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A Comprehensive Survey of the Problems of Old Age, Past and Present Solutions Offered for Them, and the Obligation of the Church with Regard to Them

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A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE PROBLEMS OF
OLD AGE, PAST AND PRESENT SOLUTIONS OFFERED
FOR THEM, AND THE OBLIGATION OF THE CHURCH
WITH REGARD TO THEM

A thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
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Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Then a man was old. There is a carry-over of this idea in many universities, where the retirement of professors is set at that age. More recently the retirement age was set at sixty-five. Most institutions for the care of the aged have set their age limit at sixty-five. The Social Security Act of 1935 specified sixty-five.⁵ Hence the

⁵Dr. Stanley Hall, *Renascence: The Last Half of Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), p. 10.

⁶Jane N. Andrews and Rudolph L. Nichols, *Scientific Problems of Modern Society* (New York: The World Trade Company, 1937), p. 300 f.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When is a person old? Age is a relative thing. An Eskimo is old at fifty. Few natives of Central Africa live to be older than forty-five.¹ So-called "industrial old age" is different from chronological old age. And it changes from generation to generation in meaning. Some insects live a few hours. Several animals live one hundred and two hundred years. A tree may live to be a thousand.

Old age has become somewhat standardized in the United States by a series of events and movements. Originally seventy was considered the retirement age. Then a man was old. There is a carry-over of this idea in many universities, where the retirement of professors is set at that age. More recently the retirement age was set at sixty-five. Most institutions for the care of the aged have set their age limit at sixty-five. The Social Security Act of 1935 specified sixty-five.² Hence the

¹G. Stanley Hall, Senescence The Last Half of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), p. 42.

²John N. Andrews and Rudolph K. Michels, Economic Problems of Modern Society (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1937), p. 550 f.

general feeling in the United States is that at sixty-five a man is entering upon old age.

Webster defines the word "old" in the following manner: "Having existed long; advanced far in years or life; having lost the vigor of youth."³ The last phrase is probably the most accurate. A man usually is as old as he feels. For all practical purposes, however, the age of sixty-five can be taken as an arbitrary figure to mark the beginning of old age. This thesis will operate on that principle, not so much with the understanding that people are old at sixty-five; in most cases this is not true; but at that age, the individual first becomes eligible for the gifts, benefits and aids which are reserved by government and church for the aged.

Old age is not as "crabbed" as it is usually pictured. Many men were outstanding at a very advanced age. To mention only a few: Victor Hugo wrote his best works between the ages of seventy and eighty; Voltaire did his best work during the last ten years of his life although burdened by many infirmities. He died at eighty-four. Immanuel Kant, although frail, died at eighty, and worked steadily up un-

³Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Fifth edition; Springfield: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1942), p. 691.

til the last few months of his life.⁴ Cato began to study Greek at eighty. Sophocles wrote his Oedipus at ninety. Leo XII was outstanding after seventy and died at ninety-four. Titian painted his masterpiece at eighty-five. Newton lived to be eighty-five. Ben Franklin was at the height of his prominence at seventy, ambassador to France at seventy-five. Elihu Root was active until he was ninety, dying at ninety-eight. Florence Nightingale lived to be ninety.⁵

Youth has never been too solicitous of age at any period of history. The youth of Athens chased the Old men through the streets. The Paris medical students of the Middle Ages protested against being taught by "old dotards".⁶ In modern days, youth is forcing age out of industry.

And yet, there has been a recent rise of interest in old age and its problems. Three reasons have probably prompted this interest: 1. a growing proportion of old

⁴Lilien J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 39.

⁵E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 838 f.

⁶Hall, op. cit., p. 88.

people, due to a falling birth rate, restricted immigration, and increased life span; 2. the difficulty of older people to get and keep jobs in modern, mechanized industry; and 3. a more sensitized social conscience, which is beginning to assume responsibility for those, who, because of age, cannot care for themselves.⁷ The church should have a primary interest in this problem.

Many secular agencies are delving into this problem. Instead of pointing the way as prophet, the church has been content to follow in the wake. The purpose of this thesis is to stimulate the church and its charitable agencies to find better and more adequate means to care for aged Christians. Insurance companies are aware of the increasing number of aged. Political parties are aware of the potential voting strength they have. The church must also be aware of their needs and requirements, and be prepared to fill them on a much grander scale than ever before.

In order to assist the reader of this thesis, who perhaps may not be acquainted with the background material of the present old age problem, the author has included four preliminary chapters. Chapter II contains an historical background. Chapter III describes the Bible's approach to old age. Chapter IV characterizes the aged and Chapter V

⁷Recent Social Trends in the United States (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 1199.

sets forth their particular needs.

Chapter VI sets forth the problem as it exists today, and as it is likely to develop in the immediate future. It is followed by a chapter which discusses what has been done for the aged in the past. This chapter also contains an analysis of the worth of past procedure. Chapter VIII discusses present day methods and approaches. The final chapter gives a prospectus and offers suggestions for future action by the church, to keep ahead of the problems which increased numbers of old people will offer. Two appendices are attached because they discuss basic attitudes in Christian charity which have often suffered in the past, and which must be taken into consideration in the formation of a new approach to the problem of old age. The final appendix is a simple exegesis of Ecclesiastes 12:1-8. It was placed in the appendix instead of in Chapter III because of its length.

CHAPTER II

OLD AGE IN HISTORY

Among the Primitives

"As far back as we can go, the hands of the aged have reached out for a little food when they could do nothing more--and they have not been entirely ignored, nor always filled."¹ This statement could well summarize the role of the aged in ancient pagan primitive society.

. . . . individuals everywhere seem to have become progressively dependent upon others for their food with the onset of old age. The assurance of food from a group or communal source has not been entirely lacking in the simplest known societies. In fact, it appears that customs of sharing food with the aged have been strongest in very harsh and difficult environments, when the food supply has been less constant, and where types of maintenance have been less well developed, as among collectors, fishers, and hunters. With advance to herding and agriculture, and the development of cultural traits characteristic of 'higher' civilization, such as grain supplies, property, trade, debt-relations, and slavery, support of the aged through communal sharing of food appears to have declined in importance or to have taken on features more characteristic of organized society.²

However, the picture was not so pleasant for the aged as it may seem. "Most Indian tribes provided for their aged so long as they could come and get what they needed.

¹Leo W. Simmons, The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 25.

When they could no longer come, or became senile, they were neglected and died alone."³ In general, the aged had a greater opportunity to secure food in those societies where group sharing of food was the practice, and fewer opportunities where each individual fended for himself.⁴ The more complicated society became, the harder was the lot of the aged.

With the development of the techniques and complexities of maintenance, communal food sharing with the aged, or with anyone, seems to have declined as an essential part of the cultural complex in primitive societies.⁵

As a result the old man or woman was left to his own resources to secure food for himself. What avenues of help were available to him?

The Family

Throughout human history, the family has been the safest haven for the aged. Its ties have been the most intimate and longlasting, and on them the aged have relied for greatest security. Where other supports have crumbled and disappeared, the aged have clung to kith and kin as their last saviors; and the astute old man or woman has not infrequently manipulated such bonds to great personal advantage. Indeed, many individuals have been able to find in family relationships opportunities for effect-

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

⁵Ibid., p. 33.

tive social participation well into senility, and even to exploit some rights which have outlasted life itself, for the last wishes of aged parents have seldom been ignored by their offspring.⁶

Importance to the Clan

" . . . an important means of security for the aged when they have become too feeble to forage for themselves has been active association and assistance in the interests and enterprises of others."⁷ Hence, many of the aged were active in the clan and community long after their ability to forage for food had waned. They served as rulers and advisers, as midwives, as religious leaders and witch doctors.

Certain Foods Reserved For the Aged

Certain foods, or parts of animals were reserved for the aged. This was generally the result of the aged, playing on the superstitious fears of the people. For instance, the tribes of Africa generally saved the entrails and brains of animals for the old men.⁸ This seems like a hardly edible dish to the refined taste of civilized moderns, but

⁶Ibid., p. 177.

⁷Ibid., p. 104. Cf. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1932), p. 88.

⁸Ibid., p. 24.

these two parts of animals were cherished by the primitives. The aged, emphasizing the fact that in the entrails lay the emotions, and the brain, the intelligence, persuaded their tribal neighbors that such things could be eaten only by men of experience. They most certainly were most qualified to overcome the 'animal spirits' dwelling in these two dishes. And thereby the aged not only were able to gain food for themselves, but choice food at that. Other tribes, more sympathetic to the ills of the aged, felt that the eating of such food would transfer the animal strength to the frail bodies of the aged.

Local Social Customs

In addition to the above-mentioned local social customs, among the Lappe and Eskimoes it was considered a disgrace for the community to have paupers in their midst. Hence the aged poor were provided for, often times better provided for than those who had means.⁹

. . . not infrequently and in widely distributed areas of the world the aged, along with other dependants, have found some reliable assurance of support through customs of food and sharing, through social requirements of hospitality, obligations imposed upon relatives, customs of communal responsibility, and in the most advanced societies--such as the Inca or Aztec--

⁹Ibid., p. 21.

through organized systems of old age assistance.¹⁰

No matter what means of security were open to the aged in their societies, one thing was true of all of them at all times: ". . . to 'get capital' would have been an apt slogan for old age security. . ." ¹¹ One thing must be emphasized: No matter how humane the society was in which the old man lived, his only real security lay in what he was, what he could do, and most important, what he had.

Primitive society was not averse to getting rid of the aged who had become useless.

. . . neglect and abandonment have played a large part in the elimination of aged and enfeebled persons. To move on and leave behind any permanently helpless and useless person has been the simplest and perhaps the most humane method of dealing with inescapable necessity.¹²

"The Indians left their old behind them to be devoured by wild beasts."¹³ Certain primitive communities used a simple and effective method of disposing of their aged poor:

. . . a council is called and if the aged person has reached a certain stage of economic uselessness, a feast is held in his honor, he bids his friends farewell, and then he is knocked on the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹Ibid., p. 49.

¹²Ibid., p. 227.

¹³J. Martine Kershaw, Has the Old Man the Right to Live? (St. Louis: Published privately, St. Louis Public Library No. 615995, n.d.), p. 3.

head.¹⁴

"A certain Indian tribe made the old men climb a tree. The young braves shook the tree, and all the aged who fell were clubbed to death. Those who retained their grip to the tree branches were given a respite until the next time."¹⁵

"Many tribes, especially wandering tribes, simply did away with the aged. Or the aged committed suicide."¹⁶

The Scythian Massagetae used to kill their aged and eat them. This was also true of the Terra Del Fuego Indians in Charles Darwin's day. The same is true of the east Africans. The Fiji Islanders, even today, sometimes bury their aged and decrepit alive. In Paraguay, among the primitives, the aged are sealed alive in large clay pots. The priest of a certain Jewish tribe in Abyssinia puts the aged to death by slitting their throats. In a certain South American tribe, when a man is at the point of death, the nearest relative breaks his back with an axe. Among various Siberian tribes the old are bound securely, hand and foot, and are bled to death. The Hottentots seal their aged in a hut with a small store of provisions and leave

¹⁴Theodore Katenkamp, "New Developments in Handling Problems of the Aged", Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1937), 106.

¹⁵Kershaw, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁶Simmons, op. cit., p. 230 ff.

them.¹⁷ By and large the outlook for the aged in primitive society was bleak and pitiful.

Among the Greeks

In ancient Greece, old people . . . were in general looked upon as useless and even harmful to those who were younger. Old men were hated by boys, despised among women, and dishonored by nearly all.¹⁸

The story is told among the ancient Greeks of an old man who came into the theater at Athens and was unable to find a seat until he came to a delegation of Spartans, who rose as a man, to give him a seat. Thereupon, the Athenians applauded the act. But it did not shame them.¹⁹ Frequently, there were close relations between wise old men and youths, but this frequently led to homoeroticity. Aristotle said that:

. . . the old through experience were forced to be doubtful and suspicious; they were never positive about anything, tended to be uncharitable and selfish, to be cowardly and alarmistic, and to live in memory than by hope. Their self-control was due to the abatement of desires and because self-interest was their leading passion.²⁰

Strangely enough, Athens provided disability insurance.

¹⁷G. Stanley Hall, Senescence The Last Half of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), pp. 38-47.

¹⁸R. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 836 f.

¹⁹Hall, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁰Cowdry, op. cit., p. 837.

. . . those who through bodily weakness or infirmity were unable to gain their own livelihood, such as the blind, the lame, and the crippled, received a daily subsidy of two oboli. This subsidy was by law restricted to those whose means amounted to less than three minae.²¹

The writings of Plato reflect an entirely different attitude toward the aged. But it must be remembered that he spoke only of the upper class of Athens. The lower class and the slaves were beneath his notice. In his Republic the character Socrates meets his friend's aged father, Cephalus, at his home. Always anxious to learn from others, Socrates asks this aged gentleman what old age is like. Cephalus answers, giving first the common complaint of the aged, and then his own personal view:

. . . I cannot eat, I cannot drink; the pleasures of youth and love are fled away: there was a good time once, but now that is gone, and now life is no longer life. Some complain of the slights which are put upon them by relations, and they will tell you sadly of how many evils their old age is the cause.
The truth is, Socrates, that these regrets, and also the complaints about relations, are to be attributed to the same cause, which is not old age, but men's characters and tempers; for he who is of a calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, but to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden.²²

It is significant that in Plato's Republic, his Greek Utopia,

²¹Gerhard Uhhorn, Christian Charity in the Ancient Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), p. 9.

²²E. Jowett, The Works of Plato (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, n.d.), II, 4.

no beggars are permitted. The ill and infirm are permitted to die without assistance, for they are of value to the state only so long as they have something to contribute to the state.²³ This is Plato's solution to the old age problem.

It is surprising, in the light of the above, to hear Plato say:

. . . good men think that they are the gainers by having aged parents living, to the end of their life, or if they depart early, they are deeply lamented by them. . .²⁴

Greek mythology reveals an interesting sidelight on the attitude of the Greeks toward old age. Oedipus called the wrath of the gods down upon his sons when they dishonored him and they were punished. So also Amyntor and Theseus with their children.²⁵ These legends show the high regard which Athenians had for their parents, and constitute a "fourth commandment" in Greek society.²⁶

At Ancient Rome

Of isolated acts springing from natural pity there was never any want. There was at all times a gift ready for the beggar, and that even after the idea that beggars and those in

²³Unhorn, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁴Jowett, op. cit., p. 474.

²⁵Ibid., p. 475.

²⁶Cf. Hall, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

distress were under the special protection of the gods, had long lost its force.²⁷

Rome's was a civilization of clubs. Many societies, clubs, and guilds were formed. The members paid dues and received certain benefits. A guild is mentioned which paid part of the cost of a member's funeral from the guild funds.²⁸

The Romans were even less sympathetic with the poor and aged than the Athenians.

'Canst thou by any means condescend so far as that the poor shall not appear to thee loathsome?' asks Quinctilian; and in one of the plays of Plautus we meet with the following; which is surely the expression of the general sentiment: 'He does the beggar but a bad service who gives him meat and drink; for what he gives is lost, and the life of the poor is but prolonged to their own misery.'²⁹

Rome was dominated by two philosophical systems, Epicureanism and Stoicism. Of the latter Uhlhorn says: "Stoicism, with its emphasis upon the individual instead of the state, was the forerunner of Christianity, and probably did much to mingle heathen and Christian elements together in Charity."³⁰ Unfortunately too much of Stoicism was words and not enough deeds. One of the greatest Stoics

²⁷Uhlhorn, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁸Ibid., p. 24.

²⁹Ibid., p. 5.

³⁰Ibid., p. 42.

was Cicero. Concerning old age he says:

. . . I follow nature, the best of guides, as I would a god, and am loyal to her commands. It is not likely, if she has written the rest of the play well, she has been careless about the last act like some idle poet. But after all some 'last' was inevitable, just as to the berries of a tree and the fruits of the earth there comes in the fulness of time a period of decay and fall.³¹

Cicero mentions four reasons for unhappiness in old age: withdrawal from active employment; enfeebling of the body; privation from nearly all physical pleasures; and fear of death.³² It is quite apparent from the account of his life by various authors that he in these four reasons is summing up the causes of his own unhappiness, for he wrote the De Senectute at a very advanced age, and was chafing because the young men no longer respected him or praised his name. A little of the hopeless and despairing can be detected in the lines of his famous essay.³³

In the Early and Medieval Church

Early Christian charity was impulsive, zealous, given to all men even as the gospel knew no limitations. . . . There was no need of insti-

³¹Cicero, Two Essays on Old Age and Friendship, translated by E. S. Shuckburgh (London: Macmillan and Company, 1927), p. 50. Cf. The Lutheran Witness (Feb. 20, 1951), p. 52.

³²Ibid., p. 40

³³On Roman attitude to old age see Hall, op. cit., pp. 66-71.

tutions, for Christians received the traveler and cared for the sick in their own homes. The poor were relieved through monthly contributions or 'stips' by members to the church chest or 'arca' especially placed for the support or internment of the destitute, for the bringing up of orphans, for the relief of the aged. . . .³⁴

Christian charity must have made quite an impression on the Romans. Their love to all men, their attitude toward the poor and the destitute, the widows and the needy, was quite foreign to Rome. "Christian charity is self-denying; heathen libertas is at bottom self seeking, even although its personal selfishness be limited by the interests of the commonwealth. . . ."³⁵ The early church regularly had contributions of food at the Lord's Supper in the evening services. This food was distributed among the poor. During the morning worship service special collections of money (stips) were made for the poor.³⁶ Deacons were appointed very early in the church's history to look after the needy in the congregation.³⁷ A problem arose almost immediately: who would care for the needs of the women? In that early age, it was unheard of for men to assist women in any way. The church discovered a happy solution;

³⁴Richard W. Huegli, "The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church," (St. Louis: Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1938), p. 9.

³⁵Unknown, op. cit., p. 9.

³⁶Ibid., p. 143 ff.

³⁷Ibid., p. 163.

it hired the widows of the church to care for its women. In this way, the widows were able to provide for themselves and at the same time render a service to their fellow Christian women.³⁸

As yet institutions did not exist. There was no need of houses of hospitality, houses for foreigners, orphanages, hospitals, so long as every Christian house was an asylum for traveling brothers, and every Christian man and woman was ready to receive the indigent.³⁹

A reflection of this attitude is found in John's Third Epistle. During the first three centuries of the church, the emphasis was upon sharing the wealth. The rich should possess no more than the poor.⁴⁰

However, this first burst of Christian charity did not last. "In the period from 500-600 A.D. with the acceptance of Christianity we find Christian charity cooling and the social vision dimming."⁴¹ Clement of Rome berates the aristocratic ladies of his day who dawdle with lap dogs, male gossipers and deformed slaves. The poor widow is worth more than a maltese puppy and a pious man than their "caricatures of men".⁴² As the church increased in numbers,

³⁸Ibid., p. 169.

³⁹Ibid., p. 188.

⁴⁰Ibid., cf. II Cor. 8:14.

⁴¹Luugli, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴²Unhorn, op. cit., p. 133 f.

it began to lose contact with the individual. A hierarchical system began to develop among the clergy. The idea began to spread that almsgiving was a work meriting forgiveness. Works of charity were done more and more from this motive than from true Christian love.⁴³ Secular conditions also influenced the charitable work of the early Christians. As the Roman Empire decayed the tax burden became heavier and heavier. The people became poorer, and the lists of needy in the church increased. To meet the problem, the church began erecting institutions, hospitals and monasteries, to become "the central points of a charity, resolving itself into wholesale almsgiving."⁴⁴ Individual congregations were tremendous. The church at antioch was composed of ten thousand souls.⁴⁵ It is remarkable that the church has to the present day, continued the institutional idea of charity.

By the time that Justinian began to rule at Rome, there were: Zendochia (houses for strangers), Hosocomia (houses for the sick), Cheretrophia (houses for widows), Orphanstrophia (orphanages), Brephotrophia (houses for the rearing of little children), and Gerontosomia (homes for

⁴³Ibid., p. 210 ff.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 245. cf. Ruegli, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 250 ff.

the aged). Narses founded a Home for the Aged at Constantinople. Most of these "hospitals" cared for all types of needy, widows, the sick, children, and the aged all being cared for in the same "hospital".⁴⁶

As the church grew out of its infancy, its works of charity were less and less individual acts, and more and more institutional. And it must be remembered, that when charity loses the personal touch, when it becomes objective, it begins to decrease, and love decays. A few quotations sketch the decline of individual charity and the rise of institutionalism:

By the fifth century the church was the greatest landowner in the empire. Corruption was bound to follow.⁴⁷

The poor were not cared for individually, but the bishop distributed largesse out of the profits of the church's possessions, after the manner of the Old Roman Emperors.⁴⁸

Deacons no longer gave relief to the poor, but assisted the pastors in the services.⁴⁹

At the end of the third century a female diaconate had arisen in the Eastern Church to care for the needs of the women. This was a formalization of the work of widows who in previous centuries had baptized, taught the women, and

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 329 f.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 260.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 270 f.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 268.

administered to their needs, in return for which they received church support.⁵⁰

The attendants at the "hospitals" formed a society of hospitalers, who during the Middle Ages carried on relief work in, but independent of the church's supervision.⁵¹

The Monasteries also began to separate from the church's supervision and among other things carried on relief work.⁵²

Before very long, the Roman Empire fell, the church became a hierarchy with temporal and spiritual powers, and charity moved out of the church, out of the hands of the individual into the institution.

With the arrival of the Middle Ages (600-1500) the picture of charity in the church grew into one of institutionalism. . . . Individuals still gave to charity, but the church stood between the giver and the recipient.⁵³

During the Middle Ages the church's charitable work was carried on by the monks and the hospitalers. The individual member of the parish, except for occasional handouts to beggars, did nothing charitable except to contribute to the solicitations of the monasteries. The charity of the institutions was phenomenal. They welcomed all the needy and provided them with necessities.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 169, ff.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 338.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ruegli, op. cit., p. 11.

Benevolence to the needy was an early church principle. In the Middle Ages, the relief work of the church was exemplary. The monasteries were centers from which charity radiated. The monks ministered to the sick, protected the poor, provided shelter for the weary traveler and came to the rescue of the captive.⁵⁴

The Middle Age charity may be summarized in the following words: No period did so much for the poor as the Middle Ages. All relief work was on an institutional basis. The church was the means for all Christian charity, and in return for it she gave forgiveness. Charity was no longer done for the love of Christ, but to obtain release from purgatory. Distress was not mastered. Christianity was almost totally bankrupt.⁵⁵

In the Modern Church

The Reformation did not affect the system of charity in the church, but it changed the motive back to that of the early church. Naturally, Luther's emphasis on the universal priesthood centered the attention of the church on the individual. This could not fail to affect also the church's attitude toward its needy.⁵⁶ Luther himself felt that the ideal congregation would have a pastor and a staff

⁵⁴Abraham Epstein, The Challenge of the Aged (New York: Macy-Masins: The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 149.

⁵⁵Uhlhorn, op. cit., p. 296 f.

⁵⁶Huegli, op. cit., p. 12.

of deacons to carry out the needs of the people.⁵⁷ He well realized the intrinsic weakness of "organized charity". Therefore he sought to bring charity back to the home congregation on an individual basis.

Very little information is available for the post-Reformation period. In fact, this gap persists up to the present century. This may indicate either the absence of interest in care for the aged, or the lack of a problem. Probably the former. One of the results of the Reformation in the field of charity was the recognition of the government's responsibility to the aged needy. The abolition of monasteries in the anti-papal lands left thousands of needy without any means of support. The church in those lands was too involved in doctrinal controversies and religious wars to be able to consider the problem. Therefore it fell to the state. Hence, state aid is, remarkably, a modern development. A typical example of the development of state aid for the poor and aged is found in the history of England. Shortly after the abolishment of the monasteries by Henry the Eighth, Parliament enacted a Poor Law (1535). This law distinguished between those not able to work, who were to be provided for by state funds; and those who were able to work, who were to be provided with work by the state. This

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 13.

law was not carried out very effectively. The Act of 1597, at the time of Elizabeth, provided that hospitals and work homes were to be erected. None were built, however. The poor, with no opportunity to work, continued to be a problem. In 1697, the city of Bristol erected a work house, with such good results that other cities soon followed suit. In 1723, another Poor Law was passed to provide for the employment of the poor. Those who refused to work would be deprived of relief.⁵⁸ It is interesting to observe that the state followed the institutional method of providing charity. This is certainly understandable. Mass aid is the only possible way for government to care for its indigent. It must not be thought that government immediately stepped into the breach when the needy were stranded after the abolition of the monasteries. Little constructive work was done by either state or church until the Industrial Revolution with its attendant reform opposition brought about revision of the penal, the insane and the charitable institutions during the early nineteenth century. This reform movement continues to the present day.

The Victorian age approach to life was scarcely realistic. This is also true of the attitude toward the aged. The general feeling of people during that time, as reflected

⁵⁸Alexander Johnson, The Almshouse (Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell Co., 1911), pp. 149-57.

in their contemporary literature is as follows: The aged should not be censured. It is recognized that they may at times be difficult to get along with. A daughter must sacrifice her marriage hopes to care for her aged parents. Only when they have died can she think of marriage. (There are many such daughters, still single, in our Old Folks' Homes today.) The widow must remain "genteel". She dare not work unless it be church work. She may knit, take care of the sick, etc., to support herself.⁵⁹ The Victorian approach to the problem which the aged present is very idealized and romantic. It does not approach the real problem. Old age is a golden and beautiful thing. They do not see the sad and evil side.

About the middle of the nineteenth century the church began to face the problem of old age. It solved its problem by erecting Old Folks' Homes, as the state did.

In 1930, the White House Conference on Social Work stated:

Until this last decade the superannuated were left to their own resources or were supported in the public almshouses and the privately endowed homes for the aged. The belief that the proportion of old persons in the population was increasing and that the accelerated speed and mechanization of industrial processes had reduced the opportunities of employment of men and women above the age of 45 gave an impetus

⁵⁹L. Maria Child, Looking Toward the Sunset (Boston: Ticknow and Fields, 1865), Passim.

to the passage of many state old age pension laws.⁶⁰

"Germany originated the idea of social security for the aged under the leadership of Bismarck and established the first old age insurance in history in 1889."⁶¹ This was a "part of the National Insurance Plan, which was instituted. . . as a prophylactic against the social movement."⁶² Other European countries soon followed suit. As early as 1860 France had introduced voluntary insurance. In 1891 Denmark embarked upon a project of Outdoor Relief. In 1898 Italy also started a program of voluntary insurance. Belgium created a pension plan in 1900. Austria offered a state insurance plan in 1906, and while Britain in 1908 was setting up a pension plan, one of her Dominions, Canada, was initiating an ambitious annuity program.⁶³ Alaska passed the first old age pension plan in 1915. By 1928 six states also had such plans. From 1929 to 1931 eleven more passed such laws.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Recent Social Trends (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 848.

⁶¹H. P. Wind, "Problems of Dependency in Old Age", Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1935), p. 110.

⁶²John H. Andrews and Rudolph K. Michels, Economic Problems of Modern Society (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1937), p. 556.

⁶³Hall, op. cit., pp. 175-9.

⁶⁴Recent Social Trends, op. cit., p. 849.

By 1937, practically all states had passed old age pension laws, most of which were passed or amended after the enactment of the Federal Social Security Act of 1935.⁶⁵

Study particularly directed to the needs and problems of the aged is of very recent date. In 1910 the term geriatrics was coined by Ignatz Leo Nascher, who also wrote the first textbook in the field in 1914. Not until 1940 did the United States Public Health Service create a unit on gerontology.⁶⁶

During World War II, when the need for manpower became urgent, thousands of older people were called back into the industrial, service, and agricultural occupations from which they had been lately excluded. Their response and their productivity were amazing. Without removal of older people from the shelf on which they had been placed, even the war might have lasted longer.⁶⁷

The present day presents many problems in the field of old age. They will be discussed in a later chapter. At the present time both church and state are beginning to awaken to them. It appears evident that old age is on the rise in percentage of population both here and abroad, and will continue to rise for at least thirty more years.

. . . present society in Europe and the United States is now approaching a stabilized, even possibly a declining, total population with a

⁶⁵ Andrews and Michels, op. cit., p. 557.

⁶⁶ Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Gedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 17 f.

larger older population, both absolutely and relatively, than any other country in the world has ever known before. In the United States with decrease of birth-rate and the limitations of immigration (which has been mainly of the young and vigorous) we now have an unprecedented situation. Over one-third of the total population will soon be over fifty years of age. In 1960 the number of persons over sixty-five will be more than double that today.⁶⁸

How the United States, its Government, and its churches, will solve that problem belongs to the future.

⁶⁸Cowdry, op. cit., p. XXVII.

CHAPTER III

OLD AGE AND THE BIBLE

It is true that among the ancient Israelites there is no organized actual system of charity or poor relief. Yet even before the writing of the ten commandments sic God's people were fully aware of their social responsibilities.¹

It is true that the Old Testament contains no codified set of laws dealing with the aged Hebrews. And yet that spirit which is the outgrowth of the Fourth Commandment, and that attitude of optimism toward and desire for old age is clearly revealed in the book.

The Philology of Old Age

The Old Testament writers, referring to old age, use the term: **רִבִּי**, which means old, old man, elder, the head of the slaves, senior. It implies power by virtue of seniority. The term is used with reference to the leaders of a town, e.g., the town council. It is also used to mean the "oldest" child of a family. This use of the term has also been carried over to the English language. In the Old Testament age and respect seem to be synonymous. Old

¹Richard F. Huegli, "The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church," (St. Louis: Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1928), p. 5.

age evinces respect from the younger.²

The term most commonly used in the New Testament is *πρεσβύτερος*. As a noun it means elder or forefather. As an adjective it means: advanced in age, or senior. Among the post-exilic Jews this term was used to refer to the Sanhedrin. Among the Christians the term is used as the title of those who presided over the congregations.³ It is used in the book of Revelation to refer to the heavenly Sanhedrin of 24 members at the throne of God.⁴ Undoubtedly the New Testament concept is derived from the Old Testament.

The term *πρεσβύτερος*, and the feminine form *πρεσβυτέρα*; a related word, is used in Philemon 9, many think, as a substitute for the word "ambassador".⁵ And the term *πρεσβυτή*, meaning age, dignity, right of the first-born, is also used with reference to the aged. The elders of the church in apostolic times are always spoken of as possessing dignity, and are exhorted to be dignified.⁶ They hold offices of

²Wilhelm Gesenius, Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament (Leipzig: Verlag von F. C. W. Vogel, 1915), p. 204.

³Cf. Acts 11:30, Tit. 1:5, 2 John 1, et. al.

⁴Rev. 4:4, 10; 5:5; 7:11, 13; et. al.

⁵Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 561.

⁶Tit. 2:2 f.

leadership and also serve as advisors.⁷ Undoubtedly the term "elder" and its office in the modern church are derived from the early Christian church.

The term *γέρων* appears once in the New Testament, in John, chapter three, verse four, where Nicodemus says, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The related noun, *γερονία*, occurs only in the Book of Acts, chapter five, verse twenty-one. The Sanhedrin is referred to as "and all the council of elders of the children of Israel".⁸ The term *γέρων* is common in classical Greek. It has a somewhat contemptible flavor, due, no doubt to the Greek attitude toward old age.

Old Testament Examples of Old Age

Moses is described at the time of his death with the words: "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Joshua led the Children of Israel into battle after their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. This does not seem surprising until it is discovered that he was eighty-five at the time!⁹ He lived to be one hundred and ten.

Job lived to be one hundred and forty. His old age is one of the blessings listed by the author, which accrued to

⁷Thayer, op. cit., p. 585.

⁸Ibid., p. 114.

⁹Joshua 14:11.

him after his test.¹⁰

The fifth chapter of Genesis might well be called "The Chapter of Old Age". The list of the patriarchs and their phenomenal ages appear in that chapter. Outstanding among them is Methuselah with his nine hundred and sixty-nine years.¹¹

The outstanding example in the New Testament is Anna the Prophetess, of whom it is stated that "she was of a great age".¹²

It must not be thought that the writers of the Old Testament glossed over the attendant weaknesses and infirmities of old age. In particular three characteristics are mentioned: feebleness,¹³ gray hair,¹⁴ and dimness of vision.¹⁵

Reverence for Old Age

The Fourth Commandment serves as the basis for the reverence for parents, and more broadly, for all elders,

¹⁰Job 42:16.

¹¹Gen. 5:4, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31; 9:29; 11:11; 25:7.

¹²Luke 2:26.

¹³I Kings 1:1; Ps. 71:9; Ecc. 12:3-5; Zech. 3:4; Heb. 11:21.

¹⁴I Sam. 12:2; Job 15:10; Pr. 16:21; 20:29.

¹⁵Gen. 27:1; 48:10; I Sam. 3:2; 4:15; Ecc. 12:5 ff.

particularly the aged. Notice that the promise attached to this commandment is a long life.¹⁶ Proverbs 23:22 revises this commandment and applies it to aged parents. "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Note that the father's advice is to be heeded even though he be an old man.

There is an interesting touch of human interest in the book of Job. Three friends come to Job to comfort him in his affliction. The last of these to speak is Elihu, the Buzite. He fears to speak before the two friends because they are old and he is young.¹⁷ His natural reverence for their sage advice prevents him from disagreeing with their opinions and presenting his own.

Leviticus states as a general commandment that the Children of Israel should honor the aged. They should arise in their presence and honor them.¹⁸ The emphasis is upon showing expressions of honor.

Paul advises Timothy as a young pastor to show respect for the older people in his congregation. When an elder errs in his duty he is not to be "rebuked," but "entreated". He should treat the elder women as he would his mother.¹⁹

¹⁶Ex. 20:12.

¹⁷Job 32:6. of. Job 15:10.

¹⁸Lev. 19:32.

¹⁹1 Tim. 5:1 f.

The Old Testament also records three occurrences of disrespect for the aged. In the name of the Lord Elisha punishes the children of Bethel for their disrespect, by calling bears out of the wood to kill them.²⁰ Job complains in the midst of his affliction of the mockery of the children of the rabble.²¹ Jeremiah complains in his Lamentations that "the faces of the elders were not honored" by the Assyrians when they swept through the land.²²

Old Age, A Temporal Blessing of God

This is a common promise of God, to bless the faithful of His children with long life. "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, . . . that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."²³ To Solomon God said, ". . . if thou wilt walk in My ways, . . . then I will lengthen thy days."²⁴ God says concerning the godly man, "With long life will I satisfy him."²⁵ Concerning this passage the Pulpit Commentary says,

²⁰II Kings 2:23.

²¹Job 30:1.

²²Lamentations 5:12.

²³Deut. 5:33.

²⁴I Kings 3:14.

²⁵Psalms 91:16.

"Length of days is always viewed in the Old Testament as a blessing, and a special reward for obedience."²⁶ One Psalm stands as a contrast to this idea. It is the Psalm of Moses, which speaks of the futility of long life purely for the sake of long life. "The days of our years are three score and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."²⁷ Perhaps the most familiar of passages speaking of the blessing of godly old age is that written by Isaiah, "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."²⁸

Old Age Pictured as Good

Many passages attach the adjective "good" to old age, or indicate prosperity by the existence of old people in the community. Genesis 15:15 states, ". . . thou shalt be buried in a good old age." It is said of David that "he died in a good old age."²⁹ To Job Eliphaz said, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1950), VIII, 269.

²⁷ Ps. 90:10.

²⁸ Is. 46:4.

²⁹ I Chron. 29:28.

corn cometh in his season."³⁰ Concerning this passage a commentator says, "The Jews were no pessimists. They were far from the sickly Buddhist dream of Nirvana. With them life was sweet, and long life a blessing. Was not this a true and health conception? . . . there is a great blessing in his sparing a life for full, ripe fruit-bearing."³¹ Solomon says, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."³², and again, ". . . the beauty of old men is the grey head."³³

In times of stress and warfare the aged are the first to suffer and the first to die. To the Jewish mind the picture of a peaceful city was that where people grew to old age, and where the aged could be seen walking the streets. Isaiah uses the former picture in his sixty-fifth chapter to describe the New Testament kingdom.³⁴ Zechariah writes, "describing the rebirth of the city of Jerusalem after the exile:

. . . there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.³⁵

³⁰Job 5:26.

³¹Pulpit Commentary, op. cit., VII, 102.

³²Prov. 16:31.

³³Prov. 20:29.

³⁴Isaiah 65:20.

³⁵Zech. 8:4.

This picture becomes very vivid when it is remembered that the old people who were left in the land had perished by the time the exiles to whom Zechariah write had returned. Those who had grown old in captivity were too weak to make the return journey. Even though they would have come, they would have been a burden, rather than a help in rebuilding the city and temple.

Miscellaneous

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."³⁶ With these words Solomon begins one of the most sublime and picturesque descriptions of old age and its infirmities the world has ever known. It is strange that the passage remains almost unknown in the present day. An exposition of this passage will be found in the appendix.

In Psalm 71 the aged king David brings his fears to God about old age and seeks His aid.³⁷ This picture of fear in old age occurs very seldom in the Bible.

It may be noted that while the Old Testament abounds in references to age and its problems, the New Testament has very few. This fact may be accounted for by the following

³⁶Ecc. 12:1.

³⁷Psalm 71:17.

reasons:

1. The Old Testament covers an historical period of 5,000 years, while the New Testament covers less than a hundred.
2. The Old Testament covers a span of 1,000 years of writing, the New Testament about 60.
3. The New Testament speaks of the history of a young church. Old people do not play a prominent part, nor constitute a great problem.
4. The writings of the evangelists and apostles were mainly concerned with the message of salvation. Their books and letters were not intended to be manuals of social work.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF OLD AGE

It must be remembered that no one can completely describe people of any age group. It is impossible to describe an individual's characteristics, how much more so those of a large group of people! This chapter attempts to sketch in broad outline those characteristics which are a peculiar part of old age. Some of them may be broad enough to apply to all of the aged. Others apply to a very few. Age, perhaps, of all times of life, shows the greatest individuality of persons.

Disadvantages of Old Age

In every act, simple or complex. . . function necessarily becomes less successful with advancing age. In spite of favorable conditions of health, food, interests or experience, age decrement ultimately becomes inescapable in achievement and performance of every human kind.¹

This is a general truth of old age. The old man is no longer as capable of activity as formerly. He thinks slower, moves slower, and tires faster than he did as a youth. This does not necessarily imply that he cannot maintain the pace of people younger than himself. Some outstanding

¹E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 780 f.

individuals in history have been able to maintain great activity to a very advanced age. However, their pace became slower and slower as they grew older. It is one of the disadvantages of old age, that the physical apparatus of the body begins to deteriorate.

Young people frequently become impatient with old people. Old people do not agree with the young. They will neither obey them nor heed their advice. In fact, it very frequently happens that a well-meant offer of assistance is rejected by an aged man or woman, and rejected with not too much grace.

There is in these old people the spirit of freedom. . . a spirit that chafes at restraint. This, which many of us call willfulness, is a characteristic trait of most old people, . . . It is quite difficult to reason with such people; persuasion is of little avail. To them the younger generation is still a generation of infants.²

Most men who have earned their livelihood by mental activity, as contrasted with those who did manual labor, are able easily to grow old gracefully. This is not true of the very muscular type of laborer.

Men who have prided themselves solely upon their ability to work, or their endurance, or their physical strength, may find aging a threat to their esteem. Sickness in such men may produce more than the usual amount of anxiety. The necessity for older men to give up certain strenuous athletic pursuits in which they once found great satisfaction may be a severe source

²Francis Bardwell, The Adventure of Old Age (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), p. 14.

of frustration . . . Men to whom sexual activity has been, among other things, a source of bolstering their self-esteem may find life growing flat and directionless with the waning of the sexual drive.³

Older people are not able to work as fast as the young. As they grow older, their activity becomes progressively slower. This slowness of activity should not be totally credited to physical deterioration. This present century has been a time of greater and greater activity. They who are old today were born in a time of less speed than today. Their reactions are today naturally slower, due to force of habit and previous environment. To a certain extent, the aged person of today is physically disorientated.⁴

The most evident of the disadvantages of old age are the infirmities. Loss of eyesight, loss of hearing, of teeth, all are commonly associated with old age. Many aged are afflicted with arthritis and rheumatism. These and other physical disabilities contribute to the disadvantages of old age. Vexing as they may be, most old people take them in their stride, even joking about them. "In early life other people's legs get in our way; in later years we fall

³Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 65.

⁴Lilien J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Sweeping the Cobwebs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 20.

over our own."⁵, says Charles Courtenay. And he voices a common concern of old people, "When my legs began to trouble me I felt thankful that old age attacked me there; and not at the other end of me, my understandings, rather than my understanding."⁶

The Old Age Counseling Service of San Francisco made a discovery about the retired aged who applied at their agency.

. . . independent or dependent, all these old people lead unhappy lives. The source of this unhappiness is inability to do anything, create anything, or participate in any activity, that is worth while from the individual or the social point of view. Sustained idleness and the sense of uselessness create hopeless despair.⁷

This point may be taken into consideration, not only by church, in planning activities within the congregation, but also by the church organization on the synodical or denominational level in planning care for the aged.

Old age does not do away with selfishness. The old grandmother or grandfather is generally pictured as kindly and unselfish, but in a group of other old people, that same old grandparent acts in a selfish fashion just as does his grandchild. In an institutional atmosphere this trait is heightened.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lilien J. Martin, A Handbook for Old Age Counsellors (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Co., 1944), p. 10 f.

. . . most old people want attention and attention above their fellows. They want to be considered 'somebody'. They resent the least slight, strive for selective recognition; want to become known because of some characteristic, or some incident in past life that sets them apart from others.⁸

Pity the pastor who overlooks one of his aged parishioners in his after-service morning greetings, or forgets a name. Or worse still, woe to the pastor who visits one of his parishioners at the church's Old Folks Home, and does not visit others who are also living there. That aged man or woman will never forget that imagined slight.

Old people's social groups are marked by certain characteristics peculiar to their type, just as young people's groups, Ladies Aids and Men's Clubs have their own characteristics. Among them are: 1. slower tempo, 2. deliberation, 3. the meticulous setting forth of resolutions and motions, 4. a greater degree of eccentricity and individuality, 5. less inhibition of expression, 6. garrulousness, and 7. a greater responsiveness in expressing love and gratitude.⁹ This is also true of the activity of older men in the voters assembly of the church.

⁸Bardwell, op. cit., p. 15.

⁹Hayes and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 204 f.

Advantages of Old Age

Although deterioration of the physical is an integral part of growing old, it is not a totally evil process.

In certain functions decrement is not wholly undesirable. Thus decrease in sensitivity to pain in late adult life is without doubt a definite asset. Perhaps of social as well as personal adaptive value is the waning of the sex drive as the pressure of economic responsibility conflicts with the procreative urge. And of social merit is probably the decrement in individual ambition for personal achievement which permits or even encourages a rise in effectiveness of the next generation.¹⁰

Old age is always associated with wisdom, and rightly so. There are those among the aged who are foolish, but by and large, the aged are sagacious.

The accumulation of information and the exercise of the intellectual functions, together with the controlled organization of emotional attitudes, make possible the development of human wisdom. This is the characteristic prerogative and contribution of well preserved age.¹¹

Interests change with age. The older person becomes more reflective, and less materialistic. Mavis says:

Age may bring a maturing sense of pleasure in human relations and increase aesthetic appreciations. . . . There may be an increasing serenity and beauty of personality which attracts old and young. . . . life may take on a greater peacefulness. . . . Even retirement may bring with it a release from the necessity of meeting

¹⁰Cowdry, op. cit., p. 781.

¹¹Ibid., p. 782.

deadlines and living by the clock. One may then set his own pace, and may work at the things he really likes to do. Poise and self assurance may grow out of the knowledge of what one has done and can do . . . There may be better judgment, keener insight, and a wider perspective.¹²

The aged woman and man are no longer interested in physical activities, exploring, adventure, strenuous auto driving or travel by airplane. They become more interested in their home, in art and music, charities and politics. Strangely enough, many old people get their adventures vicariously, in detective stories.¹³

Old people are notoriously conservative. Most old people belong to the Republican Party, although the Democratic Party has been winning many of them by its "fair deal" policy and social work activity. Young people feel restricted by the conservatism of their elders, but that conservatism is offset by an increased tolerance on the part of the aged. "In the normal process of aging there appears to come a widening of normal horizons and a broadening of viewpoint."¹⁴

Until recently it was almost universally held that older people lived in something like a state of suspended animation. Now a number of us realize that from birth on, our existence

¹²Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 69.

¹³Cowdry, op. cit., p. 773.

¹⁴ibid., p. 800.

is a tension which relaxes, not for sleep or for age but only for death. Every age period has its own stresses and strains, its own internal and external adjustments to make . . . senescence, despite its physical and even social passivity, has its dynamic quality, its conflictual, striving elements. Clinical psychiatry shows that emotional rigidity is a function of personality, not of age.¹⁵

Old people are very able to care for themselves in most instances. While they may not live on as grand a scale as younger people, they manage to live satisfactorily. "Old people don't like to be managed so long as they can take care of themselves."¹⁶ Courtonay says, ". . . we old people have no wish to be fussed over, or made much of, or treated royally; we prefer to be one of the others--just a welcome guest."¹⁷

Fears of Old Age

Psychologists and psychiatrists have discovered that fears which developed in youth, but were submerged in middle age, have a habit of cropping up in old age again.¹⁸ Some of the complexes which crop up in old age are: miserliness, rationalization, and nervousness.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 786.

¹⁶ Op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁸ Lillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 89 ff.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Old people live in the shadow of death. One of the greatest questions in the field of the fears of old age, a question, perhaps put to old people more than any other is this: Do old people fear death? One authority states:

There have been very few studies or reports on the fear of death in old age, but whatever we have indicates that any such dread is not characteristic of normal old people. . . . What most old people really dread is not death, but great pain and the possibility of being disabled, especially being helplessly bedridden for a long time.²⁰

Probably the greatest fear of old people, especially of the more intellectually gifted, is the fear of mental decadence. One author states, "I have marked this fear of senility particularly in old people who are above the average in education and intelligence. 'I can't remember names.' 'I'm getting so I forget everything.' 'I hope I shall never lose my mind.' These are rather common expressions; and often the manner of the saying conveys the idea that the speakers are a bit worried."²¹ Courtenay cites the following four fears of old age: poverty, death, persecution, and senility.²²

²⁰Cowdry, op. cit., p. 303.

²¹Bardwell, op. cit., p. 21.

²²Courtenay, op. cit., pp. 126-8.

Fantasies and Eccentricities in Old Age

Medical and biological sciences, and especially their more materialistic generalizers, have from one side of the field of human observation recognized the grim fact of recession in maturity: after the vigorous positive growth in youth comes, in the course of time, a gradual negative process of physically conditioned mental decay.²³

One of the characteristics of mental decay is loss of memory. As the brain shrinks, the aged forget and their vocabulary shrinks. The mental process slows down. The emotions and feelings lessen, and control over them is often diminished. Their friends and acquaintances are dead; times have changed, and they are lost, without the mental faculties to reorient themselves.²⁴ However, loss of memory is not necessarily a part of old age. Dr. Martin says:

Indeed, loss of memory is popularly believed to be a necessary accompaniment of growing old. Psychologically considered this is false, for even in cases of advanced senility or under pathological conditions, entire loss of memory is not found. Even very old people remember well, hence their fondness for reminiscing, their garrulousness about the distant past, the Trader Horns that are found everywhere, especially among the idle old.²⁵

Many causes contribute to the eccentricities and fantasies of many of the aged.

²³Cowdry, op. cit., p. 780.

²⁴G. Stanley Hall, Senescence the Last Half of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), p. 174.

²⁵Martin and de Grushy, op. cit., p. 96 f.

When one withdraws from life, or is isolated from an active life, a natural reaction is to take refuge in fantasy. Much of the so-called reminiscence is not always of gratifying experiences, for there are also memories of failures and losses and mistakes. Queer or peculiar behavior in some older people should be understood as evidence of the need for help in finding adequate solutions to problems, and for guidance in achieving satisfying experiences within the limitations of later maturity. We should not, however, consider all behavior as queer which does not fit into a narrow norm. With older people especially we should guard against regarding all deviations as neurotic.²⁶

Many people become neurotic as a result of forced retirement.²⁷ When one of the partners of a marriage dies, there is the greatest temptation for the surviving member to begin living in the past. Reveries on the happy moments of the past can finally lead to complete mental disorientation.²⁸ Some people suffer mental loss, purely as the result of poor mental work habits. The mind grows slack through disuse and misuse.²⁹ If it is difficult for the older individual to adjust himself to his changing environment, the easiest solution is to live in the past. The result is: "the individual has his body in the twentieth cent-

²⁶Waves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁷Ibid., p. 67.

²⁸Clare de Gruchy, Creative Old Age (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Company, 1946), p. 41 f.

²⁹Cowdry, op. cit., p. 791.

ury, but his mind in the nineteenth."³⁰

The same causes may bring forth childishness in some people. One psychiatrist calls aged childishness "a mammalian response to chronically baffling situations."³¹

Mavis offers the same solution:

A childish older person is in reality a person who has never grown up, in the sense that he has never learned how to handle problem situations constructively. Many such persons go through life masking their immaturity under a cloak of conventionality, until they meet a situation which cannot be solved in a conventional way. Or a childish older person may have learned to handle his problems in a fairly adequate manner, but when frustrated over a period of time by the new problems of later maturity may fall back upon earlier patterns. Thus when one becomes dependent through illness or poverty he is likely to call upon patterns found useful in his former dependent status as a child, such as sulking, making threats, bullying, accusing, or even having tantrums.³²

When older people realize their loss of capacities, provided they have not deteriorated to such a degree that they can no longer fear, they begin to withdraw from society. They stay at home, neglect church attendance, and refuse to take part in social activities. When forced out from the security of their home, they betray fear and anguish.³³

³⁰Ibid., p. 793.

³¹Ibid., p. 819.

³²Mavis and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 54.

³³Ibid.

The Health of Old Age

The National Health Survey of 1935 and 1936 reveals that in the age group of sixty-five to seventy-four, a little more than five per cent are invalids. In the group from seventy-five to eighty-four, more than seven per cent are invalids, and in the group over eighty-five more than 10 per cent are invalids.³⁴

With regard to longevity, pure muscle workers rarely live to an advanced age. But, on the whole, women, lean people, the married, and the religious, live the longest.³⁵

The order of cause of death among the aged is: cancer, heart disease, nervous troubles, and kidney complaints.³⁶ Statistically speaking, one-half of old people die of diseases of the circulatory system. One-eighth die of diseases of the respiratory system. One-eighth die of cancer in some other part of the body. Eight and one-half per cent die of diseases of the kidneys. Six and one-half per cent die of diseases of the digestive system other than cancer. Ten per cent die of diseases of other organ systems or traumata. More old people die in winter than in summer. And more die in the latter half of the night than during the

³⁴Ibid., p. 38.

³⁵Hall, op. cit., p. 208.

³⁶Ibid., p. 201.

first half and the daylight hours.³⁷

Some old people are guilty of overt sex acts. Older people are not devoid of sex interest. In fact, the Kinsey Report suggests that sex interest and even sex capacity may continue into the seventh and even the eighth decade of life.³⁸

Effect of Sex Difference on Old Age

Among women the biological factors which tend to cause the greatest difficulty are the change in outward appearance and the loss of fertility. For women who have used sexual attractiveness and physical beauty as means of achieving domination or security or social status, instead of developing real charm and skill in human relations and a positive self-evaluation for deeper qualities of worth, aging as a biological process is a special threat.³⁹

One author was of the opinion that men are better able to adjust themselves to the almshouse atmosphere than women.⁴⁰ The experience of the author is the exact opposite.

Men have a higher rate of suicide, accident, insanity and genius than women. Men expend more energy than women. It is much more difficult for older men to take frustration than for older women. Women retire from active life more

³⁷Cowdry, op. cit., p. 834 f.

³⁸Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 54 f.

³⁹Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁰Bardwell, op. cit., p. 5.

successfully than men. Men age faster after retirement than women. Men are better able to endure isolation than women, in fact, seem to prefer it as they grow older.⁴¹

The Unmarried of Old Age

The average aged person who has not married is usually "opinionated". He has lived for and by the little things of life, has never been called upon to yield, and, consequently, holds tenaciously to his own ways and ideas. He is selfish, and the penalty is social ostracism.⁴²

The hermit type very seldom fits into an institutional or social atmosphere. His horizon is limited, and he is very self-centered. He discovers that the world does not revolve about him, and he is unable to adjust to his new environment. "They are pathetic figures, unhappy misfits".⁴³

Every almshouse has its share of old maids. Every congregation has its unclaimed treasures. Often they are eccentric, sometimes bitter. Frequently the old maid substitutes the memory of her father for the husband she never had.

They build up a tender fabric of devotion, a shrine as it were, in which they place their memory of the

⁴¹Cowdry, op. cit., p. 798.

⁴²Bardwell, op. cit., p. 7 f.

⁴³Ibid., p. 6.

most wonderful virtues which they feel he should have possessed, and gradually feel that he did possess. The pathetic part of all this is that such worship is usually given to a most unworthy person, a man whose life in many cases was spent in excesses, whose existence was a reproach . . .⁴⁴

The old maids of society, male and female, constitute a problem for the church. Generally their approach to life is unrealistic and impractical. They collect a mountain of worthless, out-of-date clothing, furniture, and books. Some render a very valuable service to the Church. Others are a parasitic drag, by whom no solution of their problems, however kindly intentioned, is pleasantly received.

The Attitude of the Aged Toward the Church

"Older people do turn quite naturally to the church. It is usually the most accessible agency in the community. Frequently it is the only agency of service that is known to many people."⁴⁵ However, many old people, suffering from poverty, will stay away from church services because of the shabbiness of their clothing and their lack of money.⁴⁶

Contrary to popular opinion, there are probably as many unchurched old people as young people.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 20 f.

⁴⁵Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 41 f.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 42.

Older people fall into temptation more easily than younger people, Charles Courtenay claims. He bases this on two points: 1. Their defenses are not so effective, and 2. They have more leisure time.⁴⁸ He lists the following sins of old people: suspicion, discontent, short-temper, prejudice, legalism, claim to infallibility, obstinacy, outspokenness, untidiness, fussiness, cantankerousness, vanity, impatience, interference, and hopelessness.⁴⁹

Courtenay, commenting about unbelief in old age states: "There must always be something desolate about old age, in all its early and late stages; but an old age without God is far more desolating."⁵⁰

Many pastors note that a number of people who had fallen away from the congregation come back in later life. This is partially explained by the changes of interests in old age. "This makes the Christian faith peculiarly relevant to the adjustments demanded by later maturity."⁵¹ Without a doubt, the church is a great comfort to the aged. As one of them says, "What a glorious prospect for the aged and the aging. It is good to be content. It is better to

⁴⁸Courtenay, op. cit., p. 106.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 108-160.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 3.

⁵¹Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 71.

be joyous. It is best of all to be at peace in Jesus our Lord. Thank God, it is for us all - Peace at the last."⁵²

Youth and Old Age

From generation to generation young and old have regarded aging from their characteristically diverse points of view. Against the purely physiological measuring standards, active enthusiastic youth has tended to check off middle or late age at or near the zero and in what has seemed to the remote and inexperienced surveyor a condition approaching inertia and impotence. In terms of an index of influence and wisdom, more admiring and more envious human engineers, even though young, have occasionally extolled, probably to an exaggerated degree, the high attainments of aged experience. And age has in its turn viewed on the one hand the deficiencies, and on the other, the intrinsic positive capacities of youth, now with superior disregard, again with tolerant benevolence, or even with appreciative encouragement.⁵³

In a survey of two thousand men in eight professions, the discovery was made that older men are no more catholic in their interests than younger men. They have as many likes and dislikes as younger men, but they are not identical.⁵⁴ Older men are less daring, and more averse to change than younger men. They generally like their occupation less. Older men are less interested in people and more seclusive in their interests and amusements. Love and

⁵²Courtenay, op. cit., p. 235.

⁵³Gowdry, op. cit., p. 779 f.

⁵⁴Edward E. Strong, Jr., Change of Interests with Age (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 20.

hatred toward other people becomes more intense as men grow older. Older men are more sure of their estimate of themselves than younger men.⁵⁵

Where physical stamina and energetic alertness are of relatively greater account for production than is considered practice, youth will probably always exceed, but in the exercise of the higher mental processes, in comprehension, in reasoning and in judgment, age alone can develop, through year after year of practice, the qualities of a broad philosophical objectivity. Increasing years offer opportunity for increasing effectiveness in life organization. Personal goals become better defined, one's own abilities better understood, the emotional stresses of frustration and disappointment are met with less expense to the personality.⁵⁶

It is quite a hardship for the aged to be shut away from children during their last years. This is quite evident when a young person visits an Old Folks Home with a baby. The old folks crowd around to pet and fondle the child. A youngster, wandering through the halls of the Home is loaded down with cookies and candy from the secret stores of the old folks. Perhaps the Jewish people realized this need of the old for the companionship of the very young when they built combination Old Folks Homes and Orphanages in former years in this country.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 20-4.

⁵⁶Cowdry, op. cit., p. 782.

⁵⁷Hardwell, op. cit., p. 12 f.

CHAPTER V

NEEDS OF THE AGED

There are certain basic needs, peculiar to the aged, which contribute to a longer life and greater physical and mental well-being and contentment. The older person can prepare himself for his advancing age by doing four things: maintaining civic functions, continuing emotional and spiritual functions, maintaining old skills and developing new ones, and keeping his health.¹ With regard to the latter point, the aged person must observe moderation in diet, proper diet with sufficient vitamins, moderate physical exercise, proper care of the skin, moderation of work, and a cheerful disposition.² The part which vitamins play in increasing the life span of an individual cannot be over-emphasized.

The most important organ of the body to the aged person is his stomach. "The stomach has more to do with well-being of the aged than the aged know."³

¹Martin S. Gumpert, "Older People Have Become Important", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 12, 1950), p. 30, col. 2 and 3.

²E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), pp. 875-9.

³Charles Courtenay, On Growing Old Gracefully (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 64.

. . . the aged need a specialized diet, just as the very young do. Elderly people are all experiencing a general slowing-up of life's processes; they live sedentary lives for the most part; their general physical powers of resistance to fatigue and disease are diminishing. It is important, therefore, that their diet be adjusted carefully to their peculiar needs if a high ratio of health and comfort is to be maintained. One of the dietary problems of the aged is due to the very general loss of the power of mastication . . . Another condition . . . is faulty elimination . . .⁴

Sleeplessness is another problem of old age. Therefore the aged need good beds and quiet.

Sleep is less regular. They have good and bad nights, one or more of each alternating, which makes the next day clear or cloudy with dregs. . . . The appetites fluctuate and may readily become capricious. . . . Most, too, not only learn to avoid hearty meals at night, but find it best to lay in most of their rations earlier in the day. Very many find in diet their chief center of interest and solicitude . . . There are alternations of mood . . . The old are very dependent upon weather, climate and seasons. Winter is hardest on them. . . . supercharged with subtle and profound symbolisms of their own stage of life.⁵

The very old often dread sunlight, dress too warmly, and don't exercise sufficiently. As a result they sit constantly in an overheated room and doze, awaking only at mealtime and bedtime. To awaken them to renewed life, one

⁴J. Stahmer, "Diets and Diet Schedules", Thirty-Second Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1933), p. 109.

⁵G. Stanley Hall, Senescence the Last Half of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), pp. 372-5.

must force them into some form of physical exercise, and give them the mental stimulation to carry it out.⁶

Old people have great difficulty mounting heights, entering cars, and going up and down steps. Many of their accidents happen in the bathroom, entering and leaving the bathtub. The old require special tubs. Perhaps the best type both from the standpoint of sanitation and of safety is the sitzbath. It is well for old people to live on the first floor of dwellings, to have low cupboards in the kitchen, eliminating both climbing and stooping to get kitchen utensils, perhaps special doors, easy to open, with simple catches on them. Little study has been given to this area of the needs of the aged.

The aged appreciate entertainment. This is a particular problem when the aged are institutionalized.

To break the monotony of daily routine, entertainment of a suitable type must be provided. It must not be too deep, nor too high, nor too heavy. If it is, it bores instead of entertaining them as their yawning and general restlessness proves. . . . their infirmity, poor sight, hard of hearing, the mental faculties slowed down, wide differences of intelligence and education, even the language, offers some real difficulties.⁷

⁶ Gillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Sweeping the Cobwebs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 62 f.

⁷ M. E. Bunderthal, "The Social Life of Inmates", Thirty-First Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1932), p. 170 f.

The opinion is rapidly developing that many aged are best provided for, not in institutions, but by themselves in their own homes. The program of social security has made this more generally possible.⁸

The old most of all need personal provision and suffer most from mass treatment, for they are not a class but are hyper-individualized. . . . the old often develop what seems to others senseless idiosyncrasies that are really expressive of essential traits. . . . It is . . . hard on them to be denied the privilege of privacy at will, of having certain things all their own. . . .⁹

However the old cannot be left completely independent. They need: the assurance that if they ever are in financial straits they will be helped; the assurance that adequate medical and nursing care will be available if needed; and the certainty that anytime that they are in need their pastor can and will help them.¹⁰

Old people cannot be molded, particularly if they are well over seventy-five. Their modes of living, their table manners, their ability to get along with people are set. The basic consideration with the majority of needy aged is not the rebuilding of character. It is enabling the aged person to meet his needs. The aged man or woman who be-

⁸Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 244 f.

⁹Hall, op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁰Hayes and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 245.

comes institutionalized has a particular problem to solve. He and she have been thrown into an entirely new atmosphere and way of life. New acquaintances must be made, and the old left behind. Some of these aged parents never make the adjustment. Others die in the attempt, of loneliness. Institutionalization presents its own particular type of problems for the aged, and a new set of needs arises. In general, the individual must be permitted as much as possible to lead his life in the institution as he did in the home and environment he left behind.¹¹

¹¹Theo. Katenkamp, "Personality Problems in a Home for the Aged", Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1959), p. 113.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF OLD AGE

Old age has always been a problem to a greater or lesser degree. There have always been those aged whose physical or mental resources gave out long before they were ready for the grave. Friendless and without relatives, it remained for the state or church to provide for them. It was not until the last century that the Lutheran church in America felt the need for the establishment of old age institutions. Institutions are always established by the church when the number of those requiring the help offered by that institution has become large. It is an assumption that by mass care, the church can offer better and cheaper care than by individual care within the congregation.

The problem of the aged, however, has become greater in recent days. Perhaps this is partially due to increased interest in the problems of old age, the newest field of social care. Many other factors enter in to make this period of time the threshold to an era which may possibly be dominated by the aged and their problems.

Population Trends

For the first time in human history people over sixty years of age now constitute a significant proportion of the population. In 1949 about 11 per cent of the people of the United States will be sixty or over. In 1900 it was less than 7

per cent, and a hundred years before that, less than 3 per cent.¹

The following is a table of the percentage of the population of the United States, sixty-five years of age or older.

1850 - 2.6%	1920 - 4.7%
1860 - 2.7%	1930 - 5.4%
1870 - 3.0%	1940 - 6.3%
1880 - 3.4%	1950 - 7.9%
1890 - 3.9%	1960 - 10%
1900 - 4.1%	1970 - 11.9%
1910 - 4.5%	1980 - 14.4% ²

The median age in 1820 was 16.7 years. In 1900 it had risen to 22.9 years. In 1940 the figure had become 29 years. Indications are that it will continue to rise until 1980 when it will gradually stabilize itself about the figure of that year or slightly less.³

The length of life span has also increased. In 1800 the average length of life was thirty-five years. In 1850 the average life span was in excess of forty years. By 1900 it had risen to slightly less than fifty. In 1940 the fig-

¹Paul B. Moses and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Ibid., p. 22.

ure was sixty-three, and only nine years later, 1949, the figure was sixty-six. This latter figure divides between the sexes in the following division: women, 69.5 and men, 64.5.⁴

An interesting set of figures have evolved from the 1920 census report. At that time there were 4,933,215 old people in the United States. The breakdown was as follows: 41.9% were between 65 and 69. 29.1% were between the ages of 70 and 74. 17.3% were between the ages of 75 and 79. The total number of aged in the United States was more than the total population of the country in 1790! It was a greater number than the combined population in 1920 of: Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming, District of Columbia and Alaska.⁵

The United States Census Bureau reported that the population of aged in the United States would rise from fourteen million in 1940, or 10.3 per cent of the population, to more than thirty million in 2000 a. d., or 18.6 per cent of the population. The median age would rise from 29 to 37.4. Only national catastrophe could reverse it. This rising trend of the number of aged could be expected

⁴Ibid.

⁵Abraham Epstein, The Challenge of the Aged (New York: Macy-Masins: The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 15 f.

to come to an end between 1980 and 2000 when the birth and death rate may be stabilized. After this time there might be a slight decline in total population.⁶

The population of the world was formerly able to be graphed in a pyramid. Now it is more in the shape of an egg. The birth rate has gone down, and more and more older people survive to a later age. . . . we now have a narrowed base, a wider middle-aged group and a much enlarged group of the aged at the top.⁷

Numerical increase is not the only cause for the increased problem of the aged. Navis lists four:

1. Changing pattern of family life - children are less desirous to help parents and parents to be helped.
2. High rent.
3. It is almost impossible to save enough money to retire on. Forty to fifty thousand dollars are required for a married man to retire at sixty-five. Twenty-five to thirty thousand are required if he has social security.
4. Hostility of society to the aged.
 - a. They can't keep abreast of the rapid change of times.
 - b. Immigrants with little education are sometimes despised by their children.
 - c. Children seek to be in a higher social class than their parents.
 - d. Increasing mobility of the population.⁸

⁶Navis and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 43.

⁷E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. XXVI f.

⁸Navis and Cedarleaf, op. cit., pp. 25-7.

Changes Within the Family Unit

Throughout history the family has afforded protection to its members The family has traditionally guarded its members against bodily harm from enemies and against economic insecurity in infancy, and old age. . . . The protection of the very old members of the family was formerly rendered almost exclusively by their offspring. With smaller families and greater mobility of the population they are less often so protected. In some countries the care of the aged has been assumed in part by the state today.⁹

It is very easy for the church to enjoin the care of aged parents upon their children. However, the consequences of obedience to the church's commands does not always lead to satisfactory results.

Too often we find the young couple putting off their rightful joy of having children of their own, because of the dependence of one or more elderly persons whom they need to support. They may assume such burdens with fine willingness, but generally the effort to supply happiness to the old by furnishing them with comfort or luxury fails to achieve its purpose. The recipient is not made happy and the young couple does itself and society an injustice through the sacrifice.¹⁰

Generally, the children of aged parents are approaching middle age themselves and have immature children. The problem for them is somewhat different. They are "compelled to choose between the necessity of neglecting their obli-

⁹Recent Social Trends in The United States (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 672.

¹⁰Lillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Sweeping the Cobwebs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 37.

gation toward their aged parents or their own immature children."¹¹

Housing also presents difficulties to the aged. Many of their children live in small and confined apartments in the city. To them the aged parent is no longer a welcome burden.¹² Housing is very seldom a problem in the country. Job opportunities are also more numerous for the aged farmer than for the city worker. However, the trend in the United States at present is toward urbanization. One of the results is the crowding together of young and old with resultant complications and emotional tensions.¹³ A household where three generations live together seldom, if ever, is a satisfactory arrangement. This is especially true where there are young children. ". . . it is practically impossible to conceive of a wholly ideal family atmosphere in the new home with one or more grandparents often present or often visited by the family."¹⁴ In addition to the singular problems which are a part of each family situation, there are

¹¹H. F. Wind, "Problems of Dependency in Old Age", Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1935), p. 108.

¹²Epstein, op. cit., p. 10.

¹³Martin S. Gumpert, "Housing Is Greatest Problem of Aged", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch (November 14, 1950), p. 2D, col. 3.

¹⁴Garry Cleveland Myers, The Modern Family (New York: Greenberg Publisher, Inc., 1935), p. 78.

certain general conflicts in the old-young relationship.

The most usual complex in the case of the aging is their attitude toward the young. They have the standards of a past generation, and believe that the young should pay them marked respect because of their years. The indifference and often the rude response of the young forcefully remind them that they are failing to create the impression that deference is their due. They retaliate by hyper-criticism of the present generation which widens the breach. The young soon return criticism for criticism, exasperation grows apace, each side tries to force its view. The fortunate old finds solace in the similar thinking of contemporaries, the less fortunate fight it out to the finish, which finish costs both young and old heartbreaking misery that might so easily have been avoided.¹⁵

Economic Insecurity

The term "compulsory retirement" has become popular within recent years. Until the boom in business as a result of preparations for World War II, many men, over forty, found it difficult to get and hold a job. The general conclusion drawn was that business wanted only younger men. If a man was over forty, he was useless. This is not true. Businessmen and factories do not hire and fire on the basis of age, but on the basis of ability. If a man had passed forty, but was expert in his field he had no need to fear unemployment. It was only when someone better than he, faster than he, was hired, that he had to fear unemployment. All too often the phrase "They don't want men over forty"

¹⁵Martin and de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 87.

became a cover-up for lack of ability and slipshod working habits. It is true that industry has speeded up; older men cannot keep up with the pace, but they are retired solely on this account, not on account of their age.

This is not to exonerate big business. Business is selfish; very seldom is it concerned about the individual, except for its own profit. The church has a duty to its aged members in the field of economics to develop a more personal interest on the part of the factory employer in his employees, particularly the aging employees, and their problems.

The problem to be faced in old age by wage earners may be characterized as two-fold in character. First, the wage earner who gains his daily bread by his toil confronts the fact of being compelled to discontinue work long before actual senility--not because he is completely worn out, but because he is unable to maintain the pace necessary in modern production--thus being deprived of his means of livelihood. Secondly, he faces the inability to provide, alone, for his support in old age, an interval which, thanks to the development of medical science and sanitation, he is destined to envision for an augmented period.¹⁶

Statistics concerning paupers reveal that most poverty is due, not to negligence or inadvertence, but to social conditions and the economic set-up. People who barely had enough for day-to-day survival were unable to save for old

¹⁶ Epstein, op. cit., p. 9 f.

age.¹⁷ In fact, the greatest sources of poverty, according to one author, are: low wages, unemployment, strikes and lockouts, business failures and industrial superannuation.¹⁸

This economic situation of forced retirement and low wages is a direct result of the present type of economic system. In former economic systems, the patriarchal, the feudal, the guild, and the early industrial, concern was felt for the individual worker and what would become of him. But today in the present system of specialization and mass production, the individual does not mean much.¹⁹ "It is notorious that the insatiable factory wears out its workers with great rapidity. As it scrapes machinery, so it scrapes human beings."²⁰ The specialist faces even greater problems. Retired from his job at forty-five or fifty, he is trained for only one type of work. He is too old to learn another. He cannot compete with younger men at his specialty. There is little that he can do. Only the simplest manual jobs are open to him, those that require the most exertion and give the least return. He is at an age where he must begin

¹⁷Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 2-5.

²⁰Ibid., p. 6.

to cut down on physical activity, not increase it. But he hasn't any alternative.

The time is rapidly becoming ripe for another industrial revolution in America. "From a purely economic point of view it is bad business to regard workers as 'ready for the scrap heap at forty', fifty, or any other arbitrarily set age. They should be allowed to remain at work as long as they are worthy of hire."²¹ Many of the people who will need old age assistance in years to come can be made self-sustaining by revision of basic attitudes of big business toward the aging employee. A large number of workers long to continue in gainful pursuits. Forced retirement produces an unhealthy frame of mind in them.²² A recent newspaper article points out the danger of forced retirement on the national economic structure: ". . . the right of the older person to remain productive must be generally established. If we do not acknowledge this right, then we might have to face a most critical situation, in which a continuously growing group of dependents would have to be maintained by a continuously shrinking group of wage earners."²³

²¹Martin and de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 135.

²²Ibid., p. 137.

²³Martin S. Gumpert, "Forced Retirement No Paradise for Aged", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch (November 13, 1950), p. 20, col. 5.

It is a general rule that the many single aged, childless married or widowed, and aged whose children cannot support them, once they have lost employment, soon become dependent and must have some sort of charitable aid and shelter.²⁴ However, only 4.3 per cent live in institutions or hotels. Four-fifths live in families or with relatives. Neither is a satisfactory solution. "The majority of our present old-age homes are nothing but dumping places for the aged, with an entrance and no exit, where nothing constructive is done for them."²⁵

Economic Circumstances of Retired People

In a survey made of clients of Boston Social Agencies, it was found that one-third to one-half of them had earned enough during their lifetime to tide them over old age. Only five to ten per cent had wasted their surplus. The other ninety to ninety-five per cent of the above one-third to one-half had lost their money through no fault of their own.²⁶ Of a group of institutionalized aged, none was able to contribute much to his support. Seven out of ten earned

²⁴Epstein, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁵Gumpert, "Housing Is Greatest Problem of Aged", op. cit., p. 20, col. 2 and 3.

²⁶Aged Clients of Boston Social Agencies, edited by Lucille Hayes, (Boston: Women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1925), p. 58.

a small amount of money in the institution. One-third were helped by relatives.²⁷

On the nation-wide scale: "Of the 11,000,000 aged living in this country in 1949, about 3,500,000 had no direct income of their own, and of the 7,500,000 with some income almost one-third earned less than \$500 a year."²⁸ The 1940 census showed that more than two-thirds of the people over sixty-five have to depend on sources other than earnings for their livelihood. Only one-fourth of older people are totally self-sufficient.²⁹ In 1947 it was found that more than one-fourth of the aged depended upon public relief for their very existence. If all forms of public participation in the economic support of the aged were rescinded nearly one-half of the aged would starve.³⁰

One out of fifty elderly persons in the United States lives in an institution today. There are approximately one hundred and forty thousand in public institutions and seventy thousand in private Homes.³¹ It was the experience in Boston that an aged woman appears at a social agency three

²⁷Ibid., p. 89 and 94.

²⁸Gumpert, "Forced Retirement No Paradise for Aged", op. cit., p. 26, col. 4.

²⁹Haves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 38 f.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 37.

times as often as a man, although the ratio of women to men is three to two.⁵²

This is the present-day problem of Old Age. It is a problem of growing numbers of aged with nothing to do and no means of self-support. They are living in an age when the family has little room for them. They are in a certain sense "ex-familia". Indications are that their numbers will increase. The United States government is concerned over the problem. It is a vital part of the present struggles between labor and capital over pensions. No group, or individual, has studied the problem sufficiently to arrive at a possible solution of the problem.

The United States, as a nation, stands alone, among the industrially developed countries, in still applying early Seventeenth Century methods to this Twentieth Century problem. Of the populous countries, only China, India and the United States are still without any form of constructive care for the aged.⁵³

Although the above words were written before the Social Security Act of 1935, much of what is stated is true. It is even more true of the church. Methods from the fifth century are being practiced by the church. In many respects the church's charity is medieval both in practice and in underlying doctrine. If at any time in its history, the present

⁵²Aged Clients of Boston Social Agencies, p. 12.

⁵³Epstein, op. cit., p. 11.

time is the time for the church to re-evaluate what it has done for its aged members, and to move in a constructive manner to prepare itself to care for their physical and spiritual needs and wants as they increase in numbers during the coming years. One can hardly visualize what potential abilities their numbers may have to change the entire outlook of this nation.

In solving the problem of Old Age two dangers exist. The one is to solve it by neglect.

When he is forsaken,
What can an old man do
But die?

Surely neither church nor state can afford to admit that that is the way out.³⁴

On the other hand, the church can so care for its aged members that they lose their individuality, their responsibility, and with all work and activity taken out of their hands, sleep their life away in a rocking chair. On this one author says by way of illustration, "The portrait of Whistler's Mother always fills one with despair. It is a presentation of the old who have given up and are content to sit, having been beaten by life and grown indifferent through defeat."³⁵

³⁴H. P. Wind, "Problems of Dependency in Old Age", op. cit., p. 109.

³⁵Allen J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 34.

The old members of the church have a potential that has never been explored, much less tapped. They have needs which their Christian brethren alone can meet. They have worship problems which require special attention from the pastor. They are entitled to special consideration. The church must give it to them. The problems in the business world can be attacked only obliquely by the church. Those in the field of Christian care must be met head-on. The church must evaluate its care of the aged program in the light of the findings of others and in the light of old people's needs. Now is the time to begin afresh, if that becomes necessary, not thirty years from now when the need of care for the aged is at its peak.

At the 1934 General Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, the setting for the work of mercy and love created by G. F. W. Selther, was in the 1934 Report of the Synodical Commission on Social Service. The report stated, "It is likewise the duty of the congregation to provide food, clothing, housing, and the necessities for the poor, the widows and orphans, the blind and lame. We are unable to procure these things ourselves and have an obligation upon special duty it would be

The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church in America, 1934, p. 11. The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church in America, 1934, p. 11. The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church in America, 1934, p. 11.

CHAPTER VII

FORMER ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE AGED

The Establishment of Old Folks Homes

The ancient custom was to do away with the aged entirely. With the advent of Christianity and its subsequent growing influence the nations of the world have become more civilized and passed old age laws of one kind or another. At first the procedure was to place all dependent aged in common almshouses where the poor and misfit, the young and old were thrown together without regard for the individual personality or religious tastes.¹

In fact, the history of care for the aged Christians in America by the various church bodies has been mainly limited to such "almshouses", with, of course, a Christian setting.

Within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the setting for the work of charity had been created by C. F. W. Walther, who in his The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State stated, "It is likewise the duty of the congregation to provide food, raiment, housing, and the necessities for the poor, the widows and orphans, the aged and infirm, who are unable to procure these themselves and have no relatives whose special duty it would be

¹Richard F. Huegli, "The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church," (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1938), p. 31.

to make such provision, . . .".² He further recommended that "almshouses" be appointed to care for the needy within the congregation.³ Walther's emphasis upon the congregation as the working unit of the church in this respect also dominated his ideas of organized charity. Although the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has followed his ideas in other respects, to a large extent, it has left his ideas in the field of charity. Although almoners, or elders, still are appointed in the congregation of today, much of the care of orphans, widows, and the aged is done by the Synod on an institutional basis. In fact, in many instances, the majority of charitable work on the congregational level is limited to the support of these institutions. The idea has become set in the minds of Lutherans that this is the only way to care for the aged, or as one man put it: "In our church it is a tradition that we use the institutional method of care for our aged. It will take a long time before our people would consent to anything different."⁴

²W. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder, Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 107.

³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴L. Winfield Wickham, "How Will Old Age Pensions Affect Our Old Folks Homes?", Thirty-First Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1932), p. 160.

In keeping with idea, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod established its first Home for the Aged and Infirm at Brooklyn, New York, in 1875. It received the name, Wartburg Home. Since that time there have been fifteen such homes established by this church, with a total capacity of almost one thousand.⁵

Various opinions were expressed in defense of this type of care. In 1937, Theodore Katenkamp stated, ". . . is it advisable and better for the aged folks to continue to live in their own surroundings with a pension or sustenance from the aged association, or is it desirable and even better for them to enter into a home for the aged and to live among people of their own ages where they can be better handled according to their various needs and desires? With these older people, it seems to me that the majority of them are happier among other aged people."⁶

Another man, active in the care of the aged wrote:

The inmates of a Lutheran Altenheim form a society of their own; they are persons that the same purpose has brought together under one roof, the Altenheim, there to find refuge and everything that pertains to this life and the life to come as long as they live. In reality, then they constitute a large family, a family not bound by

⁵H. F. Wind, "Happiness is More Than Security", The Lutheran Witness, 70 (February 20, 1951), 52, col. 1.

⁶Theodore Katenkamp, "New Developments in Handling Problems of the Aged", Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1937), p. 107.

the bonds of blood, but by the bonds of hope, and faith, and fellowship.⁷

The Reverend Paul Strasen felt that real security was found in proper care of body and soul. He felt that the Christian Old Folks Homes fulfilled these requirements since they provide: "full responsibility for the needs and wants of each inmate, elimination of the thought of poverty, true companionship, elimination of fear, and soul-security."⁸ He concluded, "When our old folks see that all responsibility is taken from them and that they are cared for you have security built in old age."⁹

In answer to the question: What is done in the Lutheran Homes to promote social life?, this answer was given:

1. Corporate prayer and worship,
2. Voluntary work about the Home,
3. Programs by Young People's Societies,
4. Radio,
5. Movies,
6. Games,
7. "Hymn Sings" at "Family Evenings".¹⁰

Only certain people were allowed to enter the Home.

The chairman of an Old Folks Home Board of Directors stated:

⁷H. E. Bunderthal, "The Social Life of Inmates", Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1932), p. 169.

⁸Paul Strasen, "Building Security in Old Age", Thirty-Ninth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1940), p. 57 F.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Bunderthal, op. cit., pp. 170-2.

Our boards do not tolerate quarrelsome characters and constant troublemakers. They do not house people of sound mind with those who are mentally deranged. They cannot and do not admit persons afflicted with a contagious, harmful or offensive disease. Our families should be safe and protected and they are safe and protected.¹¹

Church Homes Versus State Homes

In 1931 a Lutheran clergyman stated his opinion that state homes for the Aged compared favorably with church homes with regard to equipment, funds and personnel. He objected to state homes solely because they did not offer a Christian atmosphere for their inmates.¹² Shortly thereafter the state system of poor farms was exposed in the press as a failure. The New York Times stated:

The poorfarm is our human dumping-ground, into which go our derelicts of every description. Living in this mess in insanity and depravity, this prison place for criminals and the insane, are several thousand children and respectable, intelligent old folk, whose only offense is that they are poor.¹³

James J. Davis, former Secretary of Labor, stated, "The American poorhouse is a failure from any point of view you regard it. It destroys the self-respect of its inmates

¹¹Strasen, op. cit., p. 83.

¹²E. T. Selle, "When the Shadows Lengthen", Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1931), p. 98 f.

¹³Abraham Epstein, The Challenge of the Aged (New York: Macy-Masins: The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 136.

and it usually destroys the whole of their usefulness."¹⁴

The Rev. L. Winfield Wickham spoke in defense of the Old Age Pension Plan of 1935 as a cure for the miserable conditions that existed in American poorhouses.¹⁵ The Rev. H. F. Wind felt that the major cause of the corruption in state relief was due to the politics involved. However, he was opposed to the very idea of poorhouses. "Even the best poorhouse in the world is a tragedy."¹⁶

Because of the revelation of the corruption in state aid for the aged, those interested in the care of the aged by the church analyzed the church system in the light of the failures of the state, made minor improvements, and felt satisfied that the church's charitable program was correct. Instead of examining the basic philosophy of care for the aged as practiced by the church, and evaluating it in the light of the needs of aged Christians, those interested in care for the aged accepted it as the best solution and sought to make improvements in the framework of the system. This happened in spite of very serious objections in various areas of the work.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁵Wickham, op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁶H. F. Wind, "Problems of Dependency in Old Age", Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1935), p. 110.

Weaknesses of the Institutional Type of Care As Practiced in America

Physical Comfort

One of the basic principles of the institutional approach to old age is that the inmate must be comfortably provided for. His responsibilities are taken away. His meals are provided for. He is sheltered; his clothes are washed; he needs no money; the Home provides pin money for him. This view has been questioned recently.

An authority in the field of Old Age Counseling stated:

The ideal of rest for the old, no doubt, had its place in the time that is no more. In the days of the pioneer when life was a continuous physical slavery one can well imagine that the rest that came when physical force was diminished was looked upon as the fitting reward of age, but today when life has become such that many of us never do a full day of manual labor, something other than physical inactivity must be the goal in old age.¹⁷

In this connection, it should be borne in mind that the trend in labor today is such that shorter and shorter hours are worked per week. This must be borne in mind by Old Age Planners.

Responsible also for this attitude toward the aged is another basic idea, that at retirement age the work of the individual is done.

¹⁷William J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 51.

It has often been assumed that nothing can be done for older people except to make them comfortable until they die, or that they want nothing but physical security. Therefore care for the aged has been frequently limited to custodial care. We have thought mainly in terms of Homes for the aged or of doles of money.¹⁸

When asked what they want most of all, old people almost always head their list with: "a feeling of being loved and wanted and of being useful."¹⁹ The mistaken idea that old age is a time of deterioration and misery leads people to seek to comfort old folks with the questionable compliment, "You look ten years younger."²⁰ Is this not based upon the idea that old age is a thing to be avoided?

Clare de Gruchy wonders in a somewhat sarcastic manner whether the "comfort" offered to the aged is not rather for the comfort of children and relatives, and their consciences, as they heave a sigh of relief when the "troublesome" old man or woman has been installed in an Old Folks Home.²¹

"a life with perturbation and without misadventure is like a dead sea," Seneca observed ages ago, and yet it is just this kind of living we invite the fortunate old to parti-

¹⁸Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 27.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰Lillian J. Martin, A Handbook for Old Age Counsellors (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Co., 1944), p. 50.

²¹Martin and de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 70 f.

cipate in, in order to prove to them and to the world generally, the affection of their children . . ."²²

This feeling is directed against all types of Old Folks Homes, church and state alike. "Many of the old feel that to be placed in such a position means definitely that they have outlived their usefulness and have become merely bodies needing care."²³

It has been the practice to give individual rooms to residents of church Homes, wherever possible. And yet it has been found, though not conclusively, that living in a group relationship helps one to retain his mental vigor.

Recreation

Most Homes recognize the need of the residents for diversion. Something must be done to occupy the time. Some individuals can occupy themselves without need of assistance. Most cannot. This is particularly true of men. As a result, most Homes have instituted various types of occupational therapy.

However the Old Age Counseling Service of San Francisco found that even though residents were provided with everything necessary for bodily health and comfort, though they

²²Ibid., p. 47 f.

²³Ibid., p. 55.

were given hobbies, busy-work, and the like for amusement, they were only a little less unhappy. They had lost self-confidence, initiative and mental vigor. ". . . what the would-be benefactors had not realized was that the objects of their well-meaning efforts were actually having life taken out of their grasp."²⁴ This same counseling center studied a modern Old Folks Home, equipped with the latest improvements, and found the same conditions. They concluded that the problem had not been solved "because the inmates are still only passing the time in an environment created for them; they are still smothered in their old maladjustments, their old dissatisfactions, their old false views of life."²⁵

Another authority states:

At present many of the best-intentioned organizations caring for old people are planning ambitious programs of recreation and amusement for their clients. But recreation and amusement that are mere time-passers are not enough. They tend to lift the old person momentarily out of his boredom, but only for such hours as he participates in them. What is needed instead is the self-fulfillment of the individual, through securing for him an opportunity for growth in his preferential field of interest . . . however found, it becomes the entering wedge for an ex-

²⁴Martin, op. cit., p. 1 f.

²⁵Lillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Sweeping the Cobwebs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 178 f.

panded mental, emotional, and spiritual life,
²⁶

Most institutions offer work on the premises for the resident. Residents usually do the work grudgingly, or refuse it altogether. "It is often only a small-scale repetition of the work at which they formerly earned a good living."²⁷

Even outside the institution, planned recreation is not very successful. Long Beach, California, is one of the resorts to which old people flock. It was found by one agency that even there old folks were not happy, although all sorts of amusements were provided for their pleasure to "while away the hours".²⁸

The Institutional Idea

An institutional life is at best an artificial thing. No matter how independent the resident may be, there are certain rules which he is bound by, certain hours which he must keep, certain obligations which he has. But there are more serious objections. An institutional life is for those who are unable to care for themselves, the children who are

²⁶Glare de Gruchy, Creative Old Age (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Company, 1946), p. 110.

²⁷Ibid., p. 89.

²⁸Ibid., p. 88 f.

orphaned (although this idea is rapidly becoming obsolete), the insane, the crippled, the sick, etc. It is also for those who are socially objectionable, the criminals. Is it for the aged?

Hospitals discharge patients with chronic ailments, and homes for the aged wish to get rid of medical problems. We have failed to provide for the incurable whose need of nursing and medical care is not desperate.²⁹

This is true also of church Old Folks Homes. The following is the stipulation which most Lutheran Old Folks Homes make:

At the time he becomes a life resident a person must be enjoying fairly good health, physical and mental. Chronic invalids and bed-ridden people are as a rule not welcome. It is evident that these health restrictions make it impossible for the home to minister to just such people as are frequently most in need of institutional care.³⁰

The following comments by the Rev. L. W. Wickham deserve serious consideration:

. . . generally only the infirm in body and mind need institutionalization. Old age is a period rather than a condition. When it becomes a condition also, then first do the aged need care in an institution. The aged, but not the infirm, are accepted by our old folk's homes. We exclude those with health defects which make it necessary for them to apply for care. Chronic invalids, above all, need

²⁹Aged Clients of Boston Social Agencies, edited by Lucile SAVON (Boston: Women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1925), p. 124.

³⁰L. F. Brandes, "Old Age Assistance and Its Implications For Our Homes For The Aged", Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1939), p. 115.

institutional care, but few of our homes are admitting such today. We say we are not equipped to handle these so-called institutional cases, when nowhere else do they belong or can they be better cared for.³¹

There has been a trend in recent years, not only to reject those most in need of help, but to accept those whose financial situation is so affluent that they do not need institutional care. They are the "boarding cases". The Old Folks Home is, for them, a sort of "Christian Hotel for Old People". This is a very questionable trend. It would seem that the church is forsaking the field of charity for the hotel business.

'The spiritual motive of providing them with spiritual care is the only justification for accepting them while they are in good health and active in their community. The question is whether they could not be cared for as well spiritually by the local pastor and congregation. Do they not pay too high a social price for the care they receive in the institution when they leave all responsibility behind them, resign their former active and useful life, forego the pleasure and duty of service in their church and community, and accept in return a thoroughly dependent life in the institution?'³²

The greatest indictment for the institutional method of care for the aged is the small number of people for which the various institutions can care. In 1938 2.8 per cent of

³¹L. W. Wickham, "Opportunities For The Development of an Adequate Program For The Care of The Aged Under The Social Security Act", Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1938), p. 88f.

³²Ibid., p. 89 f.

the population of the United States over sixty-five were dependent. The number of people cared for by the Synodical Conference of the Lutheran Church was only .045 per cent! And some of these were between sixty and sixty-five. The twelve Homes operated by the Conference had given a total number of years of service of 441. In that time they cared for 1,785 people, or four per year! In 1937, out of a total population within the Synodical Conference of 1,624,234, these twelve Homes accepted 139 people.³³

Must the aged be cared for on an institutional basis?

In China and Japan it is rare to find any individual in want about sixty years of age, who has not some relative, no matter how remote, whose ethics and religion command him to make a place in his home for the indigent one, and provide for him as if he were a member of his own immediate family. Almshouses, private indoor or outdoor relief for the old, are hardly known in these Oriental lands where high ethical regard for the aged is instilled in the individual's common mind from infancy.³⁴

The author does not mean to suggest that this policy should be followed. But this example does point out that there are other effective ways of caring for the aged. This field of care for the aged is the newest field of social work. Little study has been given to the problem. ". . . the number of clinical specialists actively engaged in attempts to re-educate the personalities of older people,

³³Ibid., p. 88.

³⁴Epstein, op. cit., p. 229. This is a quotation of L. W. Squier.

plus the number of workers doing research in this specific division of gerontology, can be counted on the fingers of one hand."³⁵ An opportunity for leadership in this field is being offered to the church at this present time. It will mean re-analysis of the whole problem and rebuilding of the whole structure of thinking concerning the aged.

³⁵E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 806.

There was great promise... this direction. The value of... been brought to public attention... cause was the degradation... of pride and indignity... theory of individual... plately shattered in the... had overtaken millions.

Industry began to... actually discarding... age was wasteful, both...

Recent Social... McGraw-Hill Book Company...

ibid., p. 1200.
E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging, Williams and Wilkins Company.

CHAPTER VIII

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

The state attitude toward care of the aged changed drastically in the twentieth century from the giving of doles and the housing in almshouses to the seeking of a scientific solution by means of old age pensions and group insurance.¹ Several causes brought about this change. There was great pressure because of the foreign advances in this direction. The evils of the almshouse situation had been brought to public attention. But perhaps the greatest cause was the depression which began in 1929. The number of poor and indigent reached unprecedented heights. The theory of individual responsibility for dependency was completely shattered in the face of economic misfortune which had overtaken millions.²

Industry began to discover that the policy of automatically discarding workers when they reached a certain age was wasteful, both to the individual and to society.³

¹Recent Social Trends in the United States (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 1276.

²Ibid., p. 1200.

³E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 794.

The experience of World War II, when thousands of these same superannuated workers were called back into industry because of the lack of manpower, showed that the industrial age still could produce in a satisfactory fashion.

The idea became more prevalent that the aged must be treated on an individual basis, and that the individuality and personality suffers least in the family or home environment.

If the aging person is to preserve his social skills at their maximum level of adult effectiveness, one thing he must do is maintain a close and friendly relationship with his (sic) family. However, the individual, as he passes from the role of parent to that of grand-parent and great-grandparent must accept a position of reduced authority and participation in family affairs.

. . . But the family also must understand what is happening to the older person. It is not easy for the younger members of a family to find a happy medium between avoiding their own emotion and financial exploitation and acting in a way prejudicial to the mental health of the older person. Under such circumstances the younger group often loses whatever benefits might come from associating with one of longer life experience. . . . The world cannot help but reach out for friendship and contacts with younger people. Moreover, in normal aging there is an increase in the desire to be socially useful, or perhaps it is only an increased opportunity to be altruistic.⁴

It was discovered that old people like a good time, just as much as the young. One of these aged said, "A good secret in the treatment of the aged is to include them in

⁴Ibid., p. 797.

everything, if not as a contributor, as a spectator."⁵
 The idea began to spread that one need not have to stay at home all the time, just because there were old folks living with the family.

With the development of the "keep the aged in their own homes" movement, children were encouraged, more and more, to care for their parents, not only from a moral standpoint, but also from a therapeutic standpoint. Courtenay said for all the aged parents, "Every day we slip nearer to the end. ✓ A little attention now will save tons of regret by and by. Gorgeous tombstones and glowing inscriptions will not be of any earthly benefit to us. A few kindly rays of sunshine now will avail much more. Later on will be too late; we shall be beyond them. So, never mind the tombstone and the grand funeral."⁶

This change of approach could not fail to affect the church's program for organized charity.

The Old Folks Home

Old age counselors began to discover that many old folks were placed in Homes by their children, not because they wanted to go to the Home, but because their children

⁵Charles Courtenay, On Growing Old Gracefully (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 101.

⁶Ibid., p. 102.

were forcing it on them. Cowdry said, "Until we stop wanting older people thoroughly passive and thoroughly impotent industrially, socially and personally, it will be impossible to completely solve their problem."⁷

Those who were developing the old age counseling technique discovered that the fear of aging, rather than aging itself, was responsible in many cases for functional loss in the mental realm, just as in the physical.⁸

Institutions will always be needed for some of the aged. However, for those who are capable of other adjustments, additional provisions will be required to permit normal relationships and activities in family and community life."⁹

The idea of a retirement home for those of means developed. Hotels began to accept the aged on a permanent basis, and to provide extra services for them. The church began to entertain the establishment of a dual-type of Old Folks Home, part for charity cases, and part for those able to pay their way.¹⁰

⁷Cowdry, op. cit., p. 795.

⁸Ibid., p. 800.

⁹John N. Andrews and Rudolph K. Michals, Economic Problems of Modern Society (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1937), p. 553.

¹⁰Theodore Katenkamp, "New Developments in Handling Problems of the Aged", Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1937), p. 108 f.

In former years little investigation has been done on applications. Now, committees were appointed to learn the financial worth of the applicant, his health, and his needs. Formerly many people had given their money away to their children and relatives and entered the Home as paupers.¹¹ It is true that some had divided their money among their children with the understanding that they would provide for them. This practice almost universally led to disastrous results. One doctor was so moved by the problem that he wrote a short pamphlet defending the "greatest fool of them all", the man who, in full possession of his faculties, divides his fortune among his children in the expectation that they will care for him.¹² These people gravitated to the Old Folks Home when they were rejected by their children.

Leaders in the field of care for the aged were led to condemn their past methods:

Every aged person has his own individual psychology, and treatment must not fail to take this into account. Our Old People's Homes particularly have been remiss in this respect. They have only one type of care to offer, mass care in a Home, and every applicant who could meet the means test and was otherwise unobjectionable, was admitted. It never occurred to us to ask some highly signifi-

¹¹Albert F. Muchow, "The Proper Investigation of Altemheim Applicants", Thirty-First Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1933), p. 175 f.

¹²J. Martine Kershaw, Has the Old Man the Right to Live? (St. Louis: Published privately, St. Louis Public Library No. 615995, n.c.), p. 1.

cant questions as, for example: 1. Does this aged person really desire to enter a Home, or is he being simply driven to it through need? . . . 2. Does this applicant have a choice of possible solutions of his problem of dependency? . . . 3. Is the applicant psychologically able to adjust to the life in a Home? . . . 4. Will it be possible for this aged person to utilize, or to develop, personal resources in a Home? . . . 5. Can this aged person make use of his capacities and achievements in the Home?"¹³

One advantage the church homes had, a regular chaplain. Their people were well provided for spiritually, usually better than if they had lived outside the Home. That a chaplain should be a member of the staff of a Home was considered an essential requisite.¹⁴ The need began to be felt for other specialists in the Home, especially an occupational therapist.¹⁵ In some instances, the Home served the church, not only as a receptacle for the aged, but also as a means of gaining new Christians and of regaining the lost.¹⁶

¹³H. F. Wind, "Case Work With the Aged", Thirty-Ninth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1940), p. 185.

¹⁴H. T. Selle, "When the Shadows Lengthen", Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1931), p. 100.

¹⁵Theodore Katenkamp, "Personality Problems in a Home for the Aged", Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1939), p. 112 f. Confer, Mates and Godarleaf, Older People and the Church, p. 190.

¹⁶Selle, op. cit., p. 100 f.

The Homes found it an almost universal rule that the aged, living in a church institution, lived longer and in better health. This was probably due to the regularity of meals and hours for sleep, the quiet, and the absence of care.¹⁷ However, this was not an unmixed blessing. Emotional and economic security do not bring happiness and contentment.¹⁸

Some Homes went to the extent of organizing self-government on a limited degree within the Home, to develop the idea among the residents that they had a voice in the decisions that were made concerning themselves.¹⁹

In spite of a growing awareness of shortcomings and attempts at improvement of the institution, people in general still looked upon the Old Folks Home with fear, and children refused to place their parents in Homes, even though the Homes would have been the best place for them.²⁰

'. . . many people undergo needless suffering and privation in the attempt to provide care at home for an older person who would be far better off, both physically and mentally, in an old age home.²¹

¹⁷ Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 68.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 191.

²⁰Ibid., p. 249 f.

²¹Cowdry, op. cit., p. 797.

Attitudes among residents within the Home improved. This was due to the attempts on the part of the staff to treat them as members of a Christian family, not as charity patients. The term "inmate" was abolished, and instead was substituted the term "resident", or "member". "The aging who are admitted generally enter the Home because they prefer to live with other elderly people."²²

A change was made in the financial requirements for entrance. Formerly all assets had to be surrendered, both past and future. Now, most Homes make an agreement with each individual applicant, based upon insurance tables of life expectancy.²³

At the present time, because of the large waiting lists, some institutions are instituting out-patient care. The prospective resident is provided with medical and casework facilities, and in case of necessity, is admitted upon short notice to the Home.²⁴

Unfortunately, Old Folks Homes must balance their budgets. Therefore, the aged who are financially able to support themselves outside the institution, are being accepted in greater numbers. The institutions, not only are balance-

²²H. P. Wind, "Happiness is More Than Security", The Lutheran Witness, 70 (February 20, 1951), 52, col. 1 and 2.

²³Ibid., col. 3.

²⁴Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 248.

ing their budgets, but are also building up reserves. The unfortunate part of the situation is, those who are in most need of the services of the institution are being crowded out, or given a less preferred position on the list of applicants. It is becoming more and more popular to retire to an Old Folks Home.²⁵ In some Homes, as a result, charity is suffering at the hands of good business practice.

Old Age Counseling

This is a field in which the church has made little or no contribution. Doctor Nascher, the father of geriatrics in America states that the three important factors in dealing with the old age problem are "first, mental stimulation; second, food; and third, exercise."²⁶

The outstanding old age counseling center in America, located in San Francisco, has as its basic axiom the theory: "Normal human beings can grow mentally at any age and reclaim life by reanimating mental processes that have been atrophied through disuse."²⁷ This Center feels that the

²⁵L. P. Brandes, "Old Age Assistance and Its Implications For Our Homes For The Aged", Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1959), p. 116.

²⁶Ellen J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 28. This reference is quoted from the book Geriatrics by Doctor Nascher.

²⁷Clare de Gruchy, Creative Old Age (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Company, 1946), p. 28.

individual is best helped, not by a change of environment, but by a change of aims and attitudes.²⁸ The happy old are happy because they have a mental or intellectual interest in life.²⁹ After a number of years in this type of counseling, the Center came to the conclusion that its basic axioms were correct, and if their technique was applied, good practical results would follow. Its two conclusions were: "Normal human beings can grow mentally at any age . . .", and "Happiness for mature people lies . . . in participation in life."³⁰ It is the person who has lost interest in life, or does not find life worth living, who will naturally slump in thought and action.³¹

Work with old people is more taxing than any other similar social welfare work, since it involves the double task of breaking down a prevalent social misconception, and of rebuilding a personality that has accepted that misconception and all the misery that goes with it.³²

"Each one of them must throw over the traditions of rest and physical comfort, the settling back into a vegeta-

²⁸Ibid., p. 2. The book explaining the technique of the Center is A Handbook for Old Age Counsellors, by Lillian J. Martin.

²⁹Martin and de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 44.

³⁰Lillian J. Martin, A Handbook for Old Age Counsellors (San Francisco: Geertz Printing Co., 1944), p. 23.

³¹de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 41.

³²Martin, op. cit., p. 64.

tive stupor."³³ The old person who comes seeking counsel has made the first step back to active participation in life.³⁴ In cases where real life cannot be given, a "proxy" life is substituted, just as glasses, dentures, and hearing aids are substituted when the real thing is no longer usable as it is.³⁵

Congregational Developments

Even at the present day few congregations have old folks societies. The aged ought to be thought of more often. They should be remembered at Thanksgiving and Christmas by the congregation. Aged should be visited during the year, not only by the pastor, but also by the fellow-members. This applies also to the aged of the community who are not members of the congregation.³⁶

In Cleveland, a church federation began holding services for the aged in a central location. It was originally designed for the old folks in institutions, but within a short time, aged members of the community also began attend-

³³Martin and de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁴de Gruchy, op. cit., p. II f.

³⁵Cowdry, op. cit., p. 796.

³⁶Wind, "Happiness is More Than Security", op. cit., p. 52, col. 3.

ing services at that church.³⁷

The aged have the advantage over the young in that they are available during the day to assist the pastor in work for the church. Where there are a sufficient number of them, clubs and Bible Classes can be formed. Old people look forward to meetings of such organization. The percentage of attendance is much higher than with any other age group.³⁸ The aged should also receive special attention from the pastor.³⁹

Religious growth must be the aim of religious instruction. It is all too easy for the aged to use the Bible and religion as a soporific to lull them to inactivity. One counseling group reports: ". . . these religious slogans that have come to our attention inwardly deal with the passive acceptance of life's trials and crosses. Never have we found a get-up-and-go-text, one that would act as a motivation in devising an original way of getting out of the 'vale of tears' called life, not one that hints at courage and purposeful effort".⁴⁰ In counseling, the pastor must remember

³⁷Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 215.

³⁸Ibid. Passim. N.B. p. 75.

³⁹Alfred Bodtke, "Psychology in the Service of a Lutheran Pastor", (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1949), p. 51.

⁴⁰Lillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Sweeping the Cobwebs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 19 f.

that these Christians, though old, should still be warriors of the cross.

New Approaches Developed Recently

Within the church, one authority recommended two steps to cover the needs of the aged completely. First, he recommended carefully guarded old age pensions and secondly, three types of Homes for those who could not care for themselves: State homes for the aged who could not qualify for a pension, and cannot find a place in a private Home; private Homes, both paid and free, for those without relatives with whom they can live, and who cannot live by themselves; and finally, a boarding-out system for those who could be better cared for in a family environment than in a Home.⁴¹

This same authority felt that in years to come, the individual would be cared for in his home by the church instead of in an institution. As early as 1932, the Reverend L. W. Wickham recommended that the church institute outdoor relief by trained workers, paid by the church, so that the aged could live in their own homes. In cases of need where there were no funds available, the individual would receive a pension from the church, gathered from the members

⁴¹Katenkamp, "New Developments in Handling Problems of the Aged", op. cit., p. 109. Cf., p. 107.

⁴²L. Winfield Wickham, "How Will Old Age Pensions Affect Our Old Folks Homes?", Thirty-First Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (1932), p. 167 f.

by taxation.⁴²

Secular authorities in social work are becoming more and more convinced that the proper place to care for the aged is in their own home or home environment. Even though it is more costly, it is a much better solution for the individual than institutionalization.⁴³

In Denmark, just outside Copenhagen, there is an Old People's Village to which it is an honor to belong. The state provides shelter, food and clothing. The aged do some work, but have ample time to lead a social life and have hobbies.⁴⁴

In Peking, China, there is an old age colony. Around a large paved square tiny homes are built. In each lives an aged couple. Each home has one room with a bedstead made of masonry, under which a fire can be built. In the center of the room is a small stove, table, and chairs. No rent is required. The state furnishes a pension for food and clothing. The old folks sit in the sun by day and visit.⁴⁵

Cottage colonies have been successful in the southern part of the United States. In the north, insulation and

⁴²Richard F. Huegli, "The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church", (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1949), p. 31 f.

⁴⁴Martin and de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age, p. 74 f.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 74.

heating have proved too expensive in most cases.⁴⁶

The Franciscan Brothers have recently completed a 120 bed hospital in La Barque Hills, near Eureka, Missouri, thirty-five miles southwest of Saint Louis. This hospital is devoted exclusively to aged men with chronic illnesses.⁴⁷

One of the leading authorities in this field recommends that old age housing projects be developed in the neighborhood of large cities. The buildings would be designed especially for old people. Routine medical and nursing care would be a part of the rent.⁴⁸

A social worker in Boston recommends that old age clinics be established. "By watching the heart, the blood-pressure, and the kidneys, and applying preventative and alleviative measures, aged men and women might be made more comfortable or even kept longer in gainful employment."⁴⁹

Another great need for the aged are chronic hospitals, located near regular hospitals for emergencies. They can be

⁴⁶Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 247.

⁴⁷Bill McGoogan Jr. "Constant Care is Order of the Day", The St. Louis Globe Democrat, (January 21, 1951), p. 2F, col. 2.

⁴⁸Martin S. Gumpert, "Housing Is Greatest Problem of Aged", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 14, 1950), p. 2D, col. 4 and 5. Op. Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 247.

⁴⁹Aged Clients of Boston Social Agencies, edited by Lucille Maves, (Boston: women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1925), p. 137.

run at half the cost with less equipment.⁵⁰ Or even greater need at present is a church mental hospital. Special wards should be established for the senile and aged disorientated. At present, they are not welcome in regular mental hospitals, and do not deserve to be with the more violent patients. Many advances have been made within recent years in the study of senility, and there is hope that in years to come mild cases can be restored to normal mental equilibrium.⁵¹

Who is to establish these institutions? A church, or group of churches could very well begin the work. Interested individuals could open private hospitals for the chronically ill aged, convalescent homes, or, if qualified, counseling agencies.⁵²

On a small scale, the members of a congregation can assist a crippled or ill member, as was done for one lady with arthritic knees and hips: "Her bed had been built up to the height of a handrail which she held on to as she rolled herself in and out of bed. Many other evidences of ingenuity were seen in the long mop handles and brooms and the built up kitchen table. All thresholds had been re-

⁵⁰Maves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 255 f.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 256.

moved and ramps replaced steps leading into the yard at back and the garden in front of the house."⁵³

E. V. Cowdry suggests the establishment of bureaus where retired professional people can meet to exchange services. "The retired carpenter, doctor, nurse, painter, teacher, all may have something to contribute to each other and to themselves."⁵⁴

The various areas of care for the aged have hardly been touched. The opportunities for progress are almost endless. In view of the rapidly increasing numbers of old people, the church will be forced to enter more fully into this area of social work, unless, of her own accord she enters into it. In view of the many progresses secular institutions and bureaus have made, the church dare not adopt half-way measures.

⁵³de Gruchy, op. cit., p. 50 f.

⁵⁴Cowdry, op. cit., p. 793.

CHAPTER IX

PROSPECTUS

The field of old age care is a new field, this in spite of the fact that all people look forward to being old.

There is much confusion and lack of pertinent knowledge of aging. Little is known of the biological processes, the diseases of old age, their mental, emotional and political outlook. We do not know how to educate them and be educated, how to help them economically, how to provide the proper comfort for them and help them to learn and to work. But we know they must be helped.¹

The words above are the conclusions drawn at the White House Conference on Aging, held in 1950. The report continues:

Under the present system the aging citizen is not relieved of fear and insecurity even with a limited pension or annuity or old-age insurance at his disposal. Methods should therefore be developed which will, in due time, assure him of sufficient services instead of insufficient cash, and provide him with a safe and satisfactory shelter in pleasant surroundings . . .²

The aged person must be kept in a respectable position in the community. He should not be considered a burden. . . . if we restore his dignity and independence, if we

¹Martin S. Gumpert, "Older People Have Become Important", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 12, 1950), p. 3G, col. E.

²Martin S. Gumpert, "Housing is Greatest Problem of Aged", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 14, 1950), p. 2D, col. 4.

listen to his judgment and experience, if we respect his right and challenge his responsibility, we may be on our way to fulfill mankind's most ardent hope: a mature society governed by wisdom."³

Men should never "retire". "The person who suddenly stops the lifelong habit and routine of his daily occupation frequently faces shock and tragedy. Emotionally his life becomes empty, and physically he has to adapt to the strains of idleness."⁴ Old folks should be encouraged to work as long as possible before entering an Old Folks Home, and these Homes should be limited to those who cannot work.⁵

Even in educational circles the arbitrary rule of retirement from university teaching at the age of sixty-five, followed perhaps by a long life hedged by traditional limitations, will have to go, and strange it seems that this has not already been accomplished since Immanuel Kant, in fighting this ruling so many years ago, called to mind the truth "that a man can be a fool at any age".⁶

The idea of pensions seems to be firmly entrenched in

³Ibid., col. 7.

⁴Martin S. Gumpert, "Forced Retirement No Paradise for Aged", The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 14, 1950), p. 20, col. 2.

⁵F. W. Katenkamp, "Problems of Leisure Time", Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Associated Lutheran Charities (Watertown: Jansky Ptd. Co., 1950), p. 118.

⁶Lillian J. Martin and Clare de Gruchy, Salvaging Old Age (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 35.

the minds of American people. There will have to be many revisions in the various systems of pensions offered. Pension systems have their disadvantages as well as their blessings.⁷ Since old age is a relative term, "any system of universal old age pensions must eventually adjust its age qualifications to what the individual is capable of doing at each level".⁸ The danger of too much government control of the life of the individual must also be borne in mind.

As far as technique is concerned, the individual must be dealt with, not the group.

Old people must be dealt with as individuals. Each of them has his needs, his desires, his capacity. These must be taken into account when a plan is made for him. For our aim and goal is not merely to provide food and shelter and clothing for our aged clients, but to enable them to lead happy, useful and satisfying lives. And we can only help them to lead such lives, if we cease thinking of them as a group who can be herded indiscriminately into Old People's Homes and begin thinking of them as individuals, whose lives consist not only of the decaying remnants of once noble traits and capacities, but of the ripened fruits of characters built by experience and ennobled by faith.⁹

⁷John H. Andrews and Rudolph K. Nichols, Economic Problems of Modern Society (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1937), p. 558 f.

⁸E. V. Cowdry, Problems of Aging (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942), p. 87.

⁹H. L. Witte, "Case Work With the Aged", Thirty-Ninth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1940), p. 86.

Industry has a great task before it, to mend the errors it made in former years with regard to its aged laborers. In this area the church can operate as an agency to encourage, to foster, and if necessary, to pressure, industry in this direction. "Physicians, personnel manager, and others by utilizing what we now know about aging, might plan for the later decades of a particular employee in a manner which would result in important gains, not only to the employee himself, but to his firm or factory."¹⁰

With the growing number of aged, the field of Public Welfare also faces problems. If the present system is followed, this nation will develop into a "gigantic old-age asylum".¹¹

The aged, in years to come, will carry a potentially great political vote. The first signs of this are apparent already in California, where the great mass of old age pension laws, passed within recent years to attract the aged voters, threatens to bankrupt the state. The plan has operated in a vicious circle. Other aged, attracted to the state by its climate and by its many special provisions for the aged, have so swelled the roster of citizens, that the state is overburdened with pension commitments. Viewed in

¹⁰ Cowdry, op. cit., p. 792.

¹¹ Gumpert, "Older People Have Become Important", op. cit., col. 2.

the abstract, we may look forward to a nation where the elders, who do not work and produce, vote the money of the younger folk, who do work and produce for their own support and use.¹² There is a greater danger that "utopias" and "idealistic ameliorative programs" will be enacted into law to attract the vote of the aged.¹³ The movement in this direction has already begun. Most Old Folks Homes were solicited in the last election to get their folks out to vote. Cars were provided to transport them to the polls. One would have to be quite ignorant of the motives of politics to believe that political parties would do this, solely to enable the aged to exercise their franchise.

In 1939, the Reverend L. F. Brandes said, "Perhaps the time will come when we shall be able to maintain so-called Rest Homes in conjunction with our homes for the aged and thus have a place in a Christian atmosphere for the aged bed-ridden and the chronic invalids."¹⁴ That time has arrived. Nursing Homes are springing up all over the country. One such church Home has been established by the Lutherans in St. Louis. As time goes by, there will probably be more.

¹²Howard W. Odum, American Social Problems (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 195 f.

¹³Ibid., p. 198 f.

¹⁴L. F. Brandes, "Old Age Assistance and Its Implications For Our Homes For The Aged", Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention Associated Lutheran Charities (1939), p. 117.

Housing developments are inclining to the idea of setting aside certain sections for the aged, with nursing and cafeteria service.¹⁵ As the aged become more affluent, through increased pensions, more such services will be offered them.

One of the reasons why church homes for the aged have been less progressive than they might have been is the lack of trained leaders.¹⁶ Most of the superintendents are pastors, filling a double job of superintendent and chaplain. The Boards are made up of successful businessmen, trained in the business of making money, but not in the business of the care of people. Yet in their untrained hands rests the future of many people.

The future of care for the aged is bright. John Dewey wrote several years ago:

I do not think that it is a sign of undue extension of imagination to anticipate a time when organized administrative care of the aged will extend not only to greater facilities in the way of hospitalization and old-age homes, special nurses and special forms of medical care, including perhaps provisions for living in especially congenial climates and special recreational facilities.¹⁷

¹⁵Paul B. Hayes and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 247.

¹⁶Richard F. Huegli, "The Social Outlook of the Lutheran Church," (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1938), p. 39.

¹⁷Cowdry, op. cit., p. XXXII.

A great responsibility rests upon the church.

Science has added years to life. The church must assume its responsibility and accept its opportunity to add life to the years, in the name of Jesus, who came to give life and give it more abundantly; to help people grow old in grace and favor with God and man; to capture the potentialities of later maturity for the enrichment of their own lives and for the service in the Kingdom of God.¹⁸

The church can also let its influence be felt in the outside world.

It can do much through social action to remove restrictions and prejudices, and to encourage the development of opportunities for employment, for recreation, and for adequate economic support for older people. Beyond this it can be active in changing the ambiguous attitudes of our society toward older people by an appeal to the community conscience, based on knowledge both of ethics and of older people. It can help the community come closer to the social affirmation of the value of older people as primarily people and not as primarily older.¹⁹

"Old age does not need to mean sickness. Our old fashioned concept of retirement should be changed. We must endow the precious gifts of longer time and better health with better and newer purposes of living. This calls, indeed, for the boldest and most adventurous educational experiment which the human mind has ever undertaken."²⁰

¹⁸Haves and Cedarleaf, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁹ibid., p. 80 f.

²⁰Gumpert, "Older People Have Become Important", op. cit., col. 6.

Appendix A

What is Charity?

Charity is a term which has changed in meaning over the centuries. Originally it was equated with love, love in action. The most typical example of this love in action was the first Christian church. There have been occasional attempts over the centuries to return to this first love for Christ.

One of the basic axioms of charity is giving. One cannot do charity without giving. But charity must be more sharply defined than mere giving. Charity is giving without hope, or even thought of return. Giving to gain prestige is not giving. Nor is giving to escape income tax. Nor should appeal for this type of giving be made by charitable institutions.

A peculiar situation exists within the church today. Those most in need of charity find the greatest difficulty in receiving it. It is easy to establish rules for individual charity. It is not so easy to establish rules for, nor to define the limits of, organized charity.

After the establishment of organized charity by the monks of the early Middle Ages, the accumulation of funds was accomplished by begging. This was not a very business-like way of doing things, but it accomplished its purpose. If a particular monastery lacked any particular items, it

begged until it got them. This was charity on the lowest business level. With the passage of time, the monasteries began to accumulate property, and with property, wealth. Begging was pursued only as an ascetic discipline. The monks ate well, lived in comfort, if they wished, and carried out their vast system of charity with little fear for a lack of money to supply the wants of all who sought aid.

It seems to be an almost universal rule that the accumulation of money stifles the charity spirit. There grew up a class of people in Europe who were beneath the notice of the monks. They were too poor, too dirty, too uncouth, and too edoriferous to be welcome at the monastery. This condition was directly responsible for the organization of the Capuchins, who directed their efforts to help these unfortunates.

This same type of situation is developing today. In addition, a reaction to the shoddy business methods of the church in former years has led to the reorganization of the methods of charitable institutions along strict business principles. Old Folks Homes are expected to balance their books. Some are even expected to return a surplus for expansion. This attitude is due primarily to the men who comprise the boards of these institutions. Successful in their own line of business, they seek to make a success of the institution, not in terms of charity given, but in terms of monetary return.

City missions suffer from the same type of thinking. A city mission by its very nature cannot be expected to give a return in money or in souls won. It is a rehabilitation means. When an individual soul has been rehabilitated, physically and spiritually, he leaves the environment of the slum and moves to the more desirable parts of the city. It is an almost universal complaint of city missionaries that they are not allotted sufficient funds to do the full amount of work they would like to do with their underprivileged people.

In the light of the history of charity, this condition can be extended into the future. The trend today is toward caring for those of the middle class. The upper class will neither seek charity, nor need it. Middle class people are nicer people to deal with, are cleaner than lower class people, and can pay their way. Many Old Folks Homes are contemplating a revision of their requirements for entrance in order to provide for those who can pay a monthly board, either out of savings, or by pension. Those who will suffer are the poor. They will either be forced to take the remnants, or to go to the county poor house. A certain percentage of poor people will be taken into Old Folks Homes. This is a governmental requirement. This percentage will be the only vestige of charity left in the program of the church in the care for the aged.

The institutions of the church for the care of the aged are not equipped to care for the seniles, nor is there any prospect that they will be equipped in the near future. Most Old Folks Homes are understaffed to handle these people for whom they are caring. The idea of accepting sick or mentally sick or mentally unsound old people is vigorously opposed by staff members of Old Folks Homes, not because of a lack of Christian love, but because of the overburdened condition which prevails in most Homes. That a special mental hospital should be established for the senile, apparently has not entered into the minds of any leaders in this field.

The rule of caring for those easiest to care for has been followed, and will be followed, unfortunately, in all too many church institutions. This way leads to a much more pleasant atmosphere in the Home, a group of more congenial people, and a good financial return. But it is not good charity.

It is taken for granted that Homes are not run for the purpose of personal financial return. It is very difficult, even under the most ideal circumstances to gain a sufficient return in contributions and entrance fees to pay for operational expenses. And yet, few charitable institutions have gone bankrupt. The trend has been in the opposite direction. In fact, the state Homes, which receive a stated amount of money for operation, have the greatest financial difficulties.

There is contemplation on the part of many superintendents of establishing companion Rest Homes, or Nursing Homes for the chronically ill. These are not operated on a charitable basis. The cost of nursing is too high. If this thought materializes, and if this thought leads to others, with the corresponding development of more specialized units, within the period of a century, these institutions will have become wealthy land-owners. The government already fears this. It remembers the countries of Europe which in times past were bled of their land, and its taxes, by the church. Already there is talk of taxing the charities of the church, lest they dry up the land revenue. This, too, must be taken into consideration, as the church considers expansion of its facilities.

What rules must be established to determine when a church is doing works of charity, and when it is operating a business? Certainly, the church cannot engage in profit making. It must reconcile itself to the thought that its charities are not to make money, and that by voluntary support, it must make up the deficit. That is a basic principle of charity as outlined by Christ; charity is given, not sold. The question asked must be, "What can we do? What does the job require?", not "What is the return?", as is so often asked when the problem of an individual applicant is presented to a board of admissions. This is very idealistic.

It is based on the assumption that the individual members of the church are so concerned for the welfare of their fellow-Christians, though they may not know them personally, that they ask what is needed, instead of what it will cost them. There are such Christians, more than anyone realizes. Many of them are concerned about the growing mercenary attitude of the institutions of charity.

Together with a reanalysis of the methods of caring for the aged, it would be well to introduce a restudy of the Biblical principles of charity.

Unfortunately, this principle has not been followed so closely in charitable work. This is particularly true in the work with the aged. The aged, if any, must be treated as individuals. They are highly individual personalities. Their great bodies of individualized experiences make them highly personified. Yet, the situation, resulting because of this condition, has induced and perpetuated a type of care for all these aged needing care, which least respects this fact.

The institution, by its very nature, cannot give the individual care. It may serve needs at a certain level. All that people about the same level. One must call on oneself, and with his own strength and help. He must live in the environment, an individual life is an individual life.

Appendix B

The Dignity of the Individual

One of the basic principles of democracy is the dignity of the individual. Probably democracy learned this principle from Christianity. The church must be very much aware of the necessity of respecting the dignity of the individual in its work with him. The Lutheran Church has heightened its understanding of this term by the emphasis upon the priesthood of all believers. It places the responsibility for an individual's relation to God upon him.

Unfortunately, this principle has not been followed so closely in charitable work. This is particularly true in the work with the aged. The aged, if any, must be treated as individuals. They are highly individual personalities. Their great backlog of individualized experiences make them highly personalized. Yet, the church, seemingly unaware of this condition, has instituted and perpetuated a type of care for all those aged needing care, which least respects this fact.

The institution, by its very nature, cannot give individual care. It must serve meals at a certain time. All must retire about the same time. One must wait on another, and wait his turn when needing help. No matter how ideal the environment, an institutional life is an artificial life.

Privacy is limited. He who rebels against the rules is insubordinate. Conformity means loss of individuality, loss of responsibility, and loss of personality. The average inmate of an Old Folks Home, after a residence of two or three years, is a very helpless creature when left on his own on the outside. He has lost his responsibility and assurance. Thousands of fears crowd down upon him, as he stands, afraid to make a decision. Old folks, as they make their annual "vacation trips" back to visit the folks in the old home town, find themselves returning to an environment with which they formerly were able to cope, but which they find they no longer can handle, because they have lost their former assurance and self-reliance. They usually return sick. This is partly due to the over indulgence of rich foods while away from the carefully regulated diet of the Home. But it is also due to the many nameless fears and uncertainties which make of them temporary neurotics.

This raises an ethical question. Is this the best treatment which the church can provide for them? Beyond question, the church does not mean to harm them. In its zeal, it has given them the best of everything. But in giving them the best, it has robbed them of their fitness to lead a normal life. It has robbed those of them who could have carried on their normal life, of the opportunity for continued service in their home community. Is this right?

Heretofore the church has been content to abide by the institutional method of charity to the exclusion of other methods. It has seen the physical contentment of its patients during the visiting hours, and has been well satisfied. But it has not seen them in the lonely hours, the hours of trial and bitterness, the hours of which they seldom speak, even to the chaplain who visits them. Most residents like their Home. They enjoy its comforts. It is a richer life than they have ever known. When they feel a lack and an emptiness, they attribute it to some lack on their part. They upbraid themselves for being unthankful. They never talk about it. But that emptiness, that purposelessness is still there. And no amount of occupational therapy can take away that useless feeling.

All people, if they live long enough, reach a stage where they are for all practical purposes useless. Their physical and mental vitality wanes to the extent that, no matter how consecrated, or devout, they cannot "do" anything. For them, the institution is the best place; it is not the best place for the active.

This problem, too, must be considered in the reevaluation of the church's program of care for the aged. It is more a problem of finance than of anything else. An institutional type of charity is the cheapest type of charity that can be provided. A church body which has scarcely been able to

support its institutions will not soon change to a more expensive system. But it will entertain change if its authorities in the field of care for the aged are sufficiently enlightened and motivated to campaign for such a change. They are the men upon whom the responsibility will rest to bring about the change. The aged Christians in our midst must not be looked upon as charity patients. Thanks to consecrated leadership of Old Folks Homes Field Representatives, they no longer have the stigma of poverty attached to their entrance to the Home. It is becoming more and more the natural thing to call upon the Home in the time of need in old age. Perhaps, in like measure, these same men can bring about a type of care more ameliorative to the personalities of these old folks as they have brought it about for their bodies. At all costs, the dignity of the individual should be respected.

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 vocabulary ignore the level and tone of the whole selection
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 quiet tone of the rest of the passage.

"Then the will days were not, nor the years down right,
 then each shall say, I have no pleasure in that." These
 words picture the location of old age. There is a gradual
 withdrawal from pleasure in life, as our power and we begin
 to dread the next day and the problems, unless the youth who
 can scarcely wait for the dawn to be up and active again.

Appendix C

Exegesis of Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

This passage has never won wide renown among Bible readers, although it is probably one of the most sublime treatments of old age, its infirmities, and its final end in death. This is probably due to the difficulty of the language. While the words themselves are simple, the pictures they portray are so closely interwoven with Jewish thought that it is very difficult to unravel and explain them to the western mind.

It is addressed to a youth, or to youth in general. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,". This passage has been translated in a different fashion by a certain Professor Paul Haupt. "Remember thy well (the wife and mother of thy children) in the days of thy vigor." This translation lowers the level and tone of the whole selection to one of crass sensuality, utterly out of keeping with the quiet tone of the rest of the passage. ✓

"When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;". These words picture the inception of old age. There is a gradual withdrawal from pleasure in life. As man grows old he begins to dread the next day and its problems, unlike the youth who can scarcely wait for the dawn to be up and active again.

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain;". This passage may be interpreted in various ways. Some think of it as a description of the various stages of life. The sun is the time of childhood. The moon is the time of boyhood and early manhood. The stars are the sporadic pleasures of adulthood, and the rain and the clouds are old age. For the old man all pleasures are hidden by the cloud of his infirmities. The passage may be interpreted more simply to mean that the old man no longer can see the wonders of nature about him. His pleasures are fraught with pain, and nothing is of lasting pleasure. Rain freshens nature, but for the aged, the clouds return after the rain, so that there is only momentary refreshment.

"In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble". The keepers of the house are the hands. This may also be interpreted with a more general meaning. Strength, even in the powerful, falters before ensuing age.

"And the strong men shall bow themselves,". These are the bones of the skeleton. The backbone is meant here in particular. It may also mean the legs. The back becomes bowed and the legs bend under the weight of years.

"And the grinders cease because they are few,". The teeth, of course, are meant here. Little chewing can be done because the teeth are few.

"And those that look out of the windows be darkened."
 These are the eyes. They look out of the holes of the skull, but are darkened by the cataracts of age.

"And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low,". This passage is interpreted in various ways. In keeping with the previous idea of grinding, this must mean that the lips are fallen in over the toothless gums, for the chewing of food has become less and less. It can also be interpreted to refer to the pores of the body which do not secrete because little nourishment is being taken into the body. The bowels also are closed, and the aged evacuate with difficulty.

"And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird",. The aged cannot sleep well, and rises with the birds in the morning.

"And all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;". The ears which enjoy music and sound grow deaf. The tongue no longer speaks clearly. The voice is cracked and unmusical.

"Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,". This picture needs no interpretation. The aged are afraid of steps, and do not like to walk very great distances. Every step is accompanied by fears of a misstep and a fall.

"And the almond tree shall flourish,". The almond tree of Palestine blossoms in the midst of winter upon a leafless stem, and its flowers, at first a pale pink, turn to

the whiteness of snow as they fall from the branch. This, then, is a picture of the snowy hair which is the crown of old age.

"And the grasshopper shall be a burden,". This passage is difficult to explain. It may mean that the grasshopper jumping about very actively, vexes the crippled old man. The grasshopper was a picture of a trouble. It may be applied here as a nickname for the old man by his children who consider him a burden and a pest.

"And desire shall fail:". The old man lets loose of all earthly attachments for "man goeth to his long home,". He approaches his grave, which will be his resting place for a long time.

The relatives and professional mourners, sensing approaching death, gather like vultures in the streets. But the old man is not yet dead. Hovering at the brink, there are still the silken cords of life to be broken.

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed,". This no doubt refers to the spinal cord or the thread of life. He is letting loose of the cords of life. "Or the golden bowl be broken,". This is the brain. It lapses into unconsciousness. "Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,". Probably the water, here implied, is the blood. The pitcher, then, is the heart. It is about to cease its usefulness. "Or the wheel be broken at the cistern". The whole machinery

of the body runs down. The respiration becomes more labored. Death is not far away.

And so the old man passes from life to death. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it." The body passes to its final resting place to await the resurrection, and the soul goes to its Maker, anticipating the reunion with the body in eternity.

Compare this description of old age and its passing with that of Shakespeare in his play, "As You Like It".

Last scene of all, thus ends this strange eventful history, in second childishness and mere oblivion
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

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