where to." Science can dissect life, but it cannot give purpose to life. We are so ignorant that even our science has proved to be death.

We do not know what a day will bring. The past is lighted by memory, but the future is veiled. We walk with the line of light at our toes; we cannot foresee events even one hour.

This ignorance about the future applies--need it be said? --to death. The eggshell of life on which we walk breaks, and we slip through into silence and darkness! We are not only ignorant but deathly ignorant as well.

Death is a firm fact of life. The fact is plain and daily underscored, and yet we shy away from it. In our creature-comfort culture we think it vulgar to mention the grave and death, decay and the corpse.

Death on the American Plan is practiced in a temple of make-believe known as the Funeral Home. The shrine is constructed, as often as possible, along the lines of a country club and rectory combined. Outside, there are

gracious plantings of evergreens--designed to "create favorable public sentiment." Inside, there is a sumptuous succession of music rooms, chapels, lavatories, store-rooms, and, of course, "slumber rooms." The decoration is subdued but cheerful," which enables many funeral homes, when their business is lagging, to rent space to wedding parties. And there, where the reek of euphemism mingles with the chemical deodorant and the recorded hymn, has been perfected "the new aesthetic of death," a specifically American response to the handwriting on the wall.⁵

But camouflage it as we will, silent death comes to all.

Medical advances have boosted our life expectancy. But the death rate remains the same: one death for every inhabitant. Each of us must face the fact that one day soon our name will appear in an obituary column: Public, John Q., born. . . .

The end of one part of our story is death. However we may feel that after death there comes a kind of release, death is not a natural thing. We will all die. The promise that we shall not die is a false hope; it is a lie, the first lie recorded in the Bible (Genesis 3: 4).

This makes us wonder with Job in the Old Testament, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" There was an Air Force pilot who asked a similar question of his chaplain, "I wish you would tell me, man to man, do we go on living?" He struck a match, blew it out, and added, "Is that what happens to us?" Like every other man the pilot was in a fix, and he knew it. We are mortal; but we know we are mortal (as the animals do not). Somehow we are above death, yet we are powerless to cure our death.

⁵Quoted by Alfred P. Klausler, Christ and Your Job (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 23.

And while we wait around for death, there is trouble and plain human cussedness. There is sin. We can deny this, sugarcoat the fact, call sin "respectable," but we cannot escape the consequences. We are constantly breathing in the poisonous fumes of human perversity. We have tried to convince ourselves that we are "good at heart" and that man "every day in every way was getting better and better." We have said that education and slum clearance and "progress" would wipe out evil, for evil was due to bad environment and lack of knowledge.

However, it has not been the savages who have started the wars in recent years, but the college graduates and leaders of "civilized" countries. Crime is not limited to slum-bred criminals and "underprivileged" juvenile delinquents. It is also practiced by charity organizations in raffles, by sons and daughters of "solid" citizens. Law courts buzz with divorce cases because husbands and wives are "incompatible," as well as adulterous. Politics is wracked with bribery because "servants of the people" have itching palms. Students cheat at school because the end (good grades) justifies the means; and their status-conscious teachers make grades more important than wisdom.

We are behaving badly. Man is on an escalator going down--not up! We are like ships whose ballast has broken loose. When this happens a ship rolls unmanageably, endangering itself and other craft. And when people--you and I--break away from God and lose Him as the steady Center of life, we

move about unmanageably. We damage other people. We are "loose" and lost.

Now could it possibly be that at the core of our problem is a break-away from God? Could it be that we have lost our hold on Him? Perhaps. There are hints. Let's go back and see if we can determine just how and when man's break-away from God occurred.

We have seen how God has imprinted His own handmark on each of us. He has breathed His own Spirit into us, given us His image. There is a "God-shaped blank" in each of us which cannot be filled with anything but God. Most of our trouble comes when we try to fill this blank with Self. When this happens we become misfits--like too-big drawers in a dresser--we "squeak" and cause all kinds of trouble. "God has made us for Himself, and we are restless until we find our rest in Him." The ballast breaks lose, the image of God is shattered, because of man's own pride, not because of God's mishandling of man. When man was first created he was in a position of being a leader, responsible for all creation. God has given man the opportunity to share His creative power. Adam--representative man--could "look God in the face," talk to and with Him. As we would put it, they talked "man to man."

Man knew that God was Creator, more powerful, more wise, but he had no reason to resent this, or to question the fitness of it. God has made man, but God treated man almost as an equal. God cared for him; God loved him--and man felt the same way about God.

Nor was there any "battle of the sexes" between man and woman. They, too, respected and honored each other. There was no need to think of which was "better," or more important. Man had his responsibility; woman had hers. They simply loved each other and were unashamedly happy.

Because there was plenty there was no need to desire anything. What more than they already had could they desire or covet?

Except--to be God?

To be God, be no longer a creature--but God?

Yes. Man listened to the doubt of God's love which Satan whispered to him. "The law of your dependence on God, said the Enemy," is designed to keep you in dependence. If you break it you will be free of God, and then you can deal with Him on equal terms. Why should it be that God should be the one to decide for you what is good and what is evil? You must be in a position to decide that for yourself. Go ahead, be God!"

But how can that which has been created become the Creator?

One of the most famous horror stories of all time is that of the Frankenstein monster. A mad scientist seeks to create life, a man, and ends up with a monster who seeks to destroy the scientist. Such is the story of man's attempt to be god for himself. When man seeks to make himself God, he ends up with a monster on his hands and is then capable of being destroyed.

When man declares his independence, he sets off a chain-reaction of evil. Adam and Eve became restless and anxious, ashamed and guilt-ridden. Instead of responding to God with open love, they attempted to hide and cover up. And a family quarrel developed; both partners blamed each other for the intrusion of the disaster.

Essentially this is sin--rebellion, self-assertion, counting on Self instead of God, filling the God-shaped blank inside us with "I," disregarding the person nearest. Sin is not something which can be localized and confined in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden story is not something which happened long ago and far away as much as it is your true story and my story. The human problem is not that sin originated but that it is original. It is original to human nature and to your present predicament.

Two theological professors were talking; they had met again after several years of separation. In the course of conversation one said, "John, do you now believe in original sin?" To which the reply was, "Yes, I have a son." A second question came, "John, do you believe in the total depravity of human nature?" to which the friend replied, "No, that doctrine is an exaggeration of Martin Luther." Then the questioner commented, "You wait until you have another son."

So even in children the basic problem of the human break-away from God is evident. Listen to Karl Menninger, one of America's pioneer psychiatrists, underscore the fact in describing the infant:

Children between the ages of one and two when put together in a play pen, will bite each other, pull each other's hair, and rob each other's toys, without regard for the other child's unhappiness. They are passing through a stage of development where destruction and aggression play leading parts. If we observe young children at play, we notice that they will destroy their toys, pull off the arms and legs of their dolls, puncture their balls, smash whatever is breakable, and will only mind the result because complete destruction of the toy blocks their play. The more their independence and strength are growing, the more they have to be watched so as not to create too much damage, not to hurt each other or those weaker than themselves. At this time of life destructive and aggressive impulses are still at work in children in a manner in which they only occur in grownup life when they are let loose for purposes of war.⁶

So we see that there is something in all of us--from crib to coffin--which is perverse and "sinful." This does not mean necessarily that every one of us is mean and dirty and low, but rather that each of us tries to play God! We are born with a streak of self-assertion in opposition to God. Something inside us keeps on whispering, "You are the center of creation; you are God. You are the mid-point of the universe."

But just because we are not God, we cannot successfully manage ourselves, any more than a three-year-old can drive an Oldsmobile down Main Street without wrecking it.

This is what we mean by "sin"--traveling through life with the poorly equipped Self in the driver's seat. Sin is a basic dislocation of the whole of life, affecting all levels of living. Jesus, who had deep insight into human nature, put it this way:

⁶Saffen, op. cit., p. 9.

Out of the heart of man comes
 evil thoughts,
 fornication,
 theft,
 murder,
 adultery,
 coveting,
 wickedness,
 deceit,
 envy,
 slander,
 pride,
 foolishness.⁷

By the heart Jesus meant the core of personality, the center of the real you, where your attitudes and motives influence your decisions. Most of the more obvious "Sunday School sins" like cursing or telling off-color jokes are superficial. Getting drunk, for example, is not so much a sin in itself as it is an indication that something had gone wrong at the center of life. It is not sins but sin which is the real cause of our trouble.

Nor is sin a spectator sport in which the other fellow participates and you watch from the sidelines. You cannot get rid of sin yourself, any more than a man can keep his beard from growing. The writer Carlyle has a passage where he imagines that a man is trying to run away from his own shadow; again and again he turns around, and it is still there. That black thing dogging him, on and on--he flings himself wildly away from it--and around again, and it is still there. The man pants, "God, God, I can't get away from it! I can't."

If we are honest we will cry out about our sin, "God, I can't get away from it! Help. My lostness. My lack of love.

⁷Mark 7:21, 22.

My restlessness." With Whittaker Chambers, former editor of Time, we will say, "How silly to suppose that any man by his own effort can ever save himself." These are the words of a man who tried frantically to break with Communism and to escape back into the other world, but to no avail.

Help must come from the outside. We need not a resolution. but a rescue.

This rescue God has provided in Jesus Christ!

It was the physicist Archimedes who said, "Give me somewhere to stand and I can move the world with a lever." But he could never get far enough away to move the world; he was always too close to himself. So if our world of rebellious men is to be moved and rescued, Someone has to come from the outside, Someone who can stand with men and yet move them with the power of God.

Jesus of Nazareth is that Mover.

Left to ourselves, we are trapped and held down by sin and death--as the crew of the submarine Squalus was "sunk" 240 feet into the Atlantic Ocean. The sub's motors were dead. All the sailors could do was to send up flares and a buoy, hoping for a rescue. Their help had to come from above. In silence they waited, until a sister sub discovered the buoy, and a giant diving bell was sent down to haul up several men at a time. Soon all thirty-three men were rescued--from above.

In like manner our rescue from sin and death, our help, comes from above. God sent Jesus Christ to identify Himself with us to pull us up from the murky depths of sin.

But God who is rich in mercy
 out of the great love with which he loved us,
 even when we were dead through our trespasses
 made us alive together with Christ . . .
 and raised us up with him . . .
 by grace you have been saved!⁸

There is no other way.

⁸ Ephesians 2:4-6.

Thinking It Through

The following opinions expressed about our human condition are "open at both ends" for discussion. For the present, however, please circle the "A" if you completely agree with the statement, the "D" if you disagree, the "U" if undecided.

- A U D 1. The fact that one of twenty Americans enters a mental hospital sometime during his life indicates that the study of man's nature is not to be taken lightly.
- A U D 2. Man has generally used his inventions and discoveries for the betterment of civilization.
- A U D 3. When we say that man is the scum of the universe, we mean that we are going to hell and nothing can stop us. We might as well enjoy ourselves--it's later than we think.
- A U D 4. The St. Lawrence Seaway Project, where men have moved millions of earth-tens, is a violation of God's purpose for men. Men should let God's creation alone.
- A U D 5. The fact that you are created in the image of God means that you are capable of responding to God in love and worship, as a TV screen responds to the electron-beam.
- A U D 6. The supreme example of human ignorance was the crucifixion of Jesus as a trouble-raising blasphemer.

- A U D 7. The influences of heredity and environment, of glandular makeup and economic need, are so strong that the individual person cannot be held responsible for sin. For example, it would be unfair of God to count a widow responsible for embezzling money from a bank.
- A U D 8. The doctrine of the total depravity (complete sinfulness) of man seems to be an unnecessary exaggeration of pessimistic churchmen like Martin Luther. To say that even babies are born with sin is going too far.
- A U D 9. We are responsible to God for our actions. Sin is real and involves disastrous consequences, both for the individual and for society.
- A U D 10. Most of the good, respectable people in our communities the Bible would not call "sinners." They lead a good life, attend church, raise their children well, and help in community affairs.
- A U D 11. The best definition of sin would be: "doing bad things" like cursing, or drinking liquor.
- A U D 12. It seems that the harder we try to rescue ourselves from sin, the deeper we sink--like a man struggling in a quicksand pit.
- A U D 13. A good characterization of sin might be: "when one believes nothing, cares for nothing, enjoys nothing, sees no good in anything, lives for

nothing, and doesn't 'die' because he can see nothing worth dying for."

A U D 14. The person who is self-satisfied, who thinks he is "good enough," is really refusing the rescuing work of Jesus Christ.

A U D 15. God's "Operation Rescue" was accomplished as Jesus kept God's commandments in our place. Now God treats us as if we had obeyed the commandments and lets us go free.

1. A church group has set the borderline between sinful and moderate smoking at three packs of cigarettes a day. In the light of v. 9, do you think this evidence a very deep recognition of what sin is? Why?
2. What are the symptoms of the sin-sickness described in verses 11-13?
3. If Paul were speaking today, he might have used the X-ray as an illustration of the work of God's "law." Is there any person who can block the X-rays of God's law?
4. Combining the sickness picture, how has God set men "back on their feet"? (vs. 11-14)

The Witness of the Word

Do you remember a few years ago, before the Salk vaccine was perfected, how parents of young children used to approach the polio season? Every decision to go to the beach or to the circus was made with real worry. Then with the coming of the vaccine, a whole bloc of fear was removed from the minds of millions. The disease was not removed, but its power to kill and cripple was gone. A similar thought is behind the scenes of Romans 2: 9-24. Here St. Paul, like a family doctor, diagnoses "what ails" the human family. Sin is like a powerful plague which overcomes every man, a sickness which shows its ugly symptoms. But God has supplied the vaccine to overcome the dread disease. He has removed the killing and crippling power of sin through Jesus Christ. To understand this, let us work our way into this section of Scripture. . . .

1. A church group has set the borderline between sinful and moderate smoking at three packs of cigarettes a day. In the light of v. 9, do you think this evidences a very deep recognition of what sin is? Why?
2. What are the symptoms of the sin-sickness described in verses 11-18?
3. If Paul were speaking today, he might have used the X-ray as an illustration of the work of God's "law." Is there any person who can block the X-rays of God's law?
4. Continuing the sickness picture, how has God set men "back on their feet"? (vv. 21-24)

5. Summing up, then, which of the following statements best expresses the central thought of this passage?

Some people have sinned, and God has had to rescue them through Christ.

All men--religious and worldly--are sick with sin. But God gives helpless men "health" through faith in Jesus Christ.

Since sin is mostly doing bad things, God overlooks sin for the sake of Jesus.

The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions

Also our churches teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God . . . and that his disease . . . is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.

They condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

--The Augsburg Confession, Article II

Of the cause of sin they teach that although God does create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says: (John 8:44) "When the devil lies, he speaks according to his own nature. . . ."

--The Augsburg Confession, Article XIX

The Witness of Your Own Reaction

Toward God in person-to-Person worship. . . .

Stir up Thy power, O Lord,
and come--
that by Thy protection
we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins
and may be saved by Thy mighty deliverance,
who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

--The Collect for the First Sunday in Advent

CHAPTER VII

PILOT LESSON III: I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST--

WHO CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND WAS INCARNATE

BY THE HOLY GHOST OF THE VIRGIN MARY

AND WAS MADE MAN

"God is in His heaven, all's right with the world."

This is the sweet way a poet has described our world condition
--while under the influence of a sunset's glow.

"It may be a pious wish," the thought comes to mind,
"but anyone with his eyes and ears half open can see that all
is not so well with the world." We shudder at the grimness
of death, and the churches talk about the downdrag and damage
of sin. Suffering and evil appear to be shockingly real; take,
for example, the twenty-six children who plunged to their death
when their school bus careened into a Kentucky river. What
is God doing in His heaven when things like this go on? It
gets to be pretty hard to believe in a good God if He allows
wars, concentration camps, cancer, and crooked business. Why
even any normal, decent human being, if he exercised divine
power for five minutes, would abolish such things at once.
Does God dare to remain aloof and distant above the tangled
affairs of men? Who doesn't God do something. Doesn't God
care whether we sink or swim?"

Now the Christian Church speaks precisely to this point
when it proclaims that all is not really well with the world

--but also that God has not barricaded Himself in heaven. The good news of the Christian faith is that the God of the universe has entered into the human life of this planet--by being born and by living out a man's life in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Now in order to help us see more clearly this problem of God's "keeping His distance" from the earth and the proclamation of the Church in answer to this problem, let us listen to a modern parable. (The parable is adapted from "The Sign of Jonah," a drama written by an East German clergyman in 1948.)

Suppose that at the end of time all people who had ever lived were brought before God to be judged. They were all assembled together on a great plain before God's throne. Strangely, however, the crowd did not submit to the awesome presence of God. No one much cared. Groups clustered here and there, heatedly talking. No one seemed to be greatly disturbed or ashamed for past wrongs.

One of the groups had suffered severe persecution at the hands of men. They were the Jews. Millions of them had died in slave camps--in Egypt, Babylonia, and Germany. Now they made bold to ask, "What can God know of how we have suffered? We really know what it is to be despised and treated with contempt. We were starved and tortured to death. Who is God that He should be our judge?"

Another of the groups was made up of American negroes. They too were questioning God's right to judge them. Look at what He had allowed to happen to them. Their people had

been taken as slaves from their homeland and shipped off to a strange country. They suffered all kinds of indignities at the hands of men who even considered themselves to be God's people.

There were hundreds of groups, each harboring a long-felt grudge against God for the evil and suffering that He had permitted in the world. How fortunate God was to live in heaven where everything was goodness and light, with no weeping and fear and hunger and cruelty. What did He know of what man had been forced to endure in this world which He had made? After all, didn't God lead a protected life?

From each group came a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. A deformed arthritic, a war widow, an untouchable from India, an illegitimate child, a face-scarred citizen of Hiroshima--all came forward. And before the throne of God they consulted each other. What would they do? Was God a fit judge?

Finally their case was brought forth. It was quite simple. Before God would be qualified to be their judge He must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth--as a man!

But because He was God certain safeguards were set up to insure that He would not use His divine power to soften His lot.

Then the sentence was solemnly pronounced:

"Let Him be born a Jew.

Give Him a work so difficult that even His family will think Him out of His mind when He tries to do it. Let Him try to describe what no man has seen or heard. Let Him attempt to bring man back to God. Let Him attempt to bring to men what men do not want--the Life of God.

Let Him be rejected by the same people He has created.

Give Him for friends only those whom all men hold in contempt.

Let Him be betrayed, tried, and convicted by a crooked jury.

Let Him die alone, abandoned by His friends.

Let Him die! Die so that there can be no doubt that He died, and that He was dead. Let His grave be sealed!"

As the sentence was announced, quiet murmurs of approval went up from the great throng.

But then there was a long silence, an uneasy stillness. Gradually those who pronounced judgment stepped back. No one spoke. No one made a sound.

The Son of God--Jesus Christ--stepped forward. He pointed to His hands, scar-marked by the crucifier's spikes.

An awed hush overcame the assemblage. Silence. Every man was riveted to the spot. For then they all realized--

God had already served His sentence!!

The parable is imaginative, but the staggering reality of its central point rings true. For God was incarnate--He was made man in Jesus. This is the bold, jolting, and shocking assertion of the Church. God has served His sentence.

Our firm faith is that Jesus was as divine as God and as human as any man. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. Or else He was a raving lunatic.

"But in what sense is Jesus both God and Man," the question stirs in your mind. "How could that one life be both completely human and completely divine? And what difference does it make?" Now we cannot sound the depths of this awe-filled mystery, but neither dare we playfully skim its surface. If this event actually happened, then we must plunge in and take an honest, under-the-surface look at the New Testament record. All the while we heed the words; "If any man says that he understands the relation of Deity to humanity in Christ, he only makes it clear that he does not understand at all what is meant by an Incarnation" (William Temple). So we approach the incarnation as the shepherds and wise men came to the infant Jesus. They were the simple and the learned--those who knew they knew nothing, and those who knew they did not know everything.

To all who are open on the Godward side, the witness of the New Testament about Jesus Christ seems to say. . . .

The seed of life was placed in a young Jewish virgin named Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. God began to "serve His sentence" in an astounding way. C. S. Lewis aptly points to the crudeness of the marvel --"The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a foetus inside a woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you'd like to become a slug or a crab."

This child grew up in the household of a carpenter in an obscure Palestinian hill town, a pinpoint on the map. He went through the normal stages of development, growing out of his clothes with each passing birthday. He carried the schoolboy's scrolls and evidenced a teen-age kind of independence. And at the age of thirty the Man was baptized by a rough-and-ready country preacher, John the Baptizer.

As a walk-about teacher the Man identified himself completely with people. He never remained detached from the experiences of those among whom He dwelt. He always participated. He conversed with the higher-ups in religion and shared the food of society's riff-raff. His emotions meshed with ours--He felt the joys and the high moments, the pangs of grief and the soul-ache of loneliness.

He shared our blood and sweat and tears. When you come right down to it, it was like one who dwells in a region of perfect health going into a plague center. It was like one who lives in refinement and cleanness going into the animal crudity of some bushland.

The extreme plainness and rugged manhood of Jesus have not often been realized. Pictorially He often wears a sweet and noble smile. Usually in the Sunday School pictures the atmosphere about Him is that of a summer day when pillowy clouds float in the sky blue. But the atmosphere of His life --if we go by the record--was more like that of the fumes and grime and disease of the earth. There is nothing really romantic about being born in a drafty cave because no one in

the donkey-motel next door will give up his bed for you. Nor was it especially pleasant for Him to agonize and die on the executioner's crossed timbers--alone, forsaken by friend and Father.

But under all the humility and rugged human gentleness of Jesus there was a purpose harder than steel, a compelling drive to "go to the Father" for men--by dying on a cross.

And it was for this very reason--the determination to suffer--that many people missed the meaning of this Man. The Jews had been expecting a warring Champion, a mighty Messiah, a national Liberator who would get them out from under Roman rule. So to them the suffering Jesus was a hapless, hopeless disappointment. He did not fit in with their grandiose plans. So they executed Him on the trumped-up charge of blasphemy; for as a mere Man Jesus claimed to be God's Equal.

"I didn't know he was so great. I saw only a little man," said a young woman once engaged to the composer Mozart. She had jilted him because of his stunted physique, but later he was applauded as a music master. Many gave Jesus up, too, as a failure. But some recognized Him for what He really was, God among men, a Man among men. They were led to believe that He was the Son of God, the Bridge-Person between man and God, the Lord God incarnate!

After all when a Man claims to be One with the Father, dares to invite indictment for sin, feeds five thousand people with a couple of chunks of bread and fish, and makes men physically and spiritually whole--then you at least have

to look up from your everyday routine and ask, "Who is He?" And especially when the report goes out of His resurrection from the dead do you begin to wonder, "Maybe His claims were really authentic after all. Maybe He was God focused and functioning among men."

Now if Jesus was really God; then "what on earth was God doing?" Was Jesus bringing some revised rules of order from God? Was He snooping as a one-man investigating committee? Just what does God's personal visit to this planet mean to us in the twentieth century?

Let's look at the incarnation of God in the Man Jesus in terms which are readily manageable. When we were children, we were taught that on Christmas Eve Santa Claus came from the North Pole and left presents for us after trimming the tree. We accepted the word of our parents--there was the lighted tree, the presents--and Santa Claus was the perfect explanation of the facts. But then as our childhood world began to expand, we began to wonder and think and doubt. How could one man visit so many homes in a single night? How could he go down all the chimneys? Was Santa real? Then some older brother told us the disappointing facts. We were shocked at first--something had gone from our world. The fuzzy "Christmas Spirit" which we now heard about could not by any means replace the personal Santa Claus to whom we could write letters.

But then there came the time not very long after when we learned that father and mother were really Santa Claus, that

they bought the toys and trimmed the tree because they loved us. Gradually we accepted this fact that the "Christmas Spirit" was personified in our parents and that through them it could get into us.

This was the course our growth had taken: we moved from trust in a fanciful man in a red suit to an impersonal spirit, then to the personal expression of that spirit--from the figure of Santa Claus to the spirit "incarnate" in our fathers and mothers.

This is the way we can move into a living and vital faith in God adequate for an adult world. When we are young, we hear about God in personal terms. He is the God who is with us in the dark, the God who goes to school with us. He is quite close and real.

But then we grow up and our horizons expand and we begin to think and doubt--how can God care about so many people at one time? How can God possibly care about me? How can the Ruler of the universe possibly be concerned about little me? And perhaps we come to the easy conclusion that God is merely a Life Force, a giant machine like a bulldozer, too distant and too busy to make much difference in our lives.

And then, if we come into contact with the clear Christian Gospel, we begin to see something else--that the God whom we believed in as children and whom we discarded as adults, once upon a time personified Himself in a real human being. We can believe this because we know the Person. He is Jesus. We know what the "Spirit of God" is like then, as we watch Jesus

at work. So we can eventually say, "There is the God that I can know; in Him are gathered together all the forces that are beyond my comprehension. But here they are condensed and reduced to human terms, scaled down, made concrete and relevant to my life and my world. I do not know how one God can hold so many planets in His care, but I know that in Christ God cares for me."

This is why God came in Christ--to make it possible for us to meet Him on our level, to break through to us in the Person of Jesus.

Finally, to nail it down firmly, to drive home the impact of the incarnation, we might think of the story of the king who became a peasant to win the love of a girl. A powerful king, while traveling through his domain, fell in love with a peasant girl. She was not attractive; in fact she was rather homely and plain. But for some strange reason the king deeply loved her. Back in His palace He thought to himself, "If I go to the girl and ask her to marry me she will no doubt consent. But perhaps she will come only out of fear for my pomp and power." It was her sterling-pure love that he wanted.

So the king devised a risky plan. He removed his royal robes, and went to the girl's hometown. He "jumped out of his skin," took a job as a street-sweeper and began patiently to court the girl. Only after winning her love did he tell her that he was the king and that by loving Him she would live by his side in the palace "happily ever after."

In the common Man Jesus, the "little rabbi from Nazareth," God was courting the world of men. This was extremely risky, for men could spurn or accept His love. God purposed to link all men to Himself in the only way possible, the way of the incarnation, the way which eventually led to the cross. In Jesus God slaved and suffered with and for men. He gave His all on the cross. To those who wanted God's love, to those who were alert and open on the Godward side, Jesus gave an eternal companionship.

It was a cosmic love affair going on as the King lived out a peasant's life.

It was God serving His sentence--for our benefit!

1. Jesus associated mostly with good people.
2. Jesus was ignorant of some things because His mental powers were limited by His human personality.
3. Because Jesus was God, His divine powers protected Him from experiencing the bitterness of life. Jesus only "seemed" to be human.
4. The temptations of Jesus described in the New Testament were probably not real temptations. For Jesus they were not too painful and difficult to resist.
5. Jesus can lead groping humanity to God because He Himself was successful in discovering the way. All we have to do is follow His example.
6. If Jesus is God-in-the-flesh, then a religion which politely ignores Him or tones down His extreme claims is an honest and true religion.

Thinking It Through

Please move back mentally over the section just read and respond to the following true-false statements.

- T F 1. A man once said to the aged philosopher Carlyle, "I can only believe in a God who does something." With a cry of pain the old man replied--"He does nothing!" Carlyle was evidently not conscious of God's personification in Christ.
- T F 2. Jesus entered the world through the normal process of conception and birth, except that His conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- T F 3. Jesus associated mostly with good people.
- T F 4. Jesus was ignorant of some things because His mental powers were limited by His human personality.
- T F 5. Because Jesus was God, His divine powers protected Him from experiencing the bitterness of life. Jesus only "seemed" to be human.
- T F 6. The temptations of Jesus described in the New Testament were probably not real temptations. For Jesus they were not too painful and difficult to resist.
- T F 7. Jesus can lead groping humanity to God because He Himself was successful in discovering the Way. All we have to do is follow His example.
- T F 8. If Jesus is God-in-the-flesh, then a religion which politely ignores Him or tones down His extreme claims is an honest and true religion.

T F 9. To win our love, to rescue and reconcile us to Himself, God went all the way to the cross.

T F 10. Jesus Christ was God in the disguise of a man. or 1:20-28.

To guide your grasp of this witness, . . .

1. How did Mary first respond to the angel's message? What response did the angel want? Why?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus is called "the Son of the Most High" and not "a Son of the Most High"?
3. In the collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity we pray:

O God, who declared Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity. . .

What words of the angel to Mary are echoed here in the Collect?

What then was the most powerful thing God ever did? How does God make use of His power?

Now let's take a snapshot look at Philippians 2:6-11. To help you frame the picture in your mind's eye. . .

1. Re-write verse 6 in your own words.
2. Set down the phrase-parallels between verses 6-8 and the words of the Nicene Creed which hymnate this lesson.

<u>2:6-8</u>	<u>N. Creed</u>
one Lord Jesus Christ	one Lord Jesus Christ
came down from heaven	came down from heaven
and was made man	and was made man
What is to be our reaction to the action of God-in-Christ pictured in the dynamic words of this paragraph?	

The Witness of the Word

Let St. Luke, a doctor, speak to you in His gospel--chapter 1:26-38.

To guide your grasp of this witness. . .

1. How did Mary first respond to the angel's message?
What response did the angel want? Why?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus is called "the Son of the Most High" and not "a Son of the Most High"?
3. In the collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity we pray:

O God, who declarest Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity. . .

Which words of the angel to Mary are echoed here in the Collect?

What then was the most powerful thing God ever did?

How does God make use of His power?

Now let's take a snapshot look at Philipians 2:5-11. To help you frame the picture in your mind's eye. . .

1. Re-shape verse 6 in your own words.
2. Jot down the phrase-parallels between verses 6-8 and the words of the Nicene Creed which keynote this lesson.

CreedV. 6-8

one Lord Jesus Christ	=====
came down from heaven	=====
and was made man	=====

3. What is to be our reaction to the action of God-in-Christ pictured in the dynamic words of this paragraph?

The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions

Our churches teach that the Word--that is the Son of God,
 did assume the human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin
 Mary, so that there are two natures--the divine and the human--
 inseparably joined together in one Person, one Christ,
 true God,
 and true Man,
 who was born of the Virgin Mary,
 truly suffered,
 was crucified, dead, and buried. . . .

--The Augsburg Confession, Article III

The Witness of Your Own Reaction

Toward God in person-to-Person worship. . . .

Stir up our hearts, O Lord,
 to make ready the way of Thine only-begotten Son,
 so that by His coming we may be enabled to serve Thee
 with pure minds--
 through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord,
 who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit,
 ever one God,
 world without end. Amen.

--The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent

CHAPTER VIII

PILOT LESSON IV: I BELIEVE IN ONE HOLY CHRISTIAN AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH

"Cannot a person be a Christian by reading his Bible and tuning in to church services on TV without belonging to the church," people ask. "Why can't I be a 'lone ranger' and enjoy my flight of the alone to the Alone?"

Is it really possible for a person to be a lone-wolf Christian, a rugged individualist before God?

Well, can an ace pitcher win a baseball game without eight other men around?

Would a soldier look good in a one-man parade?

Does a finger live if it is amputated from the hand?

Does a four-year-old child fare well if he obeys an impulse to pack up and trot off from home?

No, pitchers generally lose, paraders appear ridiculous, fingers decay, and children die--if they go it alone. And Christians are in danger of spiritual death if they persistently cut themselves off from fellowship with other Christians. A lone-wolf Christian is as self-contradictory as a one-man college.

A Christian is called to be a member of a team. When Christ calls, "Follow me," you step out and march along with the rest of His disciples. You become part of the Body of which Christ is the Head. You are adopted into a family

fellowship. As a called Christian, you belong--to the Church. This calling together by God is not an afterthought or an extra. Fellowship together is essential for the life of the Christian.

God always calls people to team up together. Go back to your childhood days and think of the times when the teams were chosen for a softball game. The captain would say, "I'll pick George and Sam and you and. . . ." You would all step out from line, and then the whole team would go to work to wallop your opponents. Well, God has done something like this in calling out His people to be a kind of team. However, God does not select only the best qualified as a choosy captain might do, and let the rest of the world go by. In fact He calls people not because they are so good, but because He has a task He wants them to accomplish as a team. Perhaps when you were chosen by the softball captain, you helped him pick the rest of the team. God, too, calls special people in order that they might be active and alert in bringing other people to Him.

This is basically the story of the Bible--the story of God's calling a team, a family, a Church. For the beginning of the story of the Church it is not enough to say, "Back to the Reformation," or even "Back to the good old days of the New Testament." We must go back to Abraham, or even back to the Garden of Eden and from there back to God. The Church begins with God and not with men having a bright idea, not with men forming a mutual admiration society.

The story of the Church begins with the account of God's creation of the universe and its different forms of life. Then the human race, telescoped into Adam and Eve, appears on the scene. Soon, because of sin, the story narrows down. The spotlight is beamed on one small fraction of mankind, the Hebrew people, which God singles out for a unique purpose. God calls Abraham, and later Moses, and after a thrilling rescue from slavery, He calls an entire race of people. Climactic in the story is the gathering of these called-out slaves at Mount Sinai where God makes a covenant or personal relationship with His people. God promises them His special care and concern, provided that they respond to His choosing by owning up to His law. The remainder of the Old Testament fills out the record of God's family-church as they live out His covenant.

These people were to be God's special agents in a rebellious world of men; the people of Israel were called to be a radiation center for God's Light and Love. But strange to say --in spite of God's undying love and protection--they failed more often than they succeeded. God's pride-filled people failed so miserably in branching out to other nations that they were cut down to size with the ax of God's judgment. The tree of Israel became a stump; the people faithful to God's covenant withered into a minority remnant. But feeble cries for a Deliverer were heard; a Rescuer was needed badly.

Then at the beginning of the New Testament era the spotlight focuses sharply upon one solitary figure: Christ. He gives a rather "shocking" performance--claiming to be God-in-Man,

insisting on His suffering as the only way of rescue, defying death by bursting from a rock-sealed grave. As He begins His ministry, other figures come into the widening circle of light. These are the disciples. After a few years they spread out into the Roman Empire; and their successors penetrate into practically every part of the world. This outreach is like an ongoing atomic-chain-reaction. God bursts into the world in Christ, and people like you and me keep on contacting others with the Gospel. God keeps on calling--you and you and you, and the rest of us into the Church of Christ until the end of time. Then, with the return of Christ, the fellowship will be permanently closed.

Always, as you have noted, it is God who does the choosing and calling. Christ is the One who heads up the Church. This is why the church is called "holy," and its members are called, quite realistically, "saints" (called-out ones).

This is puzzling, for by no stretch of the imagination could we call ourselves "holy." "The Church is full of shabby Christians and even hypocrites," folks say. But the Church's holiness is not the result of anything men do or do not do. The church is holy because God has called this group of people to share His life in Christ, and He has separated them to be His personal representatives on earth here and now. God makes us saints, or holy ones, just as your team captain picked his team-mates--not necessarily because they were so good--but because he liked them and wanted them to play on his team.

An interruption comes now from a spectator in the balcony: "If God is One, as Christians maintain, and if one Christ heads up the Church, why are there so many sections in the Church? The Church looks separated all right, but not separated for a purpose, just plain split up into denominations." Most likely the objector hails from America, where churches try to sell their wares on every street corner in supermarket style, and where we have "an ecclesiastical zoo which exhibits all sorts of religious wild life, each specimen in its own separate sectarian cage."

Again, this is a man-made botch. We men can obscure the real unity of the Church, which ought to be as close as that between the Son of God and His Father. But the real oneness can never be destroyed, for it is something which, like the Church itself, is given by God, not manufactured by men.

Let's try an illustration. A man from India visits the United States. As his guide and host, you take him on an extensive tour through the forty-eight states. The tour completed, he says, "I have seen the States; now show me the United States of America." At this point you cannot very well take him to Washington and say, "This is the United States of America," because after all, this is but the District of Columbia. Neither the White House nor the National Capitol building is the United States of America. Nor is it the total collection of States! The great nation which is called the United States of America is a kind of "hidden" legal and cultural reality which includes and encompasses all the States but is also

something "more" or "other" than a mere collection of States. And any state, to be a worthy part of the United States of America, must express in its own government and in the ideals and culture of its people that greater governmental reality which is the whole.¹

So the more faithfully church denominations express the reality that Christ alone is the Savior and Lord of the world and that He comes to people through the Word and Sacraments by the work of the Holy Spirit, the more faithful the churches are to the one Church of Jesus Christ. Wherever the good news that Christ alone is the Savior of mankind is taught there the true Church exists. The oneness of the Church is given through the Word and Sacraments. "The Church was one before it was many."

Therefore a group or a person breaks off from the Church at the risk of decay and death. A person or a splinter-group cannot stay alive spiritually if it is severed from Christ, any more than your left big toe can stay alive if it is amputated from your foot. St. Paul stresses this by calling the Church the Body of Christ. The Church belongs to Christ; He is as closely related to the Church as you are attached to your own body. Christ, the Head of the Church, is in heaven; His body is on earth. Christ's Body which is alive on earth is proof that the Head is very much alive in heaven.

It works out like this. You have a thinking head and a working body. Your head decides what your body does next.

¹Alvin N. Rogness, His Increasing Church (Minneapolis: Luther League Press, c.1957), p. 20.

Maybe your head tells you to steer left at the next corner, if you are driving. Then your arms go ahead and swing the steering wheel around. Just so, as the Head of the Church, Christ guides and directs His Body. When the whole Body of Christ listens to the Head, it does the same work Christ's body did when it was on earth--heals the sick in hospitals, proclaims the Gospel, helps the poor and lonely. When parts of the body refuse to hear the Head or fail to co-ordinate, trouble comes. You would be in quite a fix if your arms turned the car right every time you clicked on the left blinker. Only as the whole Body of Christ works together and listens to the Head can it function properly.

Another characteristic New Testament symbol for the Church is the family--the household of God. The figure of the family is homey enough and wide enough to point out the true functions of the Church. A minute ago, you probably agreed that a toddler could not keep himself alive without the embracing love of his family. We shall use the picture of the family to describe how we toddling Christians are kept alive and nourished within the family-fellowship of the Church.

In the first place, there is no family without its pedigree, no Church without its fathers in the faith. Our community of faith has not been gathered as the result of common agreement on a set of religious ideas, as a Rotary Club might be organized by men with like-minded civic principles. You will remember that God is the one who has called us--the same God who called Moses, the family of Israel, and the prophets. We too have

agreed to let our common life be governed by His covenant-Word. To become a Christian, therefore, is to become a Jew. Spiritually we are Semites.

But we also believe that the crown and climax of God's work through our Jewish ancestors was accomplished in Jesus Christ. We believe that what He did was done for us--His illumining this world's darkness, His breaking the deadly circle of self-love, and destroying death.

The Church, therefore, is rooted in what God has done--without our help!

The Church with its pedigree inherits a treasure of family lore and develops its own way of living. The Church has a stored-up heritage of knowledge about God's ways and His will which is simply not accessible to research of any kind. It is the kind of knowledge which is available both to the wise and to the simple. It is secured not through mental striving but by a kind of osmosis, by loyal and humble participation in the Church's family life. Members of the household of God develop a style of living in much the same way as your children pick up a pattern of behavior from your home. This style of life--not determined by a rigid how-to-do-it rulebook--we call "love," self-sacrificing love. Love grows and warms as the Church-family centers its life in Christ--until outsiders say, "Behold, how these Christians love one another." Love--muscular and long-lasting--ought to be the trademark of the household of God.

Every family which cherishes its common life prizes also its family heirlooms, items usually of small store worth, which yet unite the generations and remind the family of its origins. The heirlooms of the Church-family are the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The homely items of water, bread and wine are of slight market worth, but they link the Christian people of each and every generation. These Sacraments remind the Church of its origin--in Jesus Christ and the God who sent Him.

The Sacrament of Baptism declares definitely that this child, this man, is a member of the Church-family before he is a member of any nation, class or race, that he is a member of a community of brothers for whom Christ died. And as long as men think greatly of Christ's death, they will think greatly of this person's life in Christ, and not despise his skin-color or income level.

The Sacrament of Communion, the bread broken and the wine poured out, signals that all men are embraced in the new humanity created by God's love in Christ. Communion is more than a gentle reminder that we belong to the Church not on the condition of perfection or character reference, but on the condition of God's forgiving grace.

The human family also marks its solidarity by festivals of unity in which the common life and common joys are shared and celebrated. We come together for family reunions. And so in the Church we come together in our worship services to strengthen our family ties and to recall our family history.

In song and story we celebrate God's mighty acts in bringing our family into being.

And since the union of men with God is the union of men with each other, we move out toward our faith-brothers at the same time. We are pulled together in love as we worship our common Father. The more we have in common with God the closer we come together on earth. We use the phrase "communion of saints" to express this close meeting of like minds and spirits. People who enter into communion with one another do not merely meet on the outside edges of their lives, like people who talk about the weather together; they meet at the center of their lives, in the deepest things.

The surest way, then, to interlock your life with God and the most practical way to be united with other people--your wife, children, employer, even your enemy--is to enter fully into the spirit of these family festivals of the Church. People get their best food for their bodies who go to their meals regularly and do not depend on the food they might happen to find hanging on trees or lying on the ground. Those whose spirits are best fed are those who use most faithfully the helps that God offers us in His Church. "The family that prays together stays together" rings true both for the human family and the Church-family.

To be honest, we also have to mention that to participate in the worship life of the Church involves you in a risk. "To attend church is about the most dangerous thing anyone of us can possibly do. For this is God's Church and He is here.

This is Christ's Body and He is in the midst. At any moment the sword of His Spirit may descend upon us to pierce the armor of our pride and self-righteousness and sin and leave us naked and defenseless. At any hour His voice may sound in our hearts and electrify us into action, sending us forth to challenge the world and do battle with the principalities and powers which seek to rule it."² A family, as strong and as solid as it might think itself to be, dare never become lulled to sleep around the fireplace. There comes a time when the family members must leave the warmth and coziness of the home and go out!

This brings us to the fifth function of the Church-- outreach. Your family invites the neighbors and friends in to share hospitality and recreation. The Church-family too has a command to go out. In fact the Church is far more a battle-station than a retreat-sanctuary. The Church is not a comfortable club for clean-handed people who have passed a post-graduate course in piety. Its members ought to be plumbers and executives, fisherman and tax collectors, paupers and millionaires, monks, politicians--each at his own battle station in the world, reaching out with the Good News of Christ.

The calling action of God must go on. The chain reaction dare not be absorbed in the lead walls of indifference. God wants you as a member of His Church-team to be busy calling

² Charles T. Sardeson, Rediscovering the Words of Faith (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 71.

others for Captain Christ, to reach out with words so that others might share your family fellowship. This you can do, as poorly as you think yourself equipped; for the command of Christ to "go" is backed up with the promise of His presence; "I am with you always." You cannot be a silent Christian and fail to speak up for Christ any more than a lover can be mum about his beloved. You too can gossip the Gospel.

The Church reaches out by getting mixed up in politics, community development, charitable work, and relief of people in physical need. "But religion and politics do not mix," heckles the voice from the balcony. Maybe some religions do not mix with politics, and again some "religions" (like Communism) become purely political. But the religion of Jesus Christ does exert a healthy, "meddling" influence in community life. Jesus had some potent words to say about the Church as a permeating, yeast-like influence in the loaf of society and the responsibility of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's. Christ challenges lay-people to work on school boards, help administer housing plans, run for public office, "needle" Congressmen, and pay taxes cheerfully.

Every Church-member ought to be awake to the world-wide community to which he belongs and to the world-wide mission of the Body of Christ. When one of Napoleon's generals in the Egyptian campaign scoffed at a certain plan of procedure as being "mere imagination," the Little Corporal flashed back--"Imagination, yes, but imagination rules the world! Membership in the Body of Christ demands the use of imagination;

it insists that we summon up in the eye of the mind the far-flung fellowship which confesses the Name of all Names. We need to be praying for the desperate, hungry, uprooted Chinese Christian who only lately learned the Name that can set this world on fire, the converted Hindu Untouchable who has found a new way of life and a new hope in Christ. We need the global point of view, a picture of the Church at least as big as a Cinerama screen. The old-time 30° screen of the theater is gone for good. And a person's narrow perspective on the world goes out for good when Christ comes in.

To come back home once more, we can capsule what we have said by sending you an invitation to participate in the life of the one, holy Christian Church. . . .

The Triune God--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

cordially invites you

to become an adopted member of the Church-family
not because you are so good, but because Christ is good to you,
and to participate fully in all the privileges of this family--

to share the family pedigree

to inherit the family lore and to live in love

to treasure the family heirlooms with the rest of the family

to join in the reunions and to share the festivals of joy

to share in the privilege of speaking the Gospel of Christ to the world.

We invite you to become One with Us.

R.S.V.P. (actively, intelligently, wholeheartedly)

viewing people from all periods of history. You asked questions about the Church of Christ and you received the following responses. Place a check-mark after the replies which reveal that the person speaking understands what the Church is really like.

1. "Why should I be so concerned about belonging to the Church, when I can walk in my garden alone, and Christ will walk with me, and talk with me, and tell me I am His son?"
2. "I regret that people call themselves after my name. We are not imitations, but Christians. I am a wretched creature; Christ alone is our Lord and Leader."
3. "That's right, I am a Jew and proud of it. God has given us His Law and we do a good job of obeying it. The last week we made two converts in Sicily. Of course we do have a problem with all these sassy Roman tax collectors around here. They even make a good Jew want to sneeze."
4. "Why don't the churches all get together and form a big organization like General Motors--where insurance is good that way, more money?"
5. "Christians are people who 'save their sabbath days during the week and then go to church once in a while to pray for a crop failure.' Most church members I know are hypocrites. It's as good as any of them."

Thinking It Through

Suppose that you were a man-on-the-street reporter interviewing people from all periods of history. You asked questions about the Church of Christ and you received the following responses. Place a check-mark after the replies which reveal that the person speaking understands what the Church is really like.

1. "Why should I be so concerned about belonging to the Church, when I can walk in my garden alone, and Christ will walk with me, and talk with me, and tell me I am His own?"
2. "I regret that people call themselves after my name. We are not Lutherans, but Christians. I am a wretched creature; Christ alone is our Lord and Leader."
3. "That's right, I am a Jew and proud of it. God has given us His Law and we do a good job of obeying it. Why last week we made two converts in Sicily. Of course we do have a problem with all these scummy Roman tax collectors around here. They even make a good Jew want to swear."
4. "Why don't the churches all get together and form a big organization like General Motors--more influence for good that way, more money?"
5. "Christians are people who 'sow their wild oats during the week and then go to church once in a while to pray for a crop failure.' Most church members I know are hypocrites. I'm as good as any of them."

6. "Look at how those Christians love one another."
7. "When I do go to church on Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, I never get much out of the service."
8. "Our family was never really what you call 'happy' until we worshipped together in church every Sunday and started family devotions in our home."
9. "Each man's religion is His own business. My boss goes to the Presbyterian Church. I'm a Lutheran. We're all going to the same place anyway. Why talk about it?"
10. "Why yes, I am glad to be part of the Church. We might not look too fancy in what we do, but we are trying to help people all over the world with the Gospel of Christ. It is a privilege to work for Him."

God's willing action
in Christ, the nation of
Israel, and the Church
through the ages

V. 1, 8-12

active love

V. 1-3, 13-18

justice
Holy Communion

V. 4

church worship
The Lord's Supper

V. 13-18

world-wide help for
all people in need,
strongest witness for
Christ

V. 18

The Witness of the Word

In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul likens the Church of Christ to the human body. As the Body of Christ, the Church has nearly the same function as the Church-family. The left column below, like a home movie in slow motion, pictures the marks of an average family. The middle column briefly points out the corresponding traits of the Church-family. The third column shifts to the picture of the Body-of-Christ and asks you to sketch (in your own words) the parallel characteristics of the Body of Christ as described in Ephesians 4:1-16.

<u>FAMILY</u>	<u>CHURCH-FAMILY</u>	<u>BODY OF CHRIST</u>
pedigree	God's calling action in Christ, the nation of Israel, and the Church through the ages	V. 1, 4-12
style of living	active love	V. 1-3, 13-16
treasured heirlooms	Baptism Holy Communion	V. 4
festivals	Common worship The Lord's Supper	V. 15-16
loving outreach	world-wide help for all people in need, strenuous witness for Christ	V. 16

The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions

Our churches teach that one holy Church is to continue forever.
 The Church is the congregation of saints,
 in which the Gospel is rightly taught,
 and the Sacraments are rightly administered.
 And to the true unity of the Church
 it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel
 and the administration of the Sacraments.
 Nor is it necessary that human traditions,
 that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men,
 should be everywhere alike.
 As Paul says: "One faith, one Baptism,
 one God and Father of us all. . . ."

--The Augsburg Confession, Article VII

The Witness of Your Own Reaction

Toward God in person-to-person worship. . . .

Almighty God,
 graciously behold this Thy family,
 for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed
 and given up into the hands of wicked men
 and to suffer death upon the cross--
 through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord,
 who livest and reignest with Thee and the holy Spirit,
 ever one God, world without end. Amen.

--The Collect for Good Friday

CHAPTER IX

PILOT LESSON V: KISSING AND COMMUNION

"I kiss my daughter in order to love her, as well as because I love her." A Christian thinker, Baron von Hügel, once made this remark in commenting on the use of the sacraments in Christianity. We might well begin our approach to the mystery of Holy Communion by considering what these words mean.

A father kisses his daughter "because" he loves her. His love needs a form of expression, a way of showing itself, of making itself felt. A kiss can make love actual and real and touchable.

A parent also kisses his child "in order to" love her. This, perhaps, is not so obviously true. Kissing can express and channel love, but can it create love? Surely not. What Hügel means is not that the kiss creates more love in himself. He is saying rather that the love-relationship between himself and his daughter will grow with these outward expressions of love--kisses. A kiss is a means by which a love-relationship grows stronger, deepens, and warms.

Anyone who has been in love knows that love thrives on actions, words, gifts, the contact of lips. "Love is as communicative as fire, as busy and as active." Love lives by expression. If you could measure love with a meter, like water or electricity, you would say that there is more of it after your act of love than before. Love between two people glows

more brightly through the give-and-take of endearing words, roses, chocolates, kisses, or a diamond ring.

With God and us it is much the same way. Our mutual love-relationship lives by expression. God loves us with words and things which we can see and hear and touch. God gives us His Son Jesus to hear and see, His Word about this Son to read, and then to make firm this relationship with us He gives the tangible sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. As a father kisses his daughter, God contacts us sacramentally in order to love us, as well as because He loves us.

Holy Communion is one vital way by which God channels His forgiving love. It is a form of expression for His great grace in Christ. God gives us this sacrament "in order to" love us. Like a kiss between father and child, communion does not create love in God. This is impossible, for God has already demonstrated His measureless love--even for His enemies--in the crucifixion of His own Son. It is our own personal man-to-God relationship which grows and deepens as we receive the outward expression of God's love in this sacrament.

Like kissing with its many shades of meaning, and a diamond with its sparkling facets, the Sacrament of the Altar is a "many-splendored thing." In communion there is a lot more than meets the eye. Like a CARE package which contains a large quantity of concentrated food and which establishes a relationship of love and gratitude between distant peoples, the bread and wine of communion contain concentrated spiritual food and unite us with God in thankfulness.

Now let us unwrap this CARE package of communion. Let us look more closely at the gleaming facets of this costly gift, this "crystallization" of God's love.

But how shall we proceed? We cannot pick apart this mystery by using our scientifically trained minds or by examining the yeastless bread and fermented wine of communion in a laboratory. We cannot demand a scientific explanation of Holy Communion any more than we can properly analyze love or the value of a diamond ring.

God can take any one of His created elements and use it sacramentally, and because we are not God, we cannot begin to grasp just how He goes about it. Take, for example, the rainbow which in the Genesis story was given to Noah and his relatives as a sign and pledge of the faithfulness of God. We can almost hear a Ph. D. investigator of the twentieth century saying, "Now we know the rainbow is a natural phenomenon of the polarization of light by moisture in the air; how can it prove anything about God?"

Speaking to this point, John Calvin, a sixteenth-century theologian and the "founder" of the Presbyterian Church, said, "If any dabbler in philosophy, in order to deride the simplicity of our faith, contends that such a variety of colors is the natural result of the refraction of the solar rays on an opposite cloud, we must immediately acknowledge it; but at the same time we will deride his stupidity in not acknowledging God as the Lord and Governor of Nature, who uses all the elements according to His will for the promotion of His own

glory. If he had impressed similar characters on the sun, on the stars, on the earth, and on stones, they would all have been sacraments to us. Shall not God be able to mark His creatures with His Word that they may become sacraments, though before they were mere elements?"¹

So a good starting place for the analysis of this sacrament is not in a laboratory. It might be better to come to the place where spiritual "sight" is more easily attained-- in a divine worship service. We might take a slow motion look at the words and the dramatic action of the Lutheran Communion liturgy.

The pastor, whom we call the "celebrant," speaks:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread;
and when He had given thanks,
He broke it and gave it to His disciples,
saying, "Take, eat.
This is my body--which is given for you.
This do in remembrance of me."

After the same manner He took the cup
when He had supped,
and when He had given thanks,
He gave it to them,
saying, "Drink ye all of it;
this cup is the New Testament (Covenant) in my blood,
which is shed for you for the remission of sins.
This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

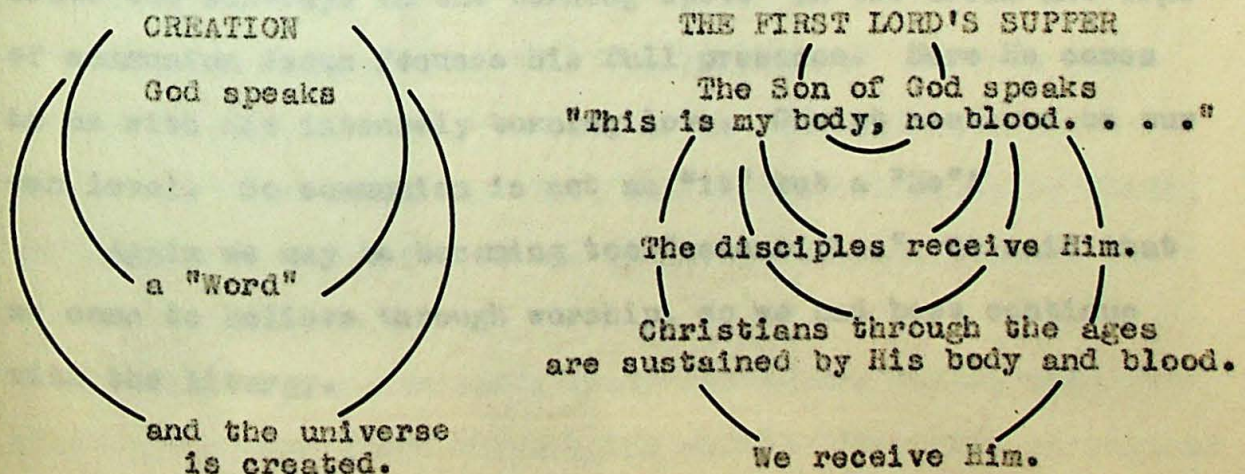
Here then in communion we are keeping a command, an order from our Lord Jesus Christ. No other order in history has been so universally obeyed by so many people. The Communion Service at your church next Sunday is a direct descendant of the Last

¹Quoted by Donald M. Baillie, The Theology of the Sacraments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1957), p. 45.

Supper of Jesus with His disciples. With one or two exceptions the Church has obeyed Christ's command to "do this in remembrance of Him." Communion, as celebrated by the Church, is plainly not an automatic, hocus-pocus tradition, even though at times it has been "magically" observed. It is a throbbing part of the Church's life, as much a part of the Church's life as your family meals are part of your family life. The Head of the Church, Christ Himself instituted this particular sacrament; this is no bright idea of mere men.

If we really believe that God was in Christ--focused and functioning--if we believe that God created the universe through a dynamic "Word," it is not too hard to believe that the Son of God could promise His presence (His body and blood) through the speaking of a creative word. So we believe that the bread and wine which we receive are actually the body and blood of Christ. This is not crude cannibalism, but faith in the word of the living Christ. We have His word for it.

This diagram might pull your understanding of communion into sharper focus:



What does it mean that Jesus Christ is really present in Holy Communion? As the ascended Christ He "fills the universe," does He not? We say that God is present everywhere. And yet we also say that God is with those who trust and obey Him in a way in which He is not with others. We say God is with them. And we say that God's presence is with us more at some times than at others. We speak of entering into His presence in worship. The New Testament says that wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is there in the midst of them. And then in apparently a further sense we speak of the real Presence in the sacrament. What does it all mean?

The illustration of the magnifying glass and the sunlight, which we used in speaking of Jesus the Lord, can let some light through on this subject also. As sunlight beams down everywhere on a bright day, so the resurrected Jesus, "sitting at God's right hand" (which means everywhere), is closer to you than your breath.

However, He has chosen to focus His presence in His Word and in His sacraments. With the magnifying glass you concentrate the sun-rays in one burning spot. In the bread and wine of communion Jesus focuses His full presence. Here He comes to us with His intensely burning love. Christ meets us on our own level. So communion is not an "it" but a "He"!

Again we may be becoming too "scientific." We said that we come to believe through worship, so we had best continue with the liturgy.

Following the "Words of Institution," the family of God sings the Agnus Dei, before coming to the altar. Before family meals we wash our hands. At this point the congregation asks Christ, the Lamb of God, to give cleanness and wholeness. We pray, "Lord, have mercy upon us, remove the grime of our guilt."

God answers this prayer by giving us the touchable and "tastable" bread and wine as a guarantee of His promise to forgive--for the sake of Jesus. To attempt an illustration, let us say that a friend promises you fifty dollars, and you are confident of that promise. But he also insists on giving you a promissary note although you reassure him that his word is enough. Using paper and ink, he incorporates his word in these visible elements. He does not thereby promise you another fifty dollars or a different fifty dollars. In the note you have the same fifty dollars in new or non-verbal form--a visible form. This makes the promise more sure, solid, and definite. This parallel to communion is clear. In communion God makes His promise of forgiveness more sure and solid and visible.

We are ready now for the "Distribution." At this high moment every communicant receives the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine, not only spiritually by faith, but also with the mouth of the body. To us Christ comes in His fullness!

Before the communicants leave the Lord's Table, the celebrant speaks these encouraging words: "May this strengthen

and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting."

This is a reminder that communion gives strength and spiritual vigor. The sacrament is designed to keep us going spiritually, to sustain us on our march, while we wait for our Lord to come again. A visit of a general to the front-lines will give increased courage to the battle-weary soldiers. So here the Captain of our salvation comes to us to bolster us for our present fight against Satan, evil, and our own destructive pride.

Being a faithful, loving Christian is a super-human task, and we need superhuman stamina for this job. Often we fail and falter. To put it clumsily, God's grace is always "with us" but we are not always "with it." We fail and fall. So the time comes when we need replenishment and renewal and refreshment. We commune with Christ.

When we come to Holy Communion, we do not receive Christ for the first time or all over again, but we receive, as it were, a fresh infusion of His life. The analogy of a blood transfusion is as apt as any analogy can be. When you receive a transfusion, the blood that is already in you is nourished and renewed by the blood you receive from without. In this special contact with Christ in communion we receive Him--His own personality powerful and working within our personalities. The vigor of His life becomes ours. Communion, then, is high-calorie food.

After the distribution of the bread and wine we recognize that this "salvation" which we have taken into our lives is

"for all people." Christ will not have us keeping Him to ourselves like children selfishly hugging their toys. In fact, we simply cannot keep Him for our own private property. As it is the nature of light to break out and shine everywhere, so the Light of the world goes out to all men. When the sunlight focused through the magnifying glass strikes the paper, the paper catches fire and burns itself up. When the Christ focused in communion comes to us, He intends that we catch fire and burn ourselves up for Him by warming the lives of other people with His love. Christ intends that we be active in a spiritual chain-reaction. His power strikes through to the center of our personalities--through communion especially--and He wants us to move out then and get this Power into the lives of people around us.

So we pray that God "would strengthen us . . . in fervent love toward one another." Christians are bound and linked to each other at the Lord's Altar, for communion is a fellowship meal of the deepest and closest kind. Only as people are at one with God through Christ can they really be at one with each other. The shortest distance between two people is through Jesus. So we come together in communion to come together--period!

King Arthur and his knights always came together for a meal before a risky mission. They looked at the king and at each other. And they received mutual strength all around. Now we are not quite like gallant Christian knights, but we do have to go through some rough-and-tumble battles in life. We can

be victorious in these battles only as we stay together in Christ, as we come together at the King's table, as we love each other with fervently burning love.

All of which brings us back to where we started--to the discussion of love and communion and kissing. We have looked at the shiny gift of love which God gives to us in communion; we have caught the glint of its sparkling facets.

There is only one proper thing left for us to do--as there is only one thing a loved one ought to do when love is offered--accept with gratitude God's concentrated gift of love in communion.

Jesus said, "This do. . . ." It is up to us to say, "We do. . . ."

Thinking It Through

Please circle the "T" if the statement holds true, "F" if false.

- T F 1. As a kiss may be a token of love and forgiveness, so the physical presence of Christ in communion assures the believer of God's forgiveness and love.
- T F 2. As God once shared His life with us in the body of a Jewish carpenter-teacher, so He is able to share Himself with us now in the bread and wine of communion.
- T F 3. Before He died, Houdini promised his friends that he would contact them at regular intervals after his death. But nothing was heard. Jesus Christ promised His presence to His followers in Holy Communion. Like Houdini, He cannot keep His promise because He is dead and gone, or at least invisible.
- T F 4. The frequency of our communing should depend on how we feel about it--just as a sick man should see a doctor only when he is in the mood.
- T F 5. On Memorial Day we recall the supreme sacrifice of our war dead--military men who have laid down their lives for our freedom. It is good that we remember Christ in Holy Communion by recalling His Supreme Sacrifice for our freedom from death.
- T F 6. As medicine is for the ill, communion is for sinners.

- T F 7. Because God's forgiveness is free--for the sake of Christ--we can approach communion with a "bargain basement" attitude. "He'll always forgive," as the song goes.
- T F 8. The Lord's Supper might become meaningless to Christians who partake of it too frequently. An overdose of anything is dangerous.
- T F 9. Francis Scott Key was encouraged in the thick of battle by the sight of the American flag, and he wrote the "Star Spangled Banner." Later someone described this flag--now in the Smithsonian Institute:

It's a moth-eaten flag, and a worm-eaten pole;
 It doesn't look likely to stir a man's soul.
 But it's the deeds that were done 'neath that
 moth-eaten rag
 When the pole was a staff, and the rag was a flag.

Just so, the little hunk of bread and sip of wine in the Lord's Supper can "stir our souls" and set us singing--because of the deeds done by Jesus Christ, who died on a worm-eaten cross.

- T F 10. When communing, a Christian should think of all the people he knows who should not be communing with him because of their out-and-out sins.

(Note: the Bible study and confessional sections for this unit would be replaced by an adaptation of Luther's "Christian Questions and Answers for Those Who Intend to Go to the Sacrament," printed in the Small Catechism.)

The Witness of Your Own Reaction

Toward God in person-to-Person worship. . . .

Almighty and everlasting God,
give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity;
and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise,
make us to love that which Thou dost command;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost,
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

--The Collect for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

APPENDIX A

Sample Witness by a Living Lutheran: I Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ

When I assert that Jesus Christ is Lord I am echoing the most ancient and the most modern of Christian creeds. The primitive church said: kyrios Christos, Christ is Lord. The World Council of Churches in our day has as a touchstone of Christian minimums the affirmation that Jesus Christ is God and Savior. But to assert, "I believe in one Lord," Jesus Christ, I am going further; I am taking the answer from my head and making it one of my heart. Now I am committed. Now there dare be no other Lord of my life but one--otherwise I am also a liar.

I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST

I assert this despite the evidence of my own life which constantly sees my honoring other lords--others who have power and authority over my life. You may have different names for your clay-footed tin-gods, but we share a commitment to whatever seems to satisfy our hungers and cravings here and now; the Lord Jesus Christ--an historical person of long ago, does not seem to.

I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST

I assert this despite the evidence of my own calculations. For when I really stop to think things through, I admit that I would have done things differently. I could have built a

better case for lordship for almost anyone else--certainly not for the one who "took the form of a servant," a carpenter, in an obscure time and an out of the way place, a man in many ways a failure, one who dies in apparent defeat. He shall be my Lord?

I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST

It does not come easy, at first. If someone says it does I must out of my own experience question whether he is telling the truth; or is he cut of a different fabric than am I and my fellows? Have I ever believed this if I have never doubted it?

I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST

I confess this, for I can confess nothing else despite these evidences. I have thought about it in crowds at noon and alone in illness at three a.m.; on mountaintops and in classrooms, at bedtimes and while preaching it as true. I have wondered whether I should "put all my eggs in one basket." One Lord? My Lord? Until I notice the presumption of the very question itself! Now, as always, to whom shall I go? The God who both veils and reveals Himself in Christ refutes whatever else I hold dear. My hopes, my ethical decisions, my concerns are all wrapped up in this sufferer on his cross who shows himself to me in resurrected triumph. The vision of the eye of faith is itself a gift. The quicksand crystallizes. It does become the rock on which all is built. Pascal had it right: The heart has its reasons . . .

--Martin E. Marty, Ph. D., Pastor of The Lutheran

Church of the Holy Spirit, Elk Grove Village, Illinois

APPENDIX B

Sample Witness by a Living Lutheran:

What Holy Communion Means to Me

I don't understand Holy Communion.

How can the eating of a small wafer and the drinking of a sip of the fruit of the vine have any meaning? By every standard of human logic, it can't.

But Holy Communion doesn't depend on man's logic or on an explanation of it.

Because the Holy Spirit has given me the faith to accept the simple words Christ used when He instituted Holy Communion, I believe that in Holy Communion the bread is Christ's body and the wine is Christ's blood. No other words of explanation are necessary, because no other words could add meaning to the mystery of Holy Communion which I accept by faith.

Because I receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, the sacrament is for me a faith-strengthening agent, a visible evidence of God's love for me.

Holy Communion is for me a seal, a guarantee that the written and spoken Word which I have been privileged to read and hear during the times between Holy Communion is backed by the same sure promises of God as He evidenced when He sent His son to be sacrificed for me.

Finally, Holy Communion is for me a remembrance of that sacrifice. It reminds me that I nailed Jesus to the cross;

that the guilt of the sins I am still committing is washed away because of His atonement; that, just as Jesus rose again on Easter, I should, here and now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, rise to a newness of life.

--Elmer Kraemer, Editor of The Lutheran Layman

- Wright, Charles. THE LUTHERAN LAYMAN. New York: Doubleday, 1957.
- A practical guide for gaining insight into the real-life situation - leader contact areas for the Gospel.
- Wright, Elmer. Preparing for Church Membership. A practical guide for the pastor and church members. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950.
- A practical guide for gaining insight into the real-life situation - leader contact areas for the Gospel.
- Wright, Elmer. How to Prepare for Church Membership. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957.
- A penetrating study for the stretching of theological awareness - sharpens the feet of biblical theology for the layman.
- Wright, Elmer. THE LUTHERAN LAYMAN. New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957.
- A skillfully constructed book by a Presbyterian pastor - discusses the Apostle's Creed with engaging literary style.
- Wright, Elmer. The Gospel and Church Membership. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- A sturdy, systematic series of essays which speak to the educated modern - come to grips with the current questions of the scientifically oriented man.
- Wright, Elmer. LIVING THE GOSPEL. New York: Doubleday, 1957.
- Influenced by the Apostle's Creed - clear and concise presentation of basic Christian doctrine for the educated and intellectually alert layman.

APPENDIX C

An Annotated List of Basic Books for Use by the Instructor
in Preparation for Guiding the Confirmation Class

Ferris, Theodore Parker. When I Became a Man. New York:
Oxford University Press, 1957.

Vigorous sermonic essays which aptly contact and speak to the basic problems of living - Extremely sympathetic to the key questions which disturb the honest religious seeker.

Baker, Milton Albert. Preparing for Church Membership, a Pastor's Guide for Biblical and Catechetical Studies. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956.

A helpful guide for gaining insight into the confirmand's life situation - Locates contact areas for the Gospel.

Heineken, Martin J. Basic Christian Teachings. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949.

A penetrating study for the stretching of theological awareness - Sharpens the foci of Lutheran theology for the layman.

Hunter, William M. God and You. Westwood, New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957.

A skillfully constructed book by a Presbyterian pastor - Discusses the Apostles' Creed with engaging literary style.

Richardson, Alan. The Gospel and Modern Thought. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.

A sturdy, systematic series of essays which speak to the educated modern - Comes to grips with the earnest questions of the scientifically orientated man.

Simcox, Carroll E. Living the Creed. New York: Morehouse-Gorham, 1950.

Structured by the Apostles' Creed - Clear and concise presentations of basic Christian doctrines for the educated and intellectually alert inquirer.

APPENDIX D

An Annotated List of Basic Books for Inclusion in the Parish
Library for the Confirmand's Use

Beck, Victor Emanuel. Why I Am a Lutheran. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1956.

A journalist's non-apologetic survey of various aspects of Lutheran "culture"--history, doctrinal emphases, educational principles, liturgy--Articles by leading Lutherans on the subject: "Why I Am a Lutheran."

Brown, Robert McAfee. The Bible Speaks to You. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.

A sparkling and interest-catching book written expressly for teenagers, but so well written that any adult would profit by reading it - The theology is vibrantly Christian with a slight Presbyterian slant.

Gockel, Herman. The Cross and the Common Man. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.

A popular, systematic apologetic for the central Christian Gospel - Moves in close to the needs and condition of the "average" confirmand.

Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953.

Adroit apologetic for the full Christian faith - Clears the underbrush for a forceful validation of the Church's belief.

Phillips, J. B. Your God Is Too Small. New York: Macmillan Company, 1954.

A careful analysis of a number of inadequate conceptions of God which narrows the possibilities for theistic belief to the Christian God - A constructive book which penetrates the general religiosity of the times.

Traver, Amos John. A Lutheran Handbook. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956.

Treats the central Lutheran doctrines, Lutheran history and worship - Short and compact.

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- Koehneke, Martin L. God and I. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956.
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- Rest, Karl H. A. Put Your Faith to Work. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956.
- Richardson, Alan. The Gospel and Modern Thought. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- Rogness, Alvin N. His Increasing Church. Minneapolis: Luther League Press, 1957.
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- Sardeson, Charles T. Rediscovering the Words of Faith. New York: Abingdon Press, 1956.
- Sayers, Dorothy. Creed or Chaos. London: Methuen and Company, 1954.
- Shoemaker, Samuel M. The Experiment of Faith. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.
- Smart, James D. The Teaching Ministry of the Church. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954.
- Theiss, Herman C. "Life With God." San Leandro, California: St. Peter's Lutheran Church (mimeographed).