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ADMINISTRATING THE CHURCH TOWARD STRONGER SPIRITUAL  
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ITS MEMBERS

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A thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Practical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1956

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A growing realization that the contemporary Church has not always been fulfilling its function; that is, to be a community of people in fellowship with God through Christ and with each other by virtue of this common higher fellowship, kept in this world by the power of the Holy Spirit in the will. That will of God is for Christians to move His love with each other within the Christian community, and with those still in the community of this world. However, as is usually observable in almost any Christian congregation, it is one thing to assent to this New Testament teaching theoretically, and quite another to find it in action on the local, interpersonal, congregational level. This is especially true in the relationship of Christian to fellow Christian. The modern congregation is such a far cry from those early Christian communities, as far as mutual edification, brotherly love, and concern and responsibility for the brother's spiritual and physical welfare are concerned. For this reason, Christians all over the world are examining contemporary Christianity, probing to see wherein lie its deficiencies that have brought about this frustration of God's purpose for it, and also how to strengthen the Church, that it may do what God wants it to do. The purpose **111** of this thesis is to use these

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Out of all the current interest in the Doctrine of the Church, there has come a growing realization that the contemporary Church has not always been fulfilling its function; that is, to be a community of people in fellowship with God through Christ and with each other by virtue of this common divine fellowship, kept in this world by the Power of the Holy Spirit to do God's will. That will of God is for Christians to share His love with each other within the Christian community, and with those still in the community of this world. However, as is easily observable in almost any Christian congregation, it is one thing to assent to this New Testament teaching theoretically, and quite another to find it in action on the local, interpersonal, congregational level. This is especially true in the relations of Christian to fellow Christian. The modern congregation is such a far cry from those early Christian communities, as far as mutual edification, brotherly love, and concern and responsibility for the brother's spiritual and physical welfare are concerned. For this reason, Christians all over the world are examining contemporary Christianity, probing to see wherein lie its deficiencies that have brought about this frustration of God's purpose for it, and also how to strengthen the Church, that it may do what God wants it to do. The purpose of this thesis is to use these

efforts: (1) to determine the New Testament pattern for the Church; and (2) how, in today's world, one can administrate a congregation toward this pattern, that is, toward stronger spiritual relationships among its members. To do this, we must first clarify the factors which hinder attainment of this goal.

#### Wrong Purpose

The first factor is that a congregation may have the wrong idea of its purpose as a Christian community. The pastor and people have never thought out clearly what the Scriptural function of a congregation is. So if there is some underlying rationale for its activities, it is either too vague and general to be applied concretely to the ongoing life of the congregation, or it is an incorrect or inadequate principle which does not direct the congregation to fulfill its job as it is outlined in the New Testament.

So, for instance, a congregation may have as its general objective, to gain more members. The pastor and people may spend a lot of time and effort organizing campaigns, and exhorting each other to witness. The work of the congregation seems to center around getting people to come to church and ultimately to join the congregation. But once these people join, the congregation does not know what to do with them, because the membership campaign was an end in itself. The congregation was not clear on its purpose beyond persuading people to join, and this goal is inadequate to do the job

outlined in the New Testament. As Allan says:

It is the easiest thing in the world to get people to "join" the church; it is supremely difficult to know what to do with them once they are in; and it is virtually impossible to keep the majority of them within the conventional framework of the Church's life.<sup>1</sup>

This is because the stress had been on the personal approach to God, at the expense of the call into the community of the Church. The congregation had failed to see its purpose as not only gaining new members, but of being the Body of Christ in which the members edify each other and call others into this fellowship of Christ.

The Church has rightly laid stress on faith, since it is only by our personal response to God's personal call that we can be redeemed to a new life. But it has in a far less degree emphasized the other truth that the new life into which we are called and admitted is a life of community and love. The impression which the Church has too often conveyed to the world is that to be a Christian means primarily to hold certain doctrinal beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

It is not difficult to see why, in this kind of congregation, the adult accessions drift away. They are chilled out by the attitudes of the old members, the week-day activities are inadequate for their needs, and so they fail to see how the church is different from their secular culture out of which the church would take them.<sup>3</sup> They fail to see the value of the Church

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Allan, The Face of My Parish (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1954), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Oldham, "The Function of the Church in Society," The Church and its Function in Society, edited by Willem A. Visser 't Hooft and J. H. Oldham (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., c.1937), pp. 159 f.

<sup>3</sup>Allan, op. cit., pp. 34-37.

because it is not being what the Church is supposed to be.

Another wrong purpose is what we might call activism. When the pastor or the people begin to realize that simply gaining new members as an end is not enough, they will often decide that the congregation needs to do more things. But because they still have not clearly thought out their purpose, the activities are apt to become an end in themselves as was the evangelism. They may be superficial, as many organizations within any congregation, which meet simply to carry on its business to keep itself going. Or the activities may be even secular: suppers, sales, card parties, and the like, usually to raise money.

And is there anything worse than the dreadful treadmill of a sectarian congregation? The endless fight to raise more money so we can go on another year and raise more money so we can go on... This is a paper church, which goes nowhere, which has no dream except to keep its doors open, which has no idea of a new world except a safer one for itself so it can go on and raise more money so it can go on. . . . That treadmill, what a curse it is.<sup>4</sup>

Although these activities may give the members something to do "for the church," they are more often than not convenient escapes from the real work of the church, namely, showing God's love to people, "especially unto those who are of the household of faith."<sup>5</sup> This infects also the pastor, who finds it easier to submerge himself in organization and routine than in

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<sup>4</sup>Stephen F. Bayne, The Optional God (New York: The Oxford University Press, c.1953), p. 129.

<sup>5</sup>Galatians 6:10.

people. Prof. James Stewart in Heralds of God is quoted by Allan:

Beware the professional busy-news which is but slackness in disguise. The trouble is that we may even succeed in deceiving ourselves. Our diary is crowded. Meetings, discussions, interviews, committees, throng the hectic page. We are driven here, there, everywhere by the whirling machinery of good works. We become all things to all men. Laziness? The word, we protest, is not in our vocabulary. Are we not engrossed from morning till night? Do we not conspicuously spend our days under the high pressure of an exacting life?<sup>6</sup>

### Individualism

In fact, even if the congregation is aware of its responsibility to edify each other, the danger is that this will be delegated and taken impersonally. This is the second factor which hinders the attainment of the congregational goal. We might call it lack of fellowship, or individualism. Because the congregation has not seen its purpose clearly enough, both as individual members of the Body of Christ, and as a Christian community, it is too often satisfied to be a group of separated individuals, loosely joined together by the common allegiance to a building, or a pastor, or a constitution. So what edification may be done, is done through a representative, the pastor, preferably in large groups. No wonder Clifford can say:

Generally speaking, the buildings are constructed and the week's programme arranged in such a way as to put in the background the idea of the church as a fellowship. It is not without significance that most people mean by the Church "the building round

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<sup>6</sup>Allan, op. cit., p. 103.

the corner." After all, they come in contact with nothing else except the Parson as an individual. Whenever they "go to church" it is to attend a service at which they look at the backs of other people's heads, or are vividly aware of others looking at the back of theirs! They, in company with others, are attending church, an activity in which certain individuals engage on Sundays and on other special occasions.<sup>7</sup>

This individualism in the Church is a vicious thing, since it goes against the very nature of the Church. The Lord left a community behind, not just a book or creed or precepts.<sup>8</sup> Thus it can only be an academic question whether it is possible for a Christian to be outside a Christian community. Likewise, by definition, a Christian community is a group of individuals living for their Lord and for His Body, and not for themselves, isolated from the Body. "Fellowship with Christ and fellowship with man are correlative, the one cannot exist without the other." Or as Aulen says to further clarify individualism, it is all right if understood

as immediate and direct relationship between God and man. If, however, the word individualism is used in its ordinary meaning and individualistic Christianity is made to imply that the individual is independent to the church, that he is isolated from the fellowship with others, and that he is antecedent to the church, such an individualism is unrealistic and contrary to the conditions under which faith lives.

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Rowntree Clifford, The Mission of the Local Church (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1953), pp. 68 f.

<sup>8</sup>Leslie Newbigin, The Household of God (New York: Friendship Press, c.1953), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1953), pp. 13 f.

. . . The Christian life in faith is not isolated from the fellowship; it lives and is nourished, "is born and nurtured" in that solidary interrelationship of blessing which the Holy Spirit creates through the ages. . . . If individualism means isolation of the individual, it is in reality that sin from which man is delivered in and through faith. If individualistic Christianity means that from the point of view of the individual Christian the church is secondary, such a conception is to faith unrealistic and contrary to the actual conditions under which faith lives.<sup>10</sup>

This individualism then, tends to destroy the true meaning of Christian fellowship by causing the congregation to be impersonal and selfish in its interpersonal relationships. The Church was established that the believers in Christ might strengthen each other through the Word and Sacraments until their Lord returns. Individualism isolates these Christians who should be strengthening and being strengthened. Not seeing their responsibilities clearly, they are content to see large church attendance and a well organized program of activities and social life within the congregation, and fail to see the importance, the vital necessity, of stronger spiritual interrelationships among the members, for which the congregation exist. The congregation dare not become a religious club, "a group of people who join together socially with a religious interest."<sup>11</sup> Instead,

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<sup>10</sup>Gustaf Aulen, "The Church of God", The Faith of the Christian Church, translated from the Swedish by Eric H. Wahlstrom & G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 349.

<sup>11</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 73.

The Church is created from above. It is the divine Society. Its corporate life is a necessary expression simply because God has saved man into a community. Unless the corporate life of the Church is rooted and grounded in God's saving acts, unless this constitutes the life men live together, then we are not talking about the Church at all.<sup>12</sup>

This is probably due to the failure to see the need of a living community in Christ, both from a sociological viewpoint and from the New Testament's teaching. Today, especially in America, the competition and the individualism in the business and social life of the people tend to make people lonely and insecure. The growth of the city and suburb, where you may never learn the name of the family who lives below you in the apartment house or next door in the subdivision, has created a serious need in our society, the need to belong, to be recognized. Coupled with this is the insecurity in the world today, not only on the international level, but on the personal, family level. This is one of the factors behind the upsurge of interest in religion. People are trying to find something bigger than themselves to hang on to.. And the Church should have the answer to both these concerns. It should provide a community, a fellowship where one is accepted and cared for.<sup>13</sup> It should also, within this community, give strength from God for the problems and stresses of everyday life.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church, Revised Edition (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1955), pp. 42-45.

The Church should be the place where barriers of race, nationality, class, sex, and education are done away; where the unprivileged, the down-trodden, the outcast, and the despised find a welcome and feel themselves at home; a meeting-ground where those who are divided in questions of politics and economics can realize afresh their unity in loyalty to a common Lord, can discuss their differences in the reality of this fellowship and learn mutually to understand one another. In the modern disintegration of social life the Church ought to provide centres in which men can find protection, shelter, and security in the care and love of their fellow-men, and re-discover the meaning of community in the support and comradeship of a society, the members of which bear one another's burdens and seek the good of all. The Church ought also to be the place not only where support and encouragement are given to those who need it, but where the more robust and vigorous may find their individualism and self-will disciplined and tempered, and their purposes purified and strengthened in a common endeavor to learn and fulfil the Will of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

But the Church is not only a means to an end. From the viewpoint of the New Testament, it is an end in itself. "The Gospel is about the Church, the Divine Society into which men are called and into which they are saved. In the last resort there is no salvation except salvation into the family of God."<sup>15</sup>

So also Brunner:

Walking in the light of the revealed truth and walking in the fellowship which that truth has brought into being are inseparably bound up. Consequently it is impossible to consider communion with the Ecclesia as a means to an end; it must be realized that it is the end itself, . . .<sup>16</sup>

The Church must be a fellowship, a community; it is not the Church if it is anything else. And as a fellowship, it must be created in God's love and existing to share that love with each other.

<sup>14</sup>J. H. Oldham, op. cit., pp. 161 f.

<sup>15</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 14.

So as a result of the lack of a clear idea of the Church's purpose, the Church is apt to slip into activism, which, in the final analysis, is selfish individualism, the opposite of Christian love and concern for the brother.

### Lovelessness

This leads us to the third factor in hindering the Church from being what its Lord wants it to be. That factor is lovelessness. This may show itself in outright strife and rivalry, or it may appear in a more seductive way, in simply failing to see the needs of the brother or to do anything about them.

(This is especially true of spiritual needs.)

Too often a congregation is satisfied with the excuse, "It is only natural to have disagreements and jealousies, etc.," when it is bothered with these evils in the church. But this is denying the very essence of the Church, that it is Christ's Body, and that He works through His members to heal any disease which appears elsewhere on the Body. These various sins of lovelessness--pride, racial discrimination, lust for power, and party strife--are as deadly in the Body of Christ as sins of lasciviousness are against the individual body.<sup>17</sup> "To do anything to break the fellowship is a supreme sin for the Christian."<sup>18</sup> A loveless congregation is not a pretty sight, and it is so because it is not what the Church is supposed to be. As Clifford says:

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<sup>17</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

More serious still [than the assumption that nothing can be done about these sins because they are natural and inevitable] is the common assumption that breaches in personal relationships within the life of the Church do not matter. Jealousy, envy, pride, lust for power, have become for many respectable sins, of which there is no real need to repent.<sup>19</sup>

But this lovelessness is not isolated to those strife-ridden congregations. It may also be in mutually kind, respectable groups, in the form of failure to find and meet the needs of the brother with love. The opposite of love is isolation and living for oneself, "despite external membership in the collectivity and sharing in its holy life."<sup>20</sup> So when a congregation has failed seeing its mission as a sharing of the love the Lord has shown them, they will

succeed in convincing themselves that they have satisfied the demands for love through their contributions for restricted purposes, such as the support of the ministry, school, and missions, and thus escape the challenge of spiritual or physical difficulty in their fellow members which they can meet on the route of direct contact. Many a Christian can test this apathy in himself as he observes his reluctance to discuss spiritual problems within his family or face to face with Christian friends, which are commonly discussed from his pulpit.<sup>21</sup>

So an unclear purpose breeds activism, and activism breeds individualism, and individualism breeds lovelessness. This can happen in the largest or the smallest, in the most "liberal" or

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>20</sup>Anton Fridrichsen, "The New Testament Congregation," This is the Church, edited by A. Nygren, trans. by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1952), p. 49.

<sup>21</sup>Richard R. Caemmerer, The Church in the World (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1949), p. 38.

the most orthodox congregation. It is simply the sign that the world and its materialism and selfishness has invaded the Church.

In Brunner's words, the church has become institutionalized:

Now there was faith, in the sense of correct, orthodox belief, but separated from love. Now there was a community in the sense of a Church with offices, but no longer the solidarity of reciprocal service.<sup>22</sup>

In the final analysis, then, what keeps a congregation from having stronger spiritual relationships among its members is the sin in its members. The Church is made up of sinners who have been made holy by the intervention of God's love in Christ in their lives.

The fact is that the Church is composed of ordinary people with the foibles and peculiarities of ordinary people. It is not a society of saints, not even of the good. "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," said Jesus, and the Church is open to all who are in any way conscious of their need.<sup>23</sup>

So this becomes a problem which calls again for a divine intervention. No program, no matter how ingenious, no preaching, no matter how eloquent, no thesis, no matter how scholarly, can change people from isolated, selfish, sinful individuals to a loving, edifying, spiritually growing community of saints. "It is not in the nature of institutions, . . . to originate or propagate life. Such movements of life originate from the working of the Spirit among men personally."<sup>24</sup> Our Lord promised

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<sup>22</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>23</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas R. Morton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, c.1954), p. 92.

His Spirit, and He kept His promise, so that, throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit's activity in the Church was given the credit for the fellowship of the Church. As Thornton comments:

The essence of the koinonia was a life shared in common. In Acts it is described by reference to a gift of the Spirit outpoured and received. The common object was the gift of the Holy Spirit as imparted to the disciples.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the only answer to this problem is the Holy Spirit, and since He is in the community in the Word and Sacraments, any program must foster a renewed emphasis on the means of Grace, and continually exhort to prayer that the Holy Spirit might work in abundant measure, using the members of the community as His instruments. A transformation to a congregation conscious of its corporate and individual responsibility toward the spiritual life of one another certainly is possible, but only through the miracle of regeneration worked by the Holy Spirit. With Paul, who was very conscious of the sin in his congregations, we still talk of them as holy units, because the things which create the Kingdom of God on earth, i.e., faith, conversion, and righteousness, are not human achievements, but the gift of God the Holy Spirit through the Church.<sup>26</sup>

So praising God for His Gifts to and through the Church, this thesis is written in an attempt to find a God-pleasing plan

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<sup>25</sup>L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, c.1942), p. 75.

<sup>26</sup>Fridrichsen, op. cit., p. 55.

of administrating a congregation to fulfill its purpose, of sharing God's love through Jesus Christ with one another, and endeavoring to bring others into this fellowship, that there may be stronger spiritual relationships among the members.

of God's purpose for him in the Church. This would visit to the heart, but such a theme as this, except for the fact that we don't have to depend on man's efforts to strive toward the goal for the Church. This is God's work, for the Church is His creation. That the Church is God's creation is plainly taught in the Bible, and as we see it as His creation, we also see for what purpose God created it, how the early Christian Church saw this purpose, and how they fulfilled it. This chapter will attempt to describe these teachings as guidelines for our further study of the problem. Thus we will outline the Biblical pattern of the Church's community, the Church's worship, the Church's stewardship, and the Church's outreach, especially as they appear as corporate activities which show strong spiritual relationships among the members of the Church.

### The Church's Community

#### with God

As we look into the Bible, we find that God, from the earliest times, chose for Himself a people. Going back to Abraham, we find God promising to create a people, to bless them, and to

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

As we have seen, man's sin keeps him from full realization of God's purpose for him in the Church. This would vitiate the need for such a thesis as this, except for the fact that we don't have to depend on man's efforts to strive toward the goal for the Church. This is God's work, for the Church is His creation. That the Church is God's creation is plainly taught in the Bible, and as we see it as His creation, we also see for what purpose God created it, how the early Christian Church saw this purpose, and how they fulfilled it. This chapter will attempt to summarize these teachings as guidelines for our further study of the problem. Thus we will outline the Biblical pattern of the Church's community, the Church's worship, the Church's stewardship, and the Church's outreach, especially as they appear as corporate activities which show strong spiritual relationships among the members of the Church.

#### The Church's Community

##### with God

As we look into the Bible, we find that God, from the earliest time, chose for Himself a people. Going back to Abraham, we find God promising to create a people, to bless them, and to

protect them.<sup>1</sup> God was creating His people, His Church, which would worship Him, do His will, trust in Him for their needs, as a community. We see this a little clearer as God takes this people out of Egypt. As He had made a covenant with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, so He makes a covenant with the children of Israel:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.<sup>2</sup>

Again and again, through Moses, the Judges, and the prophets, the Lord reminded Israel of their special relationship with Him. He it was who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; He it was who defeated their enemies; He was their Father, for He had created them in a very special way.<sup>3</sup> But even then, to show that Israel was not simply created to be a political entity, but a group of people connected to God by His covenant grace to do His will, we see the idea of the remnant emphasized by the prophets.<sup>4</sup>

This is made even more clear when we see that Jesus and the Apostles viewed the New Testament Church as a continuation, an extension, of the Old Testament people of God, chosen and

<sup>1</sup>Gen. 12:2,3.

<sup>2</sup>Exod. 19:5,6.

<sup>3</sup>Exod. 6:7; Deut. 4:37; II Sam. 7:23; Ps. 135:4; Is. 43:1; 45:4; 63:16; Hos. 11:1.

<sup>4</sup>Is. 1:9; 4:3; 11:16; 37:4; Jer. 6:9; 23:3; 31:7; Ezek. 14:22; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 2:9; cf. also Rom. 9:27; 11:5.

created by Him.<sup>5</sup> So Jesus had in mind a community which was at once new, and at the same, a continuation of the old. Flew gives as evidence five aspects of Jesus' teaching and action: (1) His conception of a new Israel, especially in view of His references and allusions to the Remnant and His role as the Servant, the representative of Israel; (2) "The fact that He taught His disciples, as the nucleus of the new Israel; the ethical teaching of Jesus presupposed a new community, and the power to fulfil the new demands."<sup>6</sup> (3) His conception of Messiahship; inherent with the Messianic idea is that the Messiah would gather a community in the last days. (Here Flew would include the concept of the Son of Man as the representative of the Saints of the most High.) (4) His message of the Gospel itself constituted the new community;

"the fact that He preached and that His message was of a certain kind, inevitably mark off those who accepted it from those who did not."<sup>7</sup> [The message of the reign of God and the new covenant also inevitable imply a community.]

(5) "The fact that He sent out His disciples on a certain mission. That mission governed His conception of apostleship."<sup>8</sup> This continuity of community was felt by the Apostles, who continued to worship in the temple and synagogues, and who preached the Gospel first

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<sup>5</sup>Rom. 11:17-22; Gal. 4:28.

<sup>6</sup>R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church (London: The Epworth Press, c.1938), p. 48.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. This evidence is summarized on p. 48, with a more exhaustive study continuing on to p. 122.

to the Jews.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Peter and the others would have been loath to extend the invitation to be joined to Christ and His people to the Gentiles, had not God directly intervened.<sup>10</sup> St. Paul could mourn the hardness of his people, and identify the Gentile Church with Israel, calling them the twigs which were grafted on to the vine of Israel.<sup>11</sup> At any rate, it is clear that the Church is regarded as an act of God, not of man. One could quote many passages to show this idea which is repeated throughout the New Testament, as Acts 2:47, "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."<sup>12</sup> So the fellowship in the Church is first of all by God and with God. As Aulen says:

the primary viewpoint of Christian faith relative to the Church is that it exists as a divine creation in the world of men. Under such circumstances it is clear that one cannot rightly understand the nature and function of the church as long as one follows a sociological approach. If the church rests on the foundation of the finished work of God in history and the new age thereby introduced, and if the church exists in the world as the dominion of Christ on earth and a fellowship created by the Spirit, it would not only be unsatisfactory but directly misleading to define the Church in terms of human endeavors and efforts. The church is then something entirely different from a mere human organization, or a human society and association for the satisfaction of certain religious needs and interests.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Acts 1:8; 3:1; 5:42; and others.

<sup>10</sup>Acts 10-11.

<sup>11</sup>Rom. 9-11.

<sup>12</sup>Cr. also Eph. 1; Acts 20:28; I Thess. 2:14, and all the passages which give a picture of the Church, as the Body, Vine, Building, Bride, Household, etc., which show the priority of God's activity.

<sup>13</sup>Gustaf Aulen, "The Church of God", The Faith of the Christian Church, translated by Eric W. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 335.

This means that we do not have to develop any feeling of fellowship before fellowship would be present. This fellowship in the Church is already there because God has established it. This is true because we all have fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ. "The koinonia draws its fundamental character, not from the degree of spiritual intimacy to which we may attain with some of our fellow-Christians, but from communion with God."<sup>14</sup> This communion with God exists in Christ. "So then, the specifically Christian characteristics of the koinonia, as a human fellowship, depend wholly upon its essence, that is, upon the communion of man with God in Christ."<sup>15</sup> For Christ has, by his atonement, reconciled God with man,<sup>16</sup> and made him an heir of God<sup>17</sup> in close fellowship with Him.<sup>18</sup>

Nor is this theocentric activity of establishing fellowship between God and man confined to only two of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. As we say that God the Father creates and chooses His people, and that this has been accomplished by the redemptive work of the Son, so we must say that the fact of the Church, the community of those in fellowship with God and with each other, is made possible, is energized by the work of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>14</sup>L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, c.1942), p. 158.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>16</sup>Rom. 5:10, et. al.

<sup>17</sup>Gal. 4:5,6; Eph. 1:5; et. al.

<sup>18</sup>John 5:20; I John 1:3,6, et. al. In this connection we could also list all the "in Christ" passages.

He is the promised Strengthener of the Church,<sup>19</sup> whose activity does not stop with the Pentecostal creation of the New Testamental Church. Indeed, some have seen in Acts 2:42 a reference to the common sharing of the Holy Spirit, and so interpret II Corinthians 12:14 and Phillipians 21:1 to mean "the participation in the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup> This seems supported in the fact that those who would repent, believe, and be baptized, would receive the "gift of the Spirit."<sup>21</sup> At any rate, it seems clear that "what the first Christians had in common was not an inspiring experience, but a gift of the Spirit received and permanently shared."<sup>22</sup> So Brunner says:

The outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the existence of the Ecclesia are so closely connected that they may be actually identified. Where the Holy Ghost is, there is the Christian communion. and the Holy Ghost is not otherwise there than as the Spirit given to the community. Therefore the community as bearer of the Word and Spirit of Christ preceded the individual believer. One does not first believe and then join the fellowship: but one becomes a believer just because one shares in the gift vouchsafed to the fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

#### With Fellow-Christians

So this new relationship with God, through His own activity,

<sup>19</sup>Joel 2:28; John 15:26.

<sup>20</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 74. Cf. also Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1953), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Acts 2:38; 10:47; 11:15-16.

<sup>22</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>23</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 11.

also creates a new relationship with fellow men, especially those who share in this fellowship with God. Thus this koinonia is in two directions:

On the divine side it was a mystical union with and participation in the life of Christ through receiving the gifts of the Spirit. On the human side it consisted in a fellowship of brethren, whose mutual relations were transformed in quality and significance through the gift which they shared.<sup>24</sup>

Because of man's sin, any holy, peaceful fellowship or community is possible only with this divine intervention. It is only by virtue of Christ's redemption and the Holy Spirit's activity that the barriers between God and man, and man and man, are eliminated. Contemporary theologians writing on this subject are very explicit in this, and perhaps some of their finest passages are just in this area. For this reason, rather lengthy quotations from several are here included. Bonhoeffer, commenting on Eph. 2:14:

Without Christ we also would not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego. Christ opened up the way to God and to our brother. Now Christians can live with one another in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one.<sup>25</sup>

And again:

The fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Not only the other person who is earnest and devout, who comes to me seeking brotherhood, must I deal with in fellowship. My brother is rather that other person who has been redeemed by Christ, delivered from his sin, and called to faith and eternal life. Not what a man is in himself as a Christian, his spirituality and piety, constitutes the basis of our community. What

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<sup>24</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>25</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, translation and introduction by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Bros., c.1954), pp. 23 f.

determines our brotherhood is what that man is by reason of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.<sup>26</sup>

So also Caemmerer:

The Church is a fellowship in Christ. The progress of redemption in Christ was one by which God designed to gather all together into one Christ. That redemption took away whatever was between men and God and hence all that was between man and man; thereby Jew and Gentile became of the oneness, the same body, the same fellowship, one family of God in Christ. Hence a bond and tie exist between the individuals of the Christian Church, the bond of love and peace which is established by Gospel and Sacrament. That bond demonstrates itself not only in a general way, but practically and actively, in the overcoming of flesh and world; in the exercise of Christian love in the practical relations of life in general and in the various Christian callings in particular.<sup>27</sup>

So also Hunt:

It is by receiving this sacrifice as God's act for our forgiveness and redemption that we become members of the church-community, citizens of the kingdom of God. . . . All that we do is accept this gift. Then we are numbered with the people of God. Then we are "holy brethren," . . . our new condition of peace with God must affect our relationship with other people. For one thing, we look on all men with a new kind of equality. . . . We are equal because we recognize one another as (a) equal sinners, (b) saved by the same single sacrifice, the death of Christ. . . . Another thing that happens is that we stop trying to justify ourselves. . . . With self-justification gone, one of the chief obstacles to community is eliminated. . . . A third result of accepting God's gift of His Son is that we make ethical decisions as carefully and prayerfully as we can, but knowing full well that some of them will be wrong. . . . Therefore, we live daily in an atmosphere of forgiveness.<sup>28</sup>

So also Thornton:

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<sup>26</sup>ibid., p. 25.

<sup>27</sup>Richard R. Caemmerer, The Church in the World (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1949), pp. 6 f.

<sup>28</sup>George Laird Hunt, Rediscovering the Church (New York: Association Press, c.1956), pp. 46-48.

The old self was led captive by the forces of "the flesh." But the new self lives in a sphere where the conflict between the inward and the outward, conscience and nature, is resolved into a new harmony. When the love of Christ is in control, the peace of Christ settles all disputes. This is true in the koinonia of Christ's Body, just in so far as it is also true in the interior life, where "Christ liveth in me." For the horizontal relations of the koinonia depend upon the vertical relations. The fellowship of the members with one another in the peace of Christ depends upon the control of Christ's love over all, upon the communion of all with Christ as co-partners in a common life.<sup>29</sup>

So also Oldham:

The Church is the realization of true community. Its essential nature is fellowship between persons. It can be the manifestation of the true meaning of community because its life is rooted in the love of God. It is only the love of God which can deliver us from our self-centred isolation and set us free to love our fellow-men. The more we struggle to overcome our egocentricity the more egocentric we become. Only a love that comes to us from without and gives our lives a new centre in the One who loves us can break the fetters of our self-love. The Church is thus the sphere of free relations of mutual love and trust between persons, and is meant to be the witness to the world of the true relations of men with one another.<sup>30</sup>

Now that it has been shown that the Church is a community of people in fellowship with God through the redemption of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit, and hence in fellowship with each other, we must see what the function of this community is as regards its members. Perhaps the very word koinonia gives the answer. Du Brau sees it used in three ways in the New Testament: (1) As common sharing of spiritual or material things (Phil. 1:5,7; 3:10; Philam. 6); and possibly Acts 2:42;

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<sup>29</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 154

<sup>30</sup>J. H. Oldham, "The Function of the Church in Society," The Church and its Function in Society, edited by Willem A. Visser 't Hooft (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., c.1937), p. 160.

II Corinthians 3:14; Phil. 2:1 (2) as mutual help and assistance (Acts 2:42; II Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Heb. 13:16); and (3) as the existing intimate fellowship in the association as a divinely created and established communion of all believers in Christ (I Cor. 1:9; II Cor. 6:14).<sup>31</sup> The first two are actually functions of the Christian community. The Community is to share God's gifts to the community through mutual help and assistance. The New Testament uses several other words to express this as edification, strengthening, admonition, love, but they are all ways of talking about the same thing. Our community is made possible by God's gifts of His Son, His Spirit, His word and Sacraments, His apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, etc. The Church is to share these things with each other, and in doing so, is bound to fulfill its function, for how else are these things which establish and strengthen the Church to be communicated except through the fellow-Christian? In this sense, the fellow-Christian is a gift of God to the other Christians. As Bonhoeffer says:

We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what He does give us daily. And is not what has been given us enough: brothers, who will go on living with us through sin and need under the blessing of His grace? Is the divine gift of Christian fellowship anything less than this, any day, even the most difficult and distressing day? Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin

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<sup>31</sup>R. T. Du Bruu, "New Testament Fellowship: A Study in Semantics," Concordia Theological Monthly, (May, 1951), p. 334.

be a constant occasion for me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ? Thus the very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparably salutary, because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by that one Word and Deed which really binds us together--the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

So also Luther says:

God is superabundantly rich in His grace. First, through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the Gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, . . . .<sup>33</sup>

Christians, then, are to share the divine gifts with each other by admonition, edification, and love. In order to understand the function of the community better, we will amplify each one of these concepts.

First, Admonition; the nature of which may be seen from such passages as Matt. 18:10-35; Gal. 6:1-3; Jas. 5:16; I Thess. 5:13f; Heb. 10:24; Titus 3:10, I John 3:11-18; II Cor. 2:4. We are to strengthen each other, and thus strengthen the community, by speaking to each other of our faults and God's love to repentant sinners. It seems to have been accepted as an integral of New Testament church life. Its basis is the command of Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter eighteen coupled

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<sup>32</sup>Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>33</sup>Martin Luther, "The Smalcald Articles," Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), III, iv, p. 146.

with the commandment of love in the Gospel according to St. John, chapter fifteen, verse twelve which is the context into which Christian admonition must be placed. (Cf. II Cor. 2:4 for Paul's motivation for admonition.) We see this very plainly as we read the entire eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. It is an integrated unit in which there is a definite thought progression. There is one main idea; namely, that God loves lost man with an unflagging and boundless love, and so those whom he has made His own also love their fellow-Christian in the same way. This is evident as we trace the thought through the chapter.

Our Lord states humility as the prerequisite for entrance into the Kingdom (v. 4). This humility which consists in trusting reliance on the strength of others<sup>34</sup> because it realizes its weakness, is typified by a child (vv. 1-4). This humility breeds reception and acceptance of other "children" (v. 5) or "little ones" which may also include other Christians who rely on us for guidance, example, and edification. The opposite of humility is offence (v. 6); that is, by lack of guidance or guidance in the wrong direction, we betray the brother's trust in us, and cause him to sin. "If any man through our fault either stumbles, or is drawn aside from the right course, or retarded in it, we

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<sup>34</sup>George A. Buttrick, Exposition of St. Matthew, vol. VII in the Interpreter's Bible, edited by Geo. Buttrick et. al. (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury, c.1951), p. 460.

are said to offend him."<sup>35</sup> Thus if we offend by refraining from helping a fellow Christian because we feel he is unworthy or we are superior, we are not being humble like a child. Indeed, offences are woeful (v. 7), do so much damage, and the misery of having ruined a beautiful character by seducing it into evil is so intense,<sup>36</sup> that it were better than the perpetrator die before it happens (v. 6). This principle is true also when you create stumbling blocks for yourself, and this self-offence is so serious, that no remedy is too drastic (vv. 7-9). So one should be humble, and receive the little ones, and not offend or despise them (v. 10), for they are very important people. They are Christ's representatives (v. 5), the angels take care of them (v. 10), and the Father in heaven is as concerned about them as a shepherd is about one of his sheep who wanders away from the flock (vv. 12-14). The shepherd does not want them to get lost, and so he goes after them. The Father does not want the little ones, who are also sinners, and are apt to wander, to be lost, so he uses other sheep, other little ones, to go after the stray brothers in Christ (v. 15). As the sheep need the shepherd, so Christians need other Christians to watch out for them, lest they stray. Therefore, as representatives of

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<sup>35</sup>John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, vol. 2, translated by Wm. Pringle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, c.1949), p. 336.

<sup>36</sup>Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, (London: Elliot Stock, c.1909), p. 250.

the Father and the Great Shepherd, and doing His will, we go to fellow Christians if they should stumble. We keep after the stray, going to the limit in our attempt to strengthen him and keep him from perishing. If need be, we take others with us to re-enforce our pleas and admonition (v. 16). We are even to take the situation to the entire assembly, if nothing else works, doing all in our power to bring him back to repentance and forgiveness (v. 17). If he refuses to heed our pleas, then we are to regard him as outside the Church, the flock (v. 17). But even in this situation, the Church does not despise or ignore him, but "where the discipline of the church ceases, its missionary work commences anew."<sup>37</sup> For we are to remember that our words carry great weight (v. 18). We are God's representatives, and our job is to carry out His will to save the perishing. So in all our attempts to win back the brother, we are to be careful. So in dealing with these situations, the best way to be sure we are doing the right thing is to pray the matter over with other Christians. This common prayer, which comes out of much discussion, will be answered (v. 19). In fact, when such a group comes together to do God's will, that is, to reestablish the bond between the man and God, worked by Jesus Christ, we have the assurance that Jesus will also be there (v. 20). When this happens, no matter how often we are betrayed, no matter how often

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<sup>37</sup>John Peter Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Matthew, translated by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 330.

we are called upon to forgive and win back, we will do it humbly, because we will recall how much God has forgiven us, and to what lengths the Good Shepherd went to win us back from sin (vv. 21-35).

In this context, we find the New Testament idea of admonishing the brother. The sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians and Philemon talk about this very thing, the idea of bearing one another's burden and forgiving, because Christ did this for us all. So Thornton says, commenting on these two passages:

If a brother is betrayed into sin true Christians will do their best to help him back into the right way with gentleness and humility, remembering their own liability to fail under temptation. As mortal men we are all of us liable to give way in the conflict. This weakness of the flesh is a burden which each must bear for himself as he takes up the cross daily and follows Christ. No Christian therefore can without self-deception take pride in his own strength, still less in another's weakness. What we have to do rather is to share one another's burdens. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (v. 2). We cannot really bear our own burdens unless we are ready also to bear the burdens of others. For this is Christ's law of love, which he fulfilled himself in his own life and death. In bearing his own appointed burden, the Cross, he also bore the burdens of all mankind.<sup>38</sup>

Closely allied with this work of admonition is what is generally termed "edification." By sharing with each other the gifts God has given us, as the Gospel, our talents, our encouragement in Christ, etc., we strengthen the Body of Christ. This is edification. St. Paul describes it in detail in chapters twelve to fifteen of his first letter to the Corinthians, and

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<sup>38</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 42.

in the fourth chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. We see this in action in Acts 2:42-46. The early Church realized its corporate responsibility for the spiritual and physical lives of its members. Whatever the individual had been given, it had been given for the benefit of Christ's Body. So Thornton, discussing the twelfth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, sees that since all we have has been made and redeemed by God, all belongs to him and must return to him in worship and service. So where this chapter talks of material things which we share with our fellow-Christians, this is symbolic of the whole meaning of the common life described in the chapter. "The various spiritual gifts (charismata) described are also shared in the sense that each is possessed and used only for the good of the whole Body. In fact none has a right to such gifts as possessions; for they all come from God."<sup>39</sup> So even the ministering to the physical needs of the saints had a spiritual connotation.<sup>40</sup>

The most general term in the New Testament is love, agape. This is the word which would describe all the actions of Christian to Christian in the Church. Admonition, edification, strengthening, all these are aspects of Christian love. This love, in its fullest sense, is what Christians show to one another whenever they are fulfilling their purpose for each other in the Church. In order to see what this love is, and how it is expressed

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<sup>39</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>40</sup>Infra, p. 52

in spiritual relationships among the members of the Church, we will, on the basis of its use in the New Testament, determine its source, its purpose, and its characteristics.

When the New Testament writers use the words agape, agapao, and agapetos, they are using words which have been used in Pagan and Jewish literature, but they fill it with such meaning that is never present in these other instances. In pagan literature, it is vague and indefinite, often meaning "no more than to be content with something."<sup>41</sup> It seems to have the idea of conscious, deliberate willing of affection contained in its, more than the sheer passion of eros.<sup>42</sup> It centers in the will of the lover, preferring one thing over another.<sup>43</sup> In Jewish literature, due to the Jewish repulsion to pagan eros, the LXX uses agape almost exclusively. However, man's love to God is stressed, and God's love to man is spoken of in collective terms, telling of God's love to Israel.<sup>44</sup> Neighborly love is almost always also within Israel. So Hellenistic Judaism talks much of neighborly love, but it is to the fellow Jew first, then to the alien within

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<sup>41</sup>Gottfried Quell, "Love", in Bible Key Words, from Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch Zum Neuen Testament, translated and edited by J. R. Coates (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1951), p. 29.

<sup>42</sup>Herman Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, translated by W. Urwick (Edinburgh; T & T Clark, c.1878), p. 11.

<sup>43</sup>Quell, loc. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

their gates, and then possibly to enemies.<sup>45</sup>

But Christian Agape transcends all this. Nygren calls it "The transvaluation of all ancient values."<sup>46</sup> It has the will of the lover seen in the pagan literature, and the Jewish particularism in a good sense. But it is completely dependent on God. In Nygren's words, it is spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to value, and creative.<sup>47</sup> It was not the value of Israel that made God love and choose them, but God's love, being unmotivated and indifferent to the value of the thing loved, loved purely out of its own greatness. So Christian Agape stressed that Jesus came to save sinners. This is an indication of God's love. This kind of love is the model for all Christian love, and the use of the agape words in the New Testament shows this.

The words agape, agapao, and agapetos are used in many different ways, but always as love in action, and almost always as someone giving something to another freely and unselfishly. Although the New Testament mentions the love of God to Christ (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; 20:13; Jn. 15:9,10; 17:23-26; 2 Pet. 1:17), God to man (Jn. 3:16), God to the Church (Rom. 1:7; 9:25; Col. 3:12; 1 Th. 2:13; Jn. 14:23; 16:27; Eph. 3:17), Christ to the Church (Jn. 13:34; 15:9), Christ to God (Jn. 14:31), the Church to God or Christ (Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Jn. 14:15; 23:23; Rom. 8:2), the Church to all men (Mt. 5:43;44;

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>46</sup>Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, revised 1953), p. 200.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 75 ff.

19:19; Mk. 12:33; Lk. 6:27,35; Rom. 13:10; 1 Th. 3:12), and the non Christian to others (Lk. 6:32; Jn. 15:19; 1 Jn. 2:15), we are primarily concerned with those many passages where love of Christian to fellow Christian is mentioned or shown. In fact, because the agape words are used in this connection more than in any other, these passages illustrate in a special way, what the early Church meant by Agape. The New Testament is, in the final analysis, a book which, describes Agape its source, its motivation, its purpose, and its characteristics. God's Agape creates the Christian's Agape, and its earthly perfection is found in the Church, as each Christian loves each Christian loves each other Christian.

Nygren says, "Christian love, . . . is a reflection of God's love; this is its prototype and its ultimate ground."<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Quell says, "Christian Agape is charged with a twofold consciousness, viz. a sense of unworthiness before God and a realization of his mercy. This spirit of charity sets the tone of the brotherhood in all its ways."<sup>49</sup> It cannot be obtained by a preaching of the Law, or be expected from non-Christians. Indeed, it is the decisive characteristic of the Church (Jn. 13:35). The New Testament describes this transfer, or reflection of God's Agape in various ways. The great chapter on Agape, 1 Cor. 13, begins and ends with this thought: Agape is a gift from God to Christians.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>49</sup>Quell, op. cit., p. 66.

Indeed, it is the greatest gift, to be preferred over brilliant persuasion, cold faith, or even charity and martyrdom. This is because "Love never ends" (v. 8).

We can come to a fuller understanding of what Paul is saying only if we take chapter thirteen as one part of the large section of the book, indeed, the whole letter, which deals with the Church. Under the large heading, "How to strengthen the Church" chapter twelve has dealt with the proper use of spiritual gifts (gifts given by the Spirit). One principle stands out; everything is measured by the good it can do a brother. All gifts must be so used as to strengthen the rest of the Body of Christ. So all gifts are necessary, since they are Spirit given and contribute to the good of others. Chapter fourteen also clearly states the principle that the edification of the brother determines my action. So the brother blessed with the gift of tongues, evidently so highly prized, uses it only when there is someone present who can interpret, and so edify others.

In this context we find chapter thirteen. It says that Agape is the highest gift, simply because with it one edifies and helps the brother. The gifts of speaking in tongues, having prophetic powers, having great understanding and faith, having the gift of giving, even the gift of martyrdom, all of these are conceivable in a situation where they may not edify another Christian. But by the very nature of Agape, it is impossible to love a brother without a resultant spiritual growth in him. This is because Christian love comes from God's love, which is

always in action towards people. Because God's love is unselfish, and indifferent to the value of the person loved, Christian love is

"patient and kind; . . . is not jealous or boastful; . . . is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (vv. 4-7).

It is the highest gift because it is most like God. Thus Paul can thank God for Christians' Agape (Col. 4:1, 1 Th. 1:3).

It is also called the first fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22. It is a manifestation of the Spirit in us. St. John uses it in this way in 1 John 3:14-18. Our love for the brethren is the sign that we have passed from death to life. In 1 John 4:12, he says that when we love one another, God is in us, continuing and completing His love to the church through us. The fact that God abides in us is the same as being born of God, as John says in 1 John 4:7. If we are born of God, God abides in us. This means that we are alive as God is alive, and we know Him for what He is, namely, Love (v. 8). When all of these things are true, as they are in a Christian, he loves the brethren. If it is God that makes us alive by giving us His new birth and abiding in us, then it is simple to see how John can say that our love for the brethren is simply God's love perfected in us, for it is God who is the source within us of love.

With this in mind it is not a contradiction to say that love comes from faith, as Paul does in Gal. 5:6. John says in his first epistle that "everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ

is a child of God" (5:1). The sons of God, those in whom God dwells, those who therefore love, are those who believe in Jesus Christ. So love is a result of faith, since the one who believes has God loving through him.

Hence the source of all Agape is God's own Agape through his Son Jesus Christ. His death is the greatest expression of Agape, and is in fact the definition of Love. It is this that Paul meant in 1 Thess. 4:9, when he says "you have been taught by God to love one another."

The principle of the motivating power behind agape among Christians is enunciated by our Lord in John 13:35 and 15:12. It is a new commandment not because it had never been proposed before that men should love one another, but because men were now given a new standard of love on which to operate. Formerly the disciples had been told to live by the "Golden Rule," do to others as you would want them to do to you. But this old commandment still left unanswered how they should wish men to treat them. Now Jesus treats them in a certain way, and then tells them, "As I have treated you, treat others." So as Jesus loved, served, forgave, sacrificed, and mediated to them redeeming grace, so they were to follow his example.<sup>50</sup> This then is Jesus' commandment to his disciples and his church: "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). His love is the

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<sup>50</sup>Walter Marshall Horton, "The Christian Community: Its Lord and its fellowship," Interpretation, (Oct., 1950), p. 392.

model and the motivation to love, and as we see from the parable of the vine and the branches, He is also the source of the Christian's love.

This commandment of love, "the law of love," is the commandment which is continually mentioned in John's epistles. In John then, the keeper of the commandment is really one who has experienced God's love for him, and so is filled with God and motivated to love because of God's love for him in Jesus Christ. So we have 1 John 4:11, 17, 19. This is the same thought as is expressed by St. Paul in Ephesians 5:1-2: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." What it is about God that we are to imitate is his love, which loved us and made us his children by giving himself for the brother. As St. John says. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child" (1 Jn. 5:1). The children are obviously the Church, which makes each member a brother to each other member in the Church. Indeed, in the New Testament, the forms of address of "beloved" and "brother" are interchangeable.<sup>51</sup> In a very special way, Christians are to show agape to other Christians. As Cranfield says, "It is noticeable that the object of agapao . . . is usually 'the brethren,' or some other expression point-

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<sup>51</sup>Quell, op. cit., p. 58.

ing to fellow-members of the Church. In fact, it is not easy to find passages where agapao, agape in this sense can definitely be shown to have a wider reference than the Church."<sup>52</sup> This is because the Church is the community of those who have all experienced God's love in Christ, and this common experience of love shows itself in love to each other. The basis for this special God-given love from brother to brother is given in John 13:34 and Rom. 14:15, where Paul gives the death of Christ as the reason for the stronger Christian to give in to the weaker brother's conscience. "If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died." The source, model, and motivation for mutual agape in the Church is God's love in sending His Son to die for all men.

Whenever a Christian shows agape to another Christian, God is actually bringing His own Agape to bear on that Christian. This is the way God uses to show His love, which basically consists in announcing the redeeming work of His Son. The main purpose of all of this is, then, to maintain and strengthen the Church. Using Christians, God makes His Agape active among other Christians, and it is this love in action, which can be equated with grace, that strengthens the Church. So in the picture of the Church as the Body of Christ in Ephesians 4, by "speaking

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<sup>52</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, "Love" in Alan Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: The Macmillan Co., c.1950), p. 136.

the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (v. 15). The fact that love causes growth is further emphasized in verse sixteen: "from whom Christ the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love." The source is Christ, the purpose is upbuilding His Body, the means is love (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1). So the writer to the Hebrews exhorts, that since Christ has opened the way to God for us, we should; (1) "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," . . . (2) "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," . . . and (3) "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:19-25). The first plea is for the Christian conduct toward God, the second, toward the unbelieving world, and the third, toward the Church. This is so important because love is necessary for the edification of the Church.

Aside from this primary purpose of love in the Church, the holy writers assign to it several other purposes. It is the sign of rebirth, of being God's child, as we have seen from 1 John 3:14 and 4:7. It perfects God's love, as He works through the Christian's love (1 John 4:12). By it, Christians are known (John 13:35). And it prepares for the last Day (Phil. 1:9-11, Heb. 10:25).

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF AGAPE AMONG CHRISTIANS

Since Agape comes from God and His Agape, one important characteristic is that Christian love be genuine. This should go without saying, nevertheless St. Paul says in Rom. 12:9, "Let

love be genuine," and Peter says in 1 Peter 1:22, "Love one another earnestly from the heart." The importance of this is that if love--kindness, charity, etc.--is not genuine, but feigned, forced, grudgingly given, it is not real Agape, since that comes from the spontaneous, unmotivated, Agape of God.<sup>53</sup> It is a gift from God, the highest gift (1 Cor. 13), the highest supplement to faith, different from compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and superior to them (Col. 3:12-14).

When in Colossians 3:14, love is called "the bond of perfectness," that means it is that which constitutes unity in the church (i.e. perfectness). As the church is the Spirit's creation and work, love is the Spirit's first and most important fruit. It follows that if love is really and truly a fraternal love, the dedication of one brother to serve another, then in this actual relationship between two persons it is a concrete expression of the love which is present in the collectivity. Behind that whole and in it is Christ himself.<sup>54</sup>

Instead of being "glad when others go wrong" (1 Cor. 13:6 Moffat), genuine agape "rejoices with those who rejoice, weeps with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). This reminds one of Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," which is "that you love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Another characteristic is that Agape is unselfish. This too is self evident when we see the model for the Christian's love. God unselfishly gave Himself completely for us. Paul says it this way: "Love does not insist on its own way." (1 Cor. 13:5)

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<sup>53</sup>Nygren, op. cit., p. 75 ff.

<sup>54</sup>Anton Fridrichsen "The New Testament Congregation," This is the Church, edited by A. Nygren, trans. by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1952), p. 49.

A Christian's unselfish love shows itself in refraining from doing something that may hurt a brother (Rom. 14:15), forbearing one another (Eph. 4:2), being hospitable (3 Jn. 6), being charitable (2 Cor. 8:7, 8, 24 which also makes the point that continued charity is a proof of the genuineness of Agape), and serving one another (Gal. 5:13,14, Heb. 6:10). These passages from Paul's epistles to the Galatians stress that this service of love is done in freedom. Love is genuine and unselfish only when it thinks only of the need of the person loved, even as God had compassion on our need. "Love means the refusal to see, think of, or deal with one's neighbor except in the light of what Christ has done for him, as the brother for whom Christ died."<sup>55</sup> So Agape cuts through social classes, recognizing others only as those for whom Christ died. (Phm. 4-7).

The third characteristic of Agape is the fact that it is not timid or sentimental, as St. Paul says in 2 Tim. 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." Reproof and church discipline, so necessary to the continued strength of the Church (Mt. 18:15-20, Lk. 17:3, 1 Cor. 6:1-6, Gal. 6:1, Jas. 5:19-20), are acts of love. Paul regards his rebuke of the erring Christians in Corinth as an act not to cause them pain, but to show them Agape. (2 Cor. 2:4). Although "love covers," that is, forgives, "a multitude of sins," (1 Pet. 4:8) the truth must be spoken, to restore the erring

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<sup>55</sup>Cranfield, loc. cit.

brother. But growth and edification can only come from reproof that is "in love" (Eph. 4:15). As Bonhoeffer observes:

Human love cannot tolerate the dissolution of a fellowship that has become false for the sake of genuine fellowship, and human love cannot love an enemy, that is, one who seriously and stubbornly resists it. . . . What love is, only Christ tells in his Word. Contrary to all my own opinions and convictions, Jesus Christ will tell me what love toward the brethren really is. Therefore, spiritual love is bound solely to the Word of Jesus Christ. Where Christ bids me to maintain fellowship for the sake of love, I will maintain it. Where his truth enjoins me to dissolve a fellowship for love's sake, there I will dissolve it, despite all the protests of my human love.<sup>56</sup>

Thus Paul says that the best kind of admonition is "with love in a spirit of gentleness" rather than "with a rod," (1 Cor. 4:21).

Love assumes a spirit of gentleness when admonishing a brother because love is aware of its own weakness without the forgiving love of God. (Gal. 6:1-2). "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude." (1 Cor. 13:4,5). So in its reproof of sin in a fellow Christian, as in all its actions, it does not worry about its reception. In fact, it can be said that love expects to be betrayed, even by Christians. Olsson says: It is characteristic of love that it

is not suspicious, but believes and assumes all good about one's neighbor; and it is that even if one be wrong, for it is the nature of love to let others take advantage of it . . . Love, which believes the good about a neighbor and willingly suffers deception, calls all who are baptized "saints."<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, it "bears all things, believes all things, hopes

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<sup>56</sup> Bonhoeffer, *op. cit.*, p. 34 f.

<sup>57</sup> Herbert Olsson, "The Church's Visibility and Invisibility," in *This is the Church*, edit. by A. Nygren, trans. by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1952), p. 238.

all things, endures all things." (1 Cor. 13:7). In all admonition, pastoral care comes after church discipline.<sup>58</sup> Homrighausen sees the highest expression of this in the Christian family, as it mutually respects, encourages, prays for, gives pastoral care, and seeks to purify with positive criticism each other.<sup>59</sup> But after all, the New Testament almost equates the Church with a family. Its members are brothers who have a common Parent. They are called the household of faith. So the mutual love existing in a family should all the more exist among Christians, with the same eagerness to improve each other. Cramer says that the church as a fellowship of life based on identity of origin brings also community of love.<sup>60</sup> This love also appears as it preaches the Law in a spirit of love.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the use of the agape words in the New Testament, as far as mutuality in the Church is concerned.

I. Agape is especially directed to other Christians.

- A. It is a gift unique to children of God through faith in Christ.
- B. "The household of faith is the primary field for Christian ethics."<sup>61</sup>
  1. They share mutual love from God.
  2. It is the mark of the Church of Christ.

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<sup>58</sup> Elmer G. Homrighausen, "who is my neighbor?" in Interpretation (October, '50), pp. 401-15.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 413-14.

<sup>60</sup> Cramer, op. cit., pp. 66 f.

<sup>61</sup> Horton, op. cit., p. 396.

II. Agape is not a neutral refraining from evil, but a doing of Good.<sup>62</sup>

A. It is not sentimental or abstract.

B. As God's Agape, it is always in action toward people.

Morton summarizes this love of the New Testament Church, stressing the physical needs.

We see, for instance, the great extent of corporate responsibility for all the troubled lives of Christians. The church was concerned with the care of the sick, with the care of orphans, with hospitality to fellow-Christians on their travels, with the care of prisoners and of those who had been sent to the mines, and with the provision of work for those who were out of work. . . . What was unique was not the care but the nature of the care. That was noticeable to outsiders. It was seen to be different in its very nature. It was not a means of joint insurance against Christians love one another," was said originally in seriousness and not in irony.<sup>63</sup>

Wand summarizes this entire section of the Church's community and its function:

The function of the Church, therefore, is to continue the work of Christ. There is something especially significant in the fact that this authoritative work is committed not merely to individuals but to a society. It is at once evident that in the Christian view religion is not only individual but social. Religion is not merely the "flight of the alone to the Alone"; it is not just a relation "between my soul and God"; it is not merely "what a man does with this solitude." It concerns human beings in community. We are all our brother's keeper, we have a responsibility for each other, and we have to assist each other in spiritual as well as in material things. It is true that no man has a right to stand as a barrier between my soul and God, but every man has a duty to act as a friend in guiding my soul to God.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Arthur John Gossip, "Exposition of John" in Interpreter's Bible, vol. VIII (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury, c.1952), p. 693.

<sup>63</sup>Thomas Ralph Morton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, c.1954), p. 37.

<sup>64</sup>John Wm. Chas. Wand, The Church, its Nature, Structure, Function (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., c.1948), pp. 90 f.

## The Church's Worship

After seeing such a stress on the corporate life, it is no surprise to see the stress on corporate worship in the New Testament. Jesus Himself set the mood when He instructed his disciples to pray "Our Father . . . ." From the start, the New Testament Church gathered together for common worship, not only in the normal temple worship, but on their special day of worship, Sunday, in their homes. Indeed, according to Acts 2:46, the early church worshipped daily. Thus, corporate worship was part of their everyday existence as Christians in the koinonia. For the Church was aware of being the Body of Christ, filled with Him who fills all things. Thus there were no such people as isolated Christians. They had been saved from the community of the world, from the table of Satan, to the community of God's people and its corporate worship. Thus it is natural that common worship and common possessions should be in such close juxtaposition in the second chapter of Acts.

In this context it is easy to see how the Apostles saw worship as something not only directed toward God, but because it was done corporately, by the Church, it was also a means of strengthening each other. Paul, Peter, and the writer to the Hebrews all make this very clear. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, says, "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one

another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,"<sup>65</sup> and "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints."<sup>66</sup> Here we see edification, as the members sang to each other the wonderful things of the Spirit whom they shared, and intercession, and they implemented their concern for the brother's spiritual welfare through prayer for him. We see this same concern and love in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter fourteen, where he indicates very explicitly that anyone who is only worshipping for himself in a corporate worship is not upbuilding the church, and in Paul's mind, this seems to be so important, that he makes edification in corporate worship the next gift after agape. The one who prophesies and the one who prays should be concerned that he edify the church and not himself only.<sup>67</sup> The climax to his argument seems to be verse twelve: "So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church." Edification in worship is the gift of the Spirit. Since this is true, no one should lead in prayer if he is angry or quarreling with any other Christian, since this would mean that he might not edify

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<sup>65</sup>Eph. 5:18, 19.

<sup>66</sup>Eph. 6:18.

<sup>67</sup>I Cor. 14:1-5; 13-19; 26-28; 39.

the one with whom he had a quarrel.<sup>68</sup> For the Spirit edifies where there is love, not strife. "The work of the Spirit is conditioned on unity of life in the congregation. Thus that which corrodes that life is a deadly peril."<sup>69</sup> So for Paul, edification is a sine quo non of worship, and worship is primarily corporate.

This is also true for the writer to the Hebrews. Moffat, quoted by Thornton, goes so far as to say that when others say "fellowship" this writer says "worship."<sup>70</sup> Thus the fellowship in this epistle is the worshipping congregation.<sup>71</sup> We see this in particular in the tenth chapter.

The congregation of the redeemed are present with their High Priest in the Holy of Holies, their bodies washed in the waters of baptism and their consciences sprinkled with blood of the divine priest-victim. They assemble in an attitude of faith and an activity of worship. As the Day approaches they hold firmly to their confession of the new hope in Christ; and their common worship passes into common acts of love (10:22-25).<sup>72</sup>

These common acts of love so closely connected with corporate worship are, in the words of the epistle, "to stir up one another to love and good works" (10:24). The writer seems to assume that the natural way to do this is: "not neglecting to meet together,

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<sup>68</sup>I Tim. 2:8.

<sup>69</sup>Fridrichsen, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>70</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (10:25). Thus corporate worship and edification are closely connected, as in the epistles of St. Paul.

Indeed, as we look at the first Epistle of St. Peter, we see that in his mind, the whole task of the Church is worship, in the widest sense. All of the Church's activity is to the glory of God, and hence can be said to be truly corporate worship.

The proclamation of the Word is worship, because the Resurrection of Christ from the dead is a signal example of the glory given to Him by God (1:11). The sufferings of the Church are worship, a cause of rejoicing, a sign that the Spirit of Glory already rests upon believers, and is not merely a future hope (4:12-14). The prayers of the Church, the brotherly love which unites its members, the spiritual gifts which are given to them, the ordinary services of love, all are worship, because the aim of the Church is not self-glorification, but the glory of God.<sup>73</sup>

We further see the function of worship as a corporate, mutually edifying activity in the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of the Alter. When Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize people, it was for the purpose of "making disciples" of them, that is, of bringing them into the fellowship of discipleship. Thus, Baptism was the Sacrament of entrance into the Body of Christ, the Church. So when St. Paul talks of the unity of the Church, he includes Baptism as one of the things which show that the Church is One Body (Eph. 4:5). As Christians belong to the One Church through the One Lord Jesus by the

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<sup>73</sup>Flew, op. cit., p. 163.

working of the One Holy Spirit, so this is accomplished by One Baptism which is common to all. So it was seen that Baptism was a sacred act of great significance to the entire Church. For this reason, the custom of sponsors developed early. Originally, sponsors instructed and watched over candidates for Baptism and entrance into the Christian community.<sup>74</sup> As time went on, and more and more entered the community in infancy, the sponsor assumed the responsibility for the child's eventual instruction and preparation for consecrated adult church membership. This he did as a member of a community, pledging to that community that the child would be brought up in it. In this way, the Christian Church has always seen its responsibility in Baptism. Thus Baptism has significance as an act of corporate worship. "The value which baptism has for the Christian life appears most clearly when it is regarded as a congregational act. From this point of view baptism means that man is received into membership in the church."<sup>75</sup>

So also the Sacrament of the Altar was viewed as a corporate act of worship. Indeed, it might be called the epitome of the Church's worship life. The fact that the Church is the One Body of Christ is shown by St. Paul in the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians by the common partaking of the One Body

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<sup>74</sup>Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1947), p. 39.

<sup>75</sup>Aulen, op. cit., p. 381.

of the Lord in the Sacrament (10:17). So Thornton sees in Paul a double use of the word Body; i.e., Christ's Body received in the Sacrament signifying his mystical Body, the Church. So the sin of division and haughtiness is condemned by Paul by showing the Corinthians the meaning of the Sacrament which they celebrated. When anyone despises the members of the One Body, the Church, one is denying the Unity of the Church in the One loaf, the Body of Christ. Thus it is natural for him to go on in the twelfth chapter to talk of the Body of Christ and the responsibility of the "stronger" toward the "weaker" members. When you despise one of the many, you are despising the One who is the head of, and died for the many. Thus when we partake of the Body of Christ, we are participating in the Unity of the Church. On the other hand, when we destroy that unity by strife, disdain, jealousy, and other divisive sins, we are profaning the Body of Christ in the Sacrament. When we deny the Real Presence of the Body of Christ, the Church, by our lovelessness, it would seem, that in Paul's mind, this is as serious as if one would deny the Real Presence of Christ's Body in the Sacrament. Thus, the body in 1 Cor. 11:29 can be interpreted as both the Eucharistic and the Mystical Body of Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Thus Thornton says:

The Eucharist has always been regarded as the Chief Christian sacrament and the central rite of Christian worship. It

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<sup>76</sup>Thornton, op. cit., pp. 332-337, 341 f.

holds this pre-eminent position precisely because, more than any other religious rite, it is the means through which the whole common life of the Church, as a participation in Christ, is corporately manifested in its full significance and actuality. The individual finds his highest privilege through participation in that which is common to all. Yet what he participates in at Holy Communion is not merely the life of the community, regarded as a human fellowship. He participates jointly with his fellow-communicants in the life of Christ, as that life is imparted to the church.<sup>77</sup>

### The Church's Stewardship

Although the Christian Stewardship of the New Testament Church had its roots in the Old Testament tithe and the teaching of Jesus Christ on being a good steward, we find the uniquely New Testament concept of this Christian Teaching emerging after Pentecost. As we see from Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32, the early church voluntarily, for the benefit of these less fortunate, created a common treasury. It is interesting that Luke associates oneness of heart and soul with oneness of physical resources. This anticipates Paul's commendation of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. 8:5). The reasoning obviously was, that since God had given them everything, and since they were now His people, all they were and had belonged to Him. Since He had told them that whatever they did to even the least of the brethren, they were doing to Him, it was natural that, in fulfilling His commandment of Love, they should make all they had, in every way, available to the Church. "Self giving to the brethren in Christ is self-

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 327 f.

oblation to God, just as the act itself is made possible by the self-giving of God to us."<sup>78</sup> Thus we see that Christian love was not interpreted in abstract terms, but in such concrete ways as giving all the money one has for the common good. Implicit in this is the feeling that if one is giving himself in love through edification, admonition, encouragement, and all that belonging to the fellowship involves, one does not keep back part of himself, his pocketbook. This is neatly summed up by Justin Martyr (1, 14) quoted by T. R. Morton:

Since our persuasion by the Lord . . . we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions now bring what we have into a common stock and communicate to everyone in need: . . . <sup>79</sup>

It was the fact of God's gracious action toward the Church that prompted this acknowledgment of the Church's stewardship responsibility. The Mammon of this world was sanctified by its appropriation by the Church to carry on the Lord's work of love to one another. St. Paul seems almost to consciously make his readers aware of this change in the status of money and possessions. For when he mentions such things, he never used monetary and economic terms, but words with high religious associations, such as grace, communion, ministry, church service, worship and blessing. "He seems anxious to describe the most material facts in the

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>79</sup>Thomas Ralph Morton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, c.1954), p. 32.

social life of the Church in terms which raise them to the highest level."<sup>80</sup>

This same sense of stewardship extends also to other gifts given to the Church. So St. Paul stresses throughout the section in his first letter to the Corinthians from chapters twelve to sixteen, the entire stewardship life of the Church, from the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, given by the Holy Spirit (12:1-3), to the manifestations of the Spirit given for the common good (12:4-30), to the highest gift, love (13:1-13), to edification of the church in the worship service (14:1-33), to the message of the Gospel given to them (15:1-58), to the contribution for the saints (16:1-3). All these things are gifts from God to be used for the common good to the glory of God. Peter, in his first epistle, also asserts this principle:

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.<sup>81</sup>

In the same way, the Church exercised stewardship over the men called by God to help His saints to His work, i. e., building up the Body of Christ. They used them as Apostles, pastors, prophets, evangelists, teachers.<sup>82</sup> Thus the ministry is another

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<sup>80</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>81</sup>I Peter 4:10-11.

<sup>82</sup>Eph. 4:11 f.

of God's gifts to His Church, to be used for the common good and edification. It is significant here that the purpose of the ministry is to equip the saints to build up the Body of Christ. All Christians are ministers, in that all edify, intercede, admonish, love, encourage. The Church uses the ministry best when the ministry helps all Christians to be better ministers.

One thing is supremely important: that all minister, and that nowhere is to be perceived a separation or even merely a distinction made between those who do and those who do not minister, between the active and the passive members of the body, between those who give and those who receive. There exists in the Ecclesia a universal duty and right of service, a universal readiness to serve and at the same time the greatest possible differentiation of functions.<sup>83</sup>

This is explicitly shown in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter twelve.

Thus all of the Church's life is governed by the principle, freely have you received, freely give. All that the Church has is to be used unselfishly. As Fridrichsen says:

That which the individual has received through baptism and the Spirit is no fixed, static possession. He stands under an un-ending responsibility. But he does not stand alone; he is a member of the body and shares all with it. As he receives all through the congregation, so he is also responsible to it for all he is and all he has. Not for so much as a moment can he fence off, as his private concern, any aspect of his life. He no longer lives unto himself.<sup>84</sup>

#### The Church's Outreach

As the gifts to the Church were never used selfishly, so the Church never saw itself without responsibility to the outside

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<sup>83</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>84</sup>Fridrichsen, op. cit., p. 59.

world. The very existence of St. Paul's epistles show that the early church took Christ's commands to preach the Gospel and baptize all nations seriously. This thesis cannot go into all the ramifications of the New Testament program of outreach. But since it is evident that the evangelism of the New Testament is the job of the whole church, and that through this outreach, the church was strengthened, also from within, it is necessary that a section of this subject be included.

Much of what could be said of this aspect of the Church's program has already been included in other sections. For this reason, we would only briefly note that the early church gained converts not simply to a certain doctrinal position, but for the community. Thus Jesus told His disciples to bring others to join themselves to this discipleship. So, we see the new converts on Pentecost joining themselves to the fellowship and worship of the Apostles immediately (Acts 2:41,42,47). Paul speaks to the Roman Christians, telling them that they were grafted on to the Old Testament people, Israel, when they believed (Rom. 11:24). So we see that conversion to Christianity meant inclusion in the Christianity community.

We also see that evangelism was the project of the whole community. Thus we might call Peter's first epistle a letter of evangelism instruction to the Christian community. Peter counsels obedience to the laws of the land, submission to husband, obedience to employer or owner, love to the brotherhood, simply for the purpose of glorifying God through Jesus Christ. This

means that by the life of the Christian individual and fellowship, the outside world might see the work of God. So if a Christian suffers for being a Christian, this is glorifying God. And when such suffering for Christ goes on in the Church, the sufferer knows that the whole Church is suffering and praying with him. In this way, witness is made to the world by the Church to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thus we have outlined the Biblical pattern for congregational life. The Bible shows us the pattern for mutual love and edification, worship, stewardship, and outreach, and shows us how these strengthen the bonds which tie Christian to Christian in the Church. There may be some who would say that it is too bad that we cannot reconstruct the Biblical times and situations; that perhaps by going back to the primitive society, customs, and environment, we can realize the function of the Church. But as Morton has observed, "to emphasize too much our preference for a more primitive social life is only to suggest that God's love is straitened, that it cannot save."<sup>85</sup> This thesis realizes this, so it endeavors to find a pattern of congregational life which will enable the Holy Spirit to do His work of strengthening and guiding the Church toward stronger spiritual relationships among the members, with the minimum of hindrance, geared to meet the needs of today's society.

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<sup>85</sup>Morton, op. cit., p. 96.

## CHAPTER III

### FOUR ELEMENTS OF A MODERN CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAM

Having now examined the obstacles toward stronger spiritual relationships among the members of a congregation, and the Biblical pattern of the congregational life, it is now the job of this thesis to set up a program which will attempt to overcome these obstacles and successfully follow the Biblical pattern. This chapter will explain the four elements in a modern program, which, according to the research of this present writer, seem to be necessary to achieve these ends. These are the work of the pastor, the work of the laity, a planned program, and an emphasis on work with small groups. In the following chapters, we will see how this would work out in the congregational program of fellowship, worship, stewardship, and evangelism.

#### The Work of the Pastor

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God established a reconciliation with sinful man. In earlier times, God had called priests to be intermediaries between Him and His people as a reminder of the great gulf between God and man, and at the same time pointing forward to the great High Priest who would once and for all enter into God's Presence for man and make atonement. Now that He has come, as the sacrifice and the High Priest, Christians can enter into God's Presence "with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from

an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."<sup>1</sup>  
 Through God's grace, we can identify ourselves with the High Priest and worship without any other mediary. As Thornton says, "The congregation of the redeemed are present with their High Priest in the Holy of Holies, their bodies washed in the waters of baptism and their consciences sprinkled with blood of the divine priest-victim."<sup>2</sup>

So with Peter (I Peter 2:9) we believe that we are priests before God. This involves a community, for not only are we able through Christ's blood to come into the Holy of Holies for ourselves, but now, as members together of the Body of Christ, we are the agents through whom the means of grace get to other Christians. Indeed, the whole second chapter of Peter's first epistle tells of the functions of Christian priests. Typical of these functions are: "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, Fear God, honour the King" (v. 17). The Christian priest is never self centered, but is a minister to all the other priests, in a sense still performing the duties of the Old Testament priests, such as intercession and teaching. So the members of the Body of Christ are given the job of edifying, admonishing, strengthening, loving, praying for the rest of the Church. In short, the New Testament priests all perform the duties, at least in a measure,

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 10:22.

<sup>2</sup>L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, c.1942), p. 171.

of the clergy and its public ministry. They administer the Word, especially the Gospel, to each other. They exercise the office of the Keys, as they encourage and admonish. In fact, the ministry can never be said to have prerogatives and dignities other than those of every Christian.<sup>3</sup>

One might well ask at this point, Why then do we need ministers? If the Church members were all perfectly able to perform their function as priests of themselves and for the rest of the Church, then this would be a valid question. But since the fact remains that the Church still is on this side of Glory, and its members are still sinners, they need all the help they can get. So God in His great wisdom and mercy gave to the Church people who would be especially able to serve the Church, to the end that its members might be better ministers and priests.<sup>4</sup> Christians need to be strengthened in order to help others. The great concern of the Church is that God's Reign might spread and be strengthened. "To stimulate and implement this concern, God uses the ministry."<sup>5</sup> The ministry is an office of service, as another way in which God graciously leads and sustains His Church until the end. God in His grace gave the Church the ministry to help it exercise the functions of priests before Him in the best possible way.

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<sup>3</sup> Richard R. Caemmerer, "Universal Priesthood and the Pastor," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (August, 1948), 565.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. 4:11, I Cor. 12:28.

<sup>5</sup> Caemmerer, op. cit., p. 564.

So if the congregation is to exercise its function of a community of priests mutually edifying each other, it is imperative that the pastor be doing his job properly. Above all others, it is his job to equip the saints to be better ministers. If he does not do it, or is not aware of this responsibility, one can hardly blame the congregation for not performing its function. Thus it is up to him to set the example in love and edification. It is up to him to teach his people fellowship, to teach them to be conscious of each other and his problems. "The pastor should make his church the warmest and most effective brotherhood in town."<sup>6</sup> This should be a constant emphasis in his preaching, confirmation instruction, counseling, in fact, this goal of helping his people see and fulfill their responsibility to the rest of the Christian community should be constantly before him. This should be the direction of the leadership he gives the governing body and the organizations of the church. This is especially, because, as we will see as we investigate the planned program, this emphasis may not be evident to the congregational members, or even to the lay leaders.

D. P. Thomson, quoted by Allan, has summarized this responsibility of the pastor in the following way. As in Jesus' time, there were the 5000 who were the curious fringe members of His group, so there are those in the congregation and the neighboring

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<sup>6</sup>Fred Lindemann, "The Preacher and His Time, II, American Lutheran, XXVI, 7 (July, 1943), 11.

community who are attached to the Christian community and its Lord only by very tenuous things, and as their name on the congregation membership list and their attendance at worship perhaps twice a year. As in Jesus' time, there were the seventy, so now in every congregation there are the dependable workers and leaders of organizations. These are loyal to their church, but have not yet come to that point in their Christian growth where, for instance, they are willing to witness to their friends and fellow-workers about their faith. As in Jesus' time, so now, there are also the twelve, who have been confronted by Christ and have responded to His call. And then finally there are those in the intimate circle, who have "been with Jesus." These are the few in every congregation whose "warp and woof" of life are tied up in Christ. Now, Thomson says, the pastor's job is to bring that fringe group of 5000 into the seventy. Those in the seventy he should build up so that they become the twelve. Those in the twelve he should build up so that there may be more and more in that intimate circle of Jesus' friends.<sup>7</sup> As this happens, the members will also come into closer and stronger spiritual relation with each other.

### The Work of the Laity

It is obvious that the work of the Church is not to be carried on by the clergy along, for as we have seen, the Church as a

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<sup>7</sup>Tom Allan, The Face of My Parish (London: SCM Press, Ltd., c.1954), pp. 51 f.

unified, corporate fellowship was given the job of carrying Jesus' work of love. Unless we accept the Roman Catholic erroneous Ecclesiology, we have to admit that the Church is not simply the clergy. The clergy and the laity together are the Church, and together do the Church's work. Indeed, as we have seen, the existence of the ministry presupposes the laity, whom the clergy are to equip to be better ministers and priests. So in a congregational program, the laity are by definition working to meet the goals as outlined in the New Testament. Therefore, a congregational program cannot hope to succeed in its aims if the laity are not actively participating in its planning and execution. The responsibility of helping fellow Christians rests on all the Church. As Brunner has said:

One thing is supremely important: that all minister, and that nowhere is to be perceived a separation or even merely a distinction made between those who do and those who do not minister, between the active and the passive members of the body, between those who give and those who receive. There exists in the Ecclesia a universal duty and right of service, a universal readiness to serve and at the same time the greatest possible differentiation of functions.<sup>6</sup>

The Church is a family, a brotherhood, a body, and as such, each member stands in a definite relationship with the others; namely, to be Christ to one another. This responsibility and privilege was given to all the members of the Church, and not only to the clergy.

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<sup>6</sup>Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1953), p. 50.

### A Planned Program

Unfortunately, because of our sin, Christians do not automatically see their function as members of the Christian community. The Pastor may stress this in his ministrations, and some laymen may attempt to carry it out, but with the complex organization of a modern congregation, this emphasis may be buried under the very machinery of the congregation, unless it is made an integral part, indeed, the essential part of a planned parish program.

This would mean, first of all, that the pastor and the lay leaders, preferably of all organizations and all age groups, sit down and evaluate themselves from time to time. Self-evaluation questionnaires are available, but several fail to ask pointed questions about the love and mutuality in the congregation. (As for instance "Measuring Ourselves" which appeared in Advance, Feb. 1955, which covered Worship, Public Relations, Education, Evangelism, Stewardship, Administration, Property, and Goals, but as far as the present author could determine, had nothing on the spiritual interrelationships of the members.) A Church may be ever so efficient, but at the same time, torn with strife and lovelessness.<sup>9</sup> Others, as the "Kingdom Work Score Sheet,"<sup>10</sup> do take these things into account. However, all these are but helps for the local pastor. It would seem wiser

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<sup>9</sup>Elmer A. Kettner, "Measuring Ourselves," Advance, 22 (Feb., 1955, pp. 21-28.

<sup>10</sup>Parish Activities, 1952-'53 (St. Louis, Mo.: The Coordinating Council, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, c.1952), pp. 16-19.

for the pastor and his lay leaders to set down their own goals, guided by Scripture and perhaps, these questionnaires, and then evaluate their congregation according to these goals. This should be done as often as necessary. There should at least be an annual evaluation and planning meeting, but some would suggest even a quarterly meeting.<sup>11</sup> Either way, the Pastor can effect a continual evaluation by having the leaders present reports on how they are meeting the goals which they set up for themselves. At the same time, not only should the entire congregational program and the individual organization programs be evaluated, but the pastor himself should frequently and periodically evaluate himself, especially as to whether he is setting the best example of love and whether he is letting himself be bogged down in detail instead of equipping his members to be better ministers.<sup>12</sup>

As this Planning Committee evaluates the present program and its effectiveness, and as it sets up its goals, it should be seeking to find better ways to implement this program and its goals. Assuming that the goals are similar to those already outlined in Chapter II, each congregation will have to face the problem which this thesis faces, namely, how to organize so that

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<sup>11</sup>Bryon Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), pp. 68 f.

<sup>12</sup>Wm. Hillmer, editor, Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers (St. Louis: Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.), pp. 51-57. This booklet is valuable also for a general evaluation of the congregational program, and for parish planning.

these goals might be reached for an ever-increasing number of members. Obviously, there may be different answers. But in planning, some answer must be found, so that these goals of edification, love, admonition, fellowship, etc., become the conscious goal of every society, and of every activity, and of every individual member. Planning in this way helps to make the goals consciously accepted, and the means to these goals will be specifically geared to them. Otherwise, any growth along these lines may come in spite of the congregational program, and not because of it. Unless the congregation knows explicitly the reasons for its existence, it is apt to degenerate into a religious society for a number of like-minded, though not always congenial, individuals.

Nor is it sufficient that this planning simply be self-evaluation and decision on the basis of this admittedly subjective information. To plan a congregational program adequately, the Planning committee should be sparing no effort to determine, for instance, the exact complexion of the congregation, as to age, sex, location, length and membership, activity in the church, educational profile, communion attendance profile, stewardship, etc. Only in this way can an intelligent plan be formulated, for only in this way will the committee be able to see the real needs of the congregation. Leiffer explains the techniques involved in making these membership, leadership, and program analyses.<sup>13</sup> There he also lists a number of criteria by which

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<sup>13</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church, Revised edition (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1955), pp. 145-90.

to judge the congregational program. They are:

1. Are the activities consistent with Christian principles?
2. Are the activities coherent parts of the whole program, that is, moreover is relationship of the parts to the whole and to one another recognized?
3. Are there activities for all ages and both sexes, especially for men, youth, and the elderly members?
4. Is there continual recruitment of members from the locality?
5. Is the leadership indigenous?
6. Is there a community outreach; that is, does the congregation see its responsibility to serve the community in which it is located?
7. Are the community resources, as social agencies, schools, etc., used to serve the congregation?
8. Is the program flexible for the best possible usefulness at the present time in the present situation? This presupposes review and self-evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

By evaluating the program, setting up goals, and finding a program which will meet this goal, the congregation has a good chance of activating a coordinated program. By keeping the goals straight, the program can then specifically and actively foster stronger spiritual relationships among the members.

#### An Emphasis on Small Groups

Today, in the midst of striving for bigness, man is lonely. This is also true in the Church. The trend is toward bigger congregations, bigger church edifices, larger denominations and groups of denominations. It is obvious, however, that simply being larger in numbers does not necessarily lead to greater

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 185-89.

fellowship or stronger spiritual relationships among the members. Indeed, the bigness is something that can hinder the Church from being the divine fellowship for which it was created. How can a Christian edify a fellow Christian whom he does not know and who is separated from him by several pews or by the several hours between the services each attends?

Public worship does draw believers together to some degree. We must not exaggerate; but experience proves that the fullness of life in the Body of Christ is only known in so far as Christians share together in more than worship.<sup>15</sup>

So congregations have established organizations as opportunities for "fellowship." But often, because the Pastor and people are not conscious of what Christian fellowship involves, these organizations become victims of activism, as we saw in Chapter I. Fortunately, there would seem to be an answer, and it comes out of the experience of the Christian Church, dating from its beginning, and appearing at almost every period of its history where this need for stronger fellowship and a deeper faith and life were felt.

Wherever there has been a revival of Christianity of an enduring kind it has generally found expression in the spontaneous activity of small groups meeting for mutual encouragement, fellowship, and common effort. The conception of "cells" is wholly congruous with the genius of Christianity. May not the formation of such cells of Christian witness and service be the distinctive Christian contribution to the social and political struggles of our time?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Paul Rowntree Clifford, The Mission of the Local Church (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1953), p. 69.

<sup>16</sup>J. H. Oldham, "The Function of the Church in Society," The Church and its Function in Society, edit. by W. A. Visser 't Hooft and J. H. Oldham (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., c.1937), p. 198.

Thus we have seen in the early church, in monastic adventures, in attempts to counteract dead orthodoxy, as with Spener and Wesley, in every missionary endeavor, and in modern church religious experiments, as the Iona community and Alcoholics Anonymous, the utilization of small groups of Christians for the purpose of creating greater Christian Fellowship among the members. This would show itself also then, in the larger group.

In the early Church we see the development of household churches. Several are mentioned in Paul's letters to Colossae, Rome, and Corinth.<sup>17</sup> Evidently these were more than simply places for Sunday worship. As Morton sees the situation:

When the household became Christian, it became the meeting place of a much larger group. The group was as large as the home could hold. And so at Colosse there were the two groups. They did not meet only for worship, but for meals. They did not meet only on Sundays, but rather the house was the place of continual gathering all through the week. Traveling Christians found there board and lodging. In a very real sense the church was the place of living: the center of the daily life of all the Christians of the place. And it was a home, not a special building set apart for worship.<sup>18</sup>

These household churches became the place for fellowship and also served as the nucleus of the evangelizing church. The family and friends of the new Christians became the first to hear of the new faith and fellowship.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Col. 4:15; Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Ralph Morton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, c.1954), p. 40.

<sup>19</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 61.

As the Church grew and became institutionalized, religious fervor waned and the Church began to lose its sense of community. However, there were those who realized these deficiencies. One approach which they found was borrowed from the primitive church in their small household groups. This was the rise of religious orders and monasticism. They sprang not from the need for specially devout life or from the asceticism of the monks of the desert, but from the need for a corporate expression of Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

What men and women failed to find in the Church set in the midst of the world, they sought to discover by retiring from the world, by making their own community life which was distinctively Christian.<sup>21</sup>

This appeared again in the Seventeenth century with Spener, in his reaction against "dead" orthodoxy, and Wesley, with his reaction against Rationalism and Formalism. Both, in separate countries, yet facing the same basic problem, came up with very similar answers. Spener, for instance, in his Pia Desideria, sets down five recommendations to improve the spiritual situation of his time. In his first recommendation, he proposes religious meetings for mutual edification,

Where the laymen of the congregation might give utterance to their thoughts on spiritual matters, propose questions on texts from the Scriptures to be answered by the preachers or more advanced laymen; the whole being under the manage-

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid. pp. 63 f.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

ment and supervision of the called ministers.<sup>22</sup>

Wesley also saw the value in small Christian groups. Indeed, the movement which was later to become Methodism, began with the Holy Club at Oxford which was started by the Wesley Brothers and two friends. After Wesley had gathered a following, he hit upon the idea of class meetings, which is characteristic of the Methodist Church even today.<sup>23</sup> These class meetings originally met for an hour twice a week.

The class meeting was, in effect, a club, a Travellers' Club whose members met twice a week to compare notes, and to exchange experiences in their spiritual progress towards the New Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup>

Both these experiments, however, tended to be fanatical, individualistic, or separatistic. As with the monastic movement, they soon tended to be groups of super-Christians withdrawing from the world, and also, from the lesser, run of the mill Christians. Obviously, this was not the spirit which motivated the early church's household gatherings. Nevertheless, we can learn much from this principle. Wesley, perhaps of all these leaders, saw the need for a Christian community to which the

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<sup>22</sup>Alvin V. Kollman, "Pietism and Methodism: A Comparative Study." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1954, pp. 11 f.

<sup>23</sup>The Methodist church has "informal group meetings for free prayer, personal witnessing, and conference about the religious life." Harris Franklin Rall, "The Methodist Church", The Nature of the Church, edit. by Clarence T. Craig, a report of the American Theological Committee of the Continuation Committee, World Conference on Faith and Order (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., c.1945), p. 107.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

weary Christian could repair occasionally, and from which he could come refreshed and better able to meet the world, secure in the knowledge that not only was the Lord strengthening him, but also the Church. "The Oxford Methodists had found that the only way in which they could keep alive their zeal and spirituality was to meet frequently together."<sup>25</sup>

This insight, traceable, as we have seen, through the history of the Church, has also been the basis for a number of religious communities in Protestantism, which have arisen within the past several years. Perhaps the best known is the Iona Community, which was started by Dr. George Macleod, "who sought to rebuild the ancient abbey of Iona and, in doing so, to discover a deeper sense of fellowship in work and worship."<sup>26</sup> Among those listed by Morton are: the Koinonia Community in Georgia, Kingwood Community in New Jersey, the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York, Christian Faith and Life Community in Austin, Texas, Kirkridge in Pennsylvania and Parishfield in Michigan.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, it should be noted that throughout the history of the Christian Church, and also today, the churches in the mission field have of necessity tended to form small groups, not only because the numbers are small, but because often conversion to Christ means a radical break with the culture, so

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 27 f.

<sup>26</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 64. cf. George Carstairs, "The Iona Community," Christian Century, XVII, 48 (Nov. 27, 1940), 1478-1480.

<sup>27</sup>Morton, op. cit., pp. 143-48.

that now the majority of the convert's contacts are with the church.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, these new Christians experience the "miracle of first century Christian fellowship."<sup>29</sup>

Men and women, after experiencing the transformed life "in Christ" of "in the Spirit," have found themselves bound with an incredible new bond to others sharing the same life, in a fellowship transcending former barriers of class or caste or race. . . . It is with the Church as fellowship, rather than organization, that the missionary movement is concerned. . . . On the one hand, invitation to accept Christ stands out as an invitation to join a fellowship, to become incorporated with the Body of Christ. . . . On the other hand, experience on the mission field has demonstrated that the gospel is commended to believers by the corporate witness of the new life as lived within the fellowship. . . .<sup>30</sup>

So it seems that working with small groups of Christians is one of the essential elements in our search for the congregational program which will best meet the problems outlined. However, the solution is not with groups of super-Christians, or groups escaping from the world:

Life together under the Word will remain sound and healthy only where it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society, a collegium pietatis, but rather where it understands itself as being a part of the one, holy catholic, Christian church, where it shares actively and passively in the sufferings and struggles and promise of the whole church. . . . When the way of intellectual or spiritual selection is taken the human element always insinuates itself and robs the fellowship of its spiritual power and effectiveness for the Church, drives it into sectarianism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, The Household of God (New York: Friendship Press, c.1953), pp. 6f.

<sup>29</sup>George Laird Hunt, Rediscovering the Church (New York: Association Press, c.1956), pp. 124 f.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, trans. by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1954), p. 37.

The use of small groups depends on the participation of all the Body of Christ in the place. Only in this way can it be considered the church, and only in this way can it meet the needs of all the members as a mutually edifying community.

So by small groups, we will now mean, in this thesis, any group of Christians in one locality who are meeting or living together to solve common problems or to strengthen each other to solve individual problems, through edification, love, worship, etc. Thus we would include the Christian family, as perhaps the prototype of the Christian community, geographical parish units which would meet in homes for information, edification, etc., special interest groups, organizations, guilds, committees, retreats, L.S.V. schools, etc. There are a number of advantages to working with these small groups, emphasizing fellowship and edification:

1. They will provide a much needed community, especially in the city, in which a Christian can really belong and have a place, where other people care about him.
2. They solve the problem of impersonality in large congregations, by helping the members get acquainted with people and how they can help, in a smaller, more intimate group. This relationship will then more readily be transferred into a larger group situation.
3. They promote a greater percentage of participation. There is in at least one of these small groups which are actively striving for realization of fellowship, a place for every member to make a contribution, and he will be more ready to make it within a small group than in a larger one. This is especially helpful with the "fringe" groups, such as the youth, new members, the elderly. These too, can be assimilated into active participation in a fellowship.
4. They stimulate spiritual concern for one another, and give opportunity for edification. For as Christians

learn to know each other in a worship and fellowship context, it is natural that there will be greater trust in each other and a greater desire to help and be helped. "The view which would lay the whole burden of responsibility on the individual to discover in each concrete situation what is God's will is a heroic but unreal conception. The individual Christian needs the guidance and support of the Christian society."<sup>32</sup>

5. They are also useful for carrying out the congregational program, for they provide a means by which information can be gotten to the members, drives can be carried on, a unified program of worship, education, and emphasis, can be implemented, and opinion gathered.

Thus we have the four elements of a congregational program: the pastor, laity, a planned program, and an emphasis on small groups. Unless the pastor gives the necessary leadership toward stronger spiritual relationships among the members, chances are the congregation will not see its task as a Christian fellowship. On the other hand, the pastor cannot do the job himself which is inherently the job of the whole congregation. So the laity must also be actively engaged in achieving this goal. However, neither can do an adequate job unless there is a carefully planned program which makes this goal which we have set up something for which the whole congregation and all its groups are consciously striving. And finally, no plan can foster Christian fellowship and brotherly spiritual concern as well as when it provides some means for the members to meet together in small groups, where there is the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace and the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, developing a stronger Christian community.

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<sup>32</sup>Oldham, op. cit., p. 196.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADMINISTRATING THE CHURCH TOWARD STRONGER SPIRITUAL

#### RELATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

We have discussed the Biblical pattern for the Christian congregation. We have also discussed the essential elements in a congregational program designed to follow this pattern. Now we will discuss each part of the Church's life, namely, its community, worship, stewardship, and evangelism, and attempt to show how the modern congregation might follow the Biblical pattern in each, using the four essential elements as our outline: the pastor, the laity, a planned program, and small groups.

#### The Pastor

In this first area, which concerns itself with the love and concern of one Christian for another in the community, it is the Pastor who must give most of the leadership and direction. There are several important items in the congregation's life which can do much to foster the desired sense of community and responsibility for the brother, and which are usually the pastor's exclusive responsibility. These are preaching, teaching those who would enter into communicant membership, pastoral calling and counseling. In these areas then, the pastor can do much in his effort to administrate his congregation toward the desired goal.

In preaching, themes such as peace, unity, brotherly love (in concrete New Testament terms), our responsibility for the spiritual welfare of our fellow Christian, the meaning of the Church, the meaning of fellowship, and others, can well be used. For instance, Rev. O. A. Geiseman, in volume two of Old Truths for a New Day, a selection of sermons for the second half of the church year based on texts taken from the epistles, has sermons dealing with brotherly love,<sup>1</sup> the meaning of the Church,<sup>2</sup> the unity of the Church,<sup>3</sup> Christian responsibility,<sup>4</sup> and edification.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, H. Lindemann would counsel to refrain from speaking too much of denominations and synods, and instead, stress the Body of Christ, the family of God, the Christian community, etc. This is "to give to the man in the pew some sense of belonging to a living organism which far transcends the particular organization to which he belongs."<sup>6</sup> Above all, the sins which keep Christians apart, such as pride, lovelessness, selfishness, should be brought to the attention of the congregation to show

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<sup>1</sup>O. A. Geiseman, Old Truths for a New Day, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), II, 30 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 66 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-69.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-72.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 177-86.

<sup>6</sup>Herbert Lindemann, "The Man in the Pew," American Lutheran, XXXIV, 3 (Mar., 1951), p. 9.

what they are doing to the fellowship. Only by personal repentance and the knowledge of God's forgiveness will a person receive the Holy Spirit, who is able to make peace between men and to enable Christians to edify, admonish, strengthen, and love one another. As Hunt puts it, there are two steps toward community:

1. Repentance is the first step toward community--repentance that recognizes the sin in us which has made community impossible, repentance that leads to forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ and makes the church a community not of saints but of forgiven sinners, . . .
2. Obedience. [We might better say faith.] Repentance is revelation: it reveals God's great love. But to receive love, we must love. We must love our lover, and each bringing to him "his body and his mind," must learn to love one another. . . . It is love for one another, our colleagues in community. The Church must be a loving fellowship or it is not the church.<sup>7</sup>

By preaching Sin and Grace to the goal of stronger Christian fellowship, the pastor can go a long way toward helping his congregation realize its purpose.

In his teaching, the pastor is especially responsible for the children and adults who are preparing for full membership in the congregation. Although he might very wisely delegate the instruction of Bible classes, special interest groups, etc., to qualified laymen (and, as we will see, this is often preferable, since this gives more of the Church the chance to exercise their office of a New Testament Priest), it is probably advisable that he reserve to himself these classes, since it is vitally

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<sup>7</sup>George Laird Hunt, Rediscovering the Church (New York: Association Press, c.1956), pp. 80 f.

necessary that these people understand the nature of the fellowship they are joining. Especially with the children, it is important for the pastor to teach not only doctrines, but Christianity as a way of life. This involves, necessarily, the Christian in the community, where he has rights and privileges as a child of God, but also responsibilities. The responsibilities are those of a priest of God, who edifies and strengthens the fellow Christian and the whole community.<sup>8</sup> The entire instruction might well be put in the context of the Doctrine of the Church, showing that belonging to the Church does not simply mean acceptance of a number of dogmas, but belonging to, and living for, a group of people called by God to be his people. "It involves the commitment of our whole personality in faith to Christ and the living out of our relationship to God through Him in the fellowship of the Church."<sup>9</sup>

Actually, this cannot be taught. It must be lived. Indeed, it must have been lived before Confirmation. The child should ideally have been living in a Christian home where the ideals of a Christian fellowship are fostered, such as mutual concern, love, edification and admonition, and worship and intercession. We will discuss this more fully later. However, the pastor should supplement his formal training on the meaning of joining

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<sup>8</sup>Wm. Hillmer, editor, Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers (St. Louis, Mo.: Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, n.d.), p. 80.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Rowntree Clifford, The Mission of the Local Church (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1953), pp. 102 f.

the communicant fellowship by making sure that immediately after, if not during, confirmation instruction, the children are included in the life of the congregation, and are not just necessary evils attached to it. If there is no place for the post-confirmation child in the church, there is the danger that there will be no place for the church in the life of the older adolescent.

This is also true with adult confirmands. The Pastor should always be stressing that these people are joining a fellowship, not simply changing their mind on doctrines. So he should be introducing them to the members, the small groups, and the organizations, where they will have an opportunity to strengthen and be strengthened. This presupposes that the pastor has a living community which can assimilate these new members. This is where the parish zone units will be invaluable, of which more will be said later.

If the pastor is teaching any other group, he should make a special effort to teach and give opportunity for fellowship. This may seem obvious, but too often the Bible classes and organization topics led by the pastor are dry and doctrinal. How much better would it be, if from time to time, these classes and topics could deal with such things as: the problems hindering fellowship, what fellowship means, how can I fulfill my purpose in the community, etc.

The pastor teaches more in an informal way than in a formal way. In his calling and counseling and working with committees, in his everyday conduct among his members and his neighborhood,

his own love and desire to help the priests of God will teach his parish a great deal. As Hillmer says, the pastor enlists Kingdom workers by:

1. preaching and planning ahead on his sermon work.
2. teaching.
3. pastoral calls to urge people to Christian service, suggesting avenues of service.
4. guiding organizations to service.
5. guiding the church officers and boards to exercise functions by sharing responsibility.
6. prayer.
7. example.
8. delegating responsibility.
9. aiding in planning program of Christian service.
10. stewardship education.<sup>10</sup>

Thus if the pastor's whole program is orientated around these goals, the congregation will learn. This is true not only in his preaching, teaching, and leadership, but also in his private counseling. If he goes into the members' homes, or if, perhaps before Advent or Lent, the members visit the Pastor,<sup>11</sup> he should always have definite objectives in mind. Geiseman lists four such emphases:

1. Sin.
2. Acceptance of Christ.

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<sup>10</sup>Hillmer, op. cit., pp. 38 f.

<sup>11</sup>Walter H. Lutz, "My Members Visited Me," Advance, 2,2 (February, 1955), pp. 14 f.

3. Separation from world--choice, Christ or world [here is an opportunity to discuss the value of the Christian fellowship.]
4. Moral and spiritual growth [here again, this can be stressed in the context of the Church.<sup>12</sup>]

Keeping these emphases in mind, the pastor can legitimately ask that each person take an inventory of his spiritual life; communion attendance, Bible class attendance, giving to the Lord, and also his Christian love to his brother. After this inventory is taken by the member, there may be special problems which will need pastoral care. The Pastor should not pry, but should show a genuine concern for the souls of his members. Once they realize this, they will be more ready to come to him if they find a deficiency in their life in the community. Above all the pastor must "be a Christ for the church."<sup>13</sup> When he shows that he has learned the real meaning of Christian love, the members will soon learn.

#### The Laity

Edification involves speaking the Word of God to a fellow Christian. For many, if not most, of our laymen, this is an extremely difficult thing to do. Christians are able to do this only when our mistaken pride and self-consciousness are replaced with the knowledge that we are equal sinners and equally in need of the same Gospel for the forgiveness of those sins. Once we see our personal sin, and are shown that we are responsible not

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<sup>12</sup>O. A. Geiseman, "Some Requisites for the Proper Care of Souls," American Lutheran XXXVI, 2 (February, 1943), pp. 8 f.

<sup>13</sup>Olof Linton, "Church and Office in the New Testament," This is the Church, edit. by Anders Nygren, trans. by Carl O. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1952), p. 130.

only for our own sins, but also for the sins of the community, it will be easier for us to strengthen the brother that he may not sin as we have.

For when does sin ever occur in the community that he must not examine and blame himself for his own unfaithfulness in prayer and intercession, his lack of brotherly service, of fraternal reproof and encouragement, indeed, for his own personal sin and spiritual leprosy, by which he has done injury to himself, the fellowship, and the brethren.<sup>14</sup>

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We speak to one another on the basis of the help we both need. We admonish one another to go the way that Christ bids us to go. . . . We are gentle and we are severe with one another, for we know both God's kindness and God's severity. Why should we be afraid of one another, since both of us have only God to fear. . . . The more we learn to allow others to speak the Word to us, to accept humbly and gratefully even severe reproaches and admonition, the more free and objective will we be in speaking ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

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Where Christians live together the time must inevitably come when in some crisis one person will have to declare God's Word and will to another. It is inconceivable that the things that are of utmost importance to each individual should not be spoken by one to another. It is unchristian consciously to deprive another of the one decisive service we can render to him. If we cannot bring ourselves to utter it, we shall have to ask ourselves whether we are not still seeing our brother garbed in his human dignity which we are afraid to touch, and thus forgetting the most important thing, that he, too, no matter how old or highly placed or distinguished he may be, is still a man like us, a sinner in crying need of God's grace.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, trans. by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1954), p. 103.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

Bonhoeffer, however, sees the difficulty in doing what he is saying. Therefore, he emphasizes that before this Word is spoken, we must first listen, actively help, and bear with one another.

The speaking of that Word is beset with infinite perils. If it is not accompanied by worthy listening, how can it really be the right word for the other person? If it is contradicted by one's own lack of active helpfulness, how can it be a convincing and sincere word? If it issues, not from a spirit of bearing and forbearing, but from impatience and the desire to force its acceptance, how can it be the liberating and healing word?<sup>17</sup>

With this advice, we can set up ideas for helping the priests of the Church be better priests to one another. Once these lessons are learned, the opportunities for service to others will be increasingly seen. Then truly, the members of the Church in their conversation and consolation become a means of grace, as Luther says in the Smalcald Articles, III, 4. The main thing is that the laymen see that they have a responsibility for the souls of their brothers, just as much as the pastor does.

The pastoral care of souls must fill a large place in the life of the community of love. There are multitudes who are sick in soul as well as in body and in mind. Ministry to these needs is not the responsibility of the clergy and pastors alone, but of all the members of the Christian community.<sup>18</sup>

This is climaxed when members can come and confess their sins to one another. Since the Office of the Keys was given to the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>J. H. Oldham, "The Function of the Church in Society," The Church and its Function in Society, edit. by Visser 't Hooft (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., c.1937), p. 161.

Church, each Christian can assure another of the forgiveness of Sins. Indeed, several writers go so far as to say that community is beyond reach until this confession and absolution is made between brother.

It is not easy to do this, because human nature resists confession and its consequences; but community is beyond reach until the people recognize that men live by forgiveness, the forgiveness made possible by the crucified and risen Word of God.<sup>19</sup>

But all of this need not be some dramatic affair. Indeed, the more natural it is the better. Therefore, these things happen within a Christian family in small groups, and in informal situations where Christians are together.

If we broaden our definition of love to include not only the spoken Word but acts of love and charity, we again see a number of opportunities in the congregational program. Visiting the shut-in and sick, with a word of Christian cheer and encouragement, distributing literature, helping with the youth program are but a few of the opportunities. There are a number of ways to involve large numbers of laymen in the work of the Church.

Above all, the responsibility of all the members to edify their fellow members is clear. This can be done in these individual, unorganized ways about which we have been talking. But there are also several very specific ways in which this responsibility can be exercised. One is the Home visitation plan. This is closely connected with the Zone Cottage meeting plan, which will

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<sup>19</sup>Hunt, op. cit., p. 48. Cf. Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 111 f.

be discussed later.

In this plan, the congregation is divided into geographic zones, and a leader, usually an elder or member of the church council, is put in charge of the people of each zone. From time to time, there will be a special effort--financial, informational, devotional--for which these leaders will visit each family in their zones. Before each of these efforts, these leaders are trained and acquainted with the project. Aside from these special visits, every leader will visit his families as often as practical, not only for social reasons, but with a spiritual emphasis. Thus, what would amount to a pastoral call is made by these laymen, who can refer a family to the pastor if there is a problem beyond their depth. Under this arrangement, the members can be kept close to the Church, the various drives can be carried on through an existing agency, and the laymen are assuming their responsibility for others.<sup>20</sup> Since the Church council "should be concerned with peace and harmony among members and should be the examples in calling delinquent members and should be assisting the pastor in promoting spiritual life,"<sup>21</sup> this is a fine way to use them.

Closely allied with this are all the every member canvasses.

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<sup>20</sup>Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, "A Stewardship Manual for our Congregations" (St. Louis, Mo., The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.).

<sup>21</sup>Hillmer, op. cit., pp. 41 f.

In these drives, many laymen are given the opportunity to discuss with others various aspects of Church life, as worship stewardship, and spiritual growth. We will discuss these convasses more fully under the Church's Worship and the Church's Stewardship.

Another area in which the laymen can exercise their responsibility as in youth work. Not only does this writer have youth group counseling and Sunday School and Bible class teaching in mind, although these are valuable and time-honored services, but also the confirmation of children. First of all, the use of trained laymen to handle pre-marital and pre-baptismal counseling and also confirmation instruction has been suggested.<sup>22</sup> But aside from this, there is a very definite need for consecrated laymen and women to act as confirmation sponsors. Under this plan, a couple is appointed to be a class' sponsors through their instruction and through high school. These people would then keep in touch with members, assist as chaperones at meetings, appeal to faithful members of the class to serve as big brothers to such as come from unchurched homes or have fallen away, invite group to commune as a group several times a year, encourage participation in youth group and Bible class, and cultivate close relationships by social gatherings, etc.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, they can be the organizers of an annual confirmation reunion.

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<sup>22</sup>Bryan Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), p. 61.

<sup>23</sup>O. A. Geiseman, "The Newly Confirmed," American Lutheran, XXXV, 4 (April, 1952), p. 5.

This would involve calling on all of their class prior to the service, sending invitations, planning service and social gathering afterward, follow up work on those who did not appear, or on those who had been previously delinquent but who did show up.<sup>24</sup> In these ways, these young members can be kept close to the fellowship, and at the same time the lay sponsors and the young people themselves are assuming their responsibility.

### The Planned Program

A well-planned program is necessary to give an opportunity to both pastor and people to discuss and live the essentials of fellowship. Without a program, there is the danger of always preaching against the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, and having a Ladies' Aid topic on "How to Raise Money," or the Youth group topic on "To Dance or Not To Dance," practically every month. However, with wise self-evaluation and planning, the pastor and congregation can see to it that throughout the year the church hears and discusses the things it needs to grow stronger individually and corporately. Among the things it needs are the lack of discussion on fellowship and the lack of love and edification. As the program is planned, they dare not be ignored, no matter how sensitive some in the congregation may be about prejudice, strife, pride, and simple carelessness about

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<sup>24</sup>Martin Strasen, "Techniques of the Annual Roll Call and Reunion Service," American Lutheran, XXIII, 3 (March 1940), pp. 22 f.

being a Christian brother to one another. There must be a conscious stress on these things in the planning for the congregation, its organizations, and its education.

Thus, Parish Activities for 1955-'56 includes suggestions for a monthly theme, text, aim, Bible Study, thoughts on the theme, discussions available on the theme, activities, tracts, visual aids, and reading.<sup>25</sup> In the suggested themes are included Education in September, The Church in October, Stewardship in November, Welfare in December, Faith and Life in March, Worship in April, and Youth and Family in May. These themes give ample opportunity for any congregation to cover those things which could serve to foster stronger spiritual relationships among the members.

An interesting example of good planning is found in Immanuel Lutheran Church in Higginsville, Mo. In August a council composed of the chairmen of all organizations meets to plan the year. A general theme is adopted with topics for every month, usually from Parish Activities. This council determines what facet in each topic is to be emphasized. Then it sets goals for the congregation in knowledge and activity fields. Then each group meets to choose its activities, worship, and social program for each month. At the same time, the pastor correlated his sermons with the Bible classes and school Bible lessons. (It has also been suggested that each week the topic for the Sunday's sermon be related to the suggested Bible study of the family,

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<sup>25</sup>Oscar E. Feucht, editor, Parish Activities, included in Advance, 2,6 (July 1955).

thus linking the pulpit, the parish school Bible program, and the family devotion. In this way, by Sunday, even the children will be able to listen intelligently to the sermon, which will attempt to summarize and point further along the line of the week's study.) Then each group makes a chart of its proposed activity and all these charts are put into a booklet which is given to each member of the church on the first Sunday of September, the Congregational Rally Sunday. On this Sunday, the officers are installed and the sermon treats the general theme of the year.<sup>26</sup>

It goes without saying that a well planned program uses the optimum number of laymen in the execution of the program. It should also be obvious that if the congregation decides to plan its program, it requires the cooperation of all the organizations. This means work on the part of the congregational and organizational leaders. But if the correct goals are set up, a planned program will do much to focus the attention of the whole congregation on the several aspects of the Christian life, and can be extremely helpful when attempting to make the members conscious of their responsibilities toward one another.

### Small Groups

As the program is planned, it should include a decided emphasis on fellowship within small groups. In the small group,

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<sup>26</sup>Julius A. Fritze, "A Planned Parish Program," Advance, 1,2 (Sept., 1954), pp. 1-3.

fellowship is made more real and concrete. If the program is geared in this direction, there will be less danger of its becoming vague and impractical.

The basic small group in the congregation is the Christian family. As with the early church, the Church really does meet in the home. If Christian fellowship does not exist in the home, it will be hard to teach in the congregation. Thus, "parent education . . . should stand at the top of the list of divine 'musts' for the church."<sup>27</sup> For "children will imitate their parents, they will listen to the conversation of father and mother and other adults in the family and thus develop one or the other attitude over against the church."<sup>28</sup>

Martin Simon conveniently list twenty-five things the Church can do to build better Christian homes:

1. References to family life in Bible Class.
2. Family life units in Bible Class.
3. Family life plays.
4. Demonstrations of family devotions.
5. A member in each organization appointed to search each topic presented for ways of applying topic to home. These "experts" meet quarterly or annually to plan family life education.
6. Family life lectures by Christian educators.

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<sup>27</sup>Henry Wind, "The Church, the Community, and Juvenile Delinquency," American Lutheran, XXXVII, 8 (Aug. 1944), p. 9.

<sup>28</sup>Hillmer, op. cit., p. 76.

7. Movies on family.
8. Open house for schools--activities to make children home devotion conscious.
9. Gripe sessions.
10. Christian Family Week and sermon.
11. Address after service by pastor or an "expert" on fundamentals for parents.
12. Tract rack with family tracts.
13. Special awards to teachers who visit homes.
14. Announcements in bulletin explaining educational program.
15. Home visitors trained to demonstrate how to tell Bible stories, how to conduct devotions, discuss parents problems (can use elders).
16. Family or parent night in Church.
17. Father-Son or Mother-Daughter, etc., Banquet.
18. Series of panel discussions on how to handle sex problems.
19. Meetings for young people thinking of marriage.
20. Writing weekly column in newspaper on family life devotions.
21. Radio skits or talks.
22. Sunday School PTA or Day School PTA.
23. Arranging of church and school program so there are at least two home nights a week available for family.
24. Christian literature available, especially for children.
25. Books from library or start own library on Family.<sup>29</sup>

To this list we might add: encouraging of parents to worship in Church with their children, by having family services.

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<sup>29</sup>Martin Simon, "How the Church and Home can Work Together," The Christian Parent, 19, 5 (May, 1955), pp. 10 f.

In the Christian home, to foster fellowship, there must be family worship regularly in which the children can participate. To do this, the Sunday School lessons can be integrated,<sup>30</sup> and the children can have a share in its planning. More of this will be discussed in the section on the Church's worship.

Besides the family devotion,

the home should be the place where dependence on God is first learnt, and, through that, the type of relationship that results from such dependence. Rightly understood the family is the setting in which the child may be introduced to those relationships which ultimately come to full fruition through the Church on earth in the Communion of Saints in Heaven.<sup>31</sup>

In the family, there must be the elements of Christian fellowship; confession of sins one to another, forgiveness proclaimed through Jesus Christ, and Christian love, appearing as admonition, encouragement, kindness, respect for another's judgment, sharing of time, energy, and abilities. Christian love should be exhibited in relations to those outside the family. One writer suggests sharing the home and its fellowship with those who are old or alone, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon. Or the family may want to have one of the lonely Christians over for his birthday, or orphans for a weekend, or transients (cf. 3 John 5-8), or foreign students, or youth groups.<sup>32</sup> In these ways, the children

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<sup>30</sup>Mrs. Omke Engelkes, "Home Devotionsthat Work," The Christian Parent, 10, 8 (Sept., 1946), p. 229.

<sup>31</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>32</sup>Esther Miller Payler, "Sharing Your Home and Family," The Christian Parent, 18, 9 (Sept, 1954), p. 11.

will see the meaning of Christian love one to another.

Another type of small group is what we will call "Cottage meetings." In this category are included all those groups which meet in members' homes and are usually made up of those members who live in the general geographical area.

There are two basic ways of organizing these groups. The first is simply by an act of the congregation. To help expedite the program of the congregation, to foster better fellowship among the members, to inform the members, to integrate new members, and to revitalize spiritual life, the congregation divided the congregation into geographic zones, with perhaps twenty to thirty families in each zone. Leaders are then assigned to each zone. These may be the elders or specially appointed leaders or couples. There also may be visitors under these leaders. These people represent the Church to the people in their zone at deaths, sicknesses, marriages, etc. They also organize meetings of all in the zone from time to time. These meetings are held in homes, and may be for the purpose of informing the people of the organization, purpose, aims of the local congregation (for this, the pastor or congregational leaders may be present to answer questions); or it may be for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with one another to the end that each might better edify the other; or it may have the purpose from time to time of conducting a canvass, as when the budget and pledge would be presented and the pledges made in the cottage meeting; or it may be simply an opportunity for the pastor to

meet with and discuss spiritual problems with his people.<sup>33</sup> Or there may be a very definite purpose for organizing these meetings, such as Bible Study. Thus Rev. Adolf Meyer of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Yonkers, New York, following Lars Qualben (Cf. Lars Qualben, "Lay Bible Study under Pastoral Leadership," The American Lutheran, November, 1945, pp. 15 f.), organized his congregation in zones for Bible Study. His plan is as follows:

1. Small groups according to age and location; when more than ten, organize another group.
2. Discussion leader is a layman.
3. The Pastor prepares a mimeographed outline of the material to be covered.
4. Meetings held once a month at a member's house. From eight o'clock to ten, Bible Study; followed by social hour.
5. Social for fellowship.
6. "While participation of all the members of the group is fundamental to success, all members are assured that they need not feel embarrassed if they do not look up Bible references or do the Home assignments." Nevertheless, usually all participate.
7. First meeting in September preceded by large inspirational meeting to invite all.
8. Provides for more rapid and popular survey of Bible, especially with Home assignments; the study outline is given out a week before.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Tobias Joeckel, "Neighborhood Gatherings," Advance, 1, 4 (Oct., 1954), pp. 17 f. Cf. A Stewardship Manual For our Congregations, by the Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

<sup>34</sup>Wilbur Luecke, "Home Bible Study Groups," American Lutheran XXX, 5 (May, 1947), pp. 16 f. Cf. also Wm. C. Munds, "Parish Discussion Groups," Anglican Theological Review, XXIX, 4 (Oct. 1947), pp. 197-200.

The second way of organizing these groups is typified by Rev. Tom Allan's experience in his parish in England. Allan had had a house to house canvass by his members in an effort to bring more of the neighborhood into the Christian Church. The laymen who participated had to talk of their faith and their church, some for the first time. Out of this experience there came a demand from this group to have meetings with the pastor in order to learn more about their faith and to grow spiritually. They were interested in exploring at the deepest level the meaning of their membership in the Church. Thus this group was not created by the congregation, but was driven together by the members' own failure to fulfill what they clearly saw to be their obligations as members of the Body. These groups were organized with three functions:

1. as a training school in Christian discipleship.
2. to provide outlet in which its members can find the opportunity to express their faith in terms of service.
3. an attempt to restore the parochial community.

They also found three fields of operation:

1. in the congregation--seeking to bring others into the sphere of the group's life and work.
2. in the community around it--by direct evangelism and indirect service.
3. where the individuals work, etc.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tom Allan, The Face of My Parish (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1954), pp. 68-71.

Soon, as these groups saw their mission to the congregation clearer, Allan made an invitation to his church as a whole. After a voluntary week-night meeting at which the nature and function of the Church and the responsibility of membership was discussed, Allan, after the Sunday evening service, asked all those who desired to make a more positive commitment of heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ and the service of his church than they had done before to remain after the service for a brief service of rededication. Then these were organized into the groups which met weekly to study the New Testament, with discussion and worship. The membership was open to all who desired to grow. But soon the groups got too large, so they were split into house cells. For three weeks each small cell would study the same passages, then at the end of the month, all would gather for general discussion. Each meeting was closed with worship led by a member, in turn.<sup>36</sup>

Allan encountered some difficulties in this arrangement. A feeling that these groups are exclusive on the part of the non-participants may vitiate the witness to the congregation, since there is the tendency to split into two factions. Allan also found that they inevitably attract cranks and that they may cause subjectivism and introspection which would cut the members off from the world.<sup>37</sup> These seem to be parallel to the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-78.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 80 f.

difficulties which caused the degeneration of the Spener groups.

Thus this approach has many advantages, but great care must be used with it. It would seem that both approaches could be used simultaneously, with all the members belonging to a local group as in the "Cottage Meeting" plan, and at the same time, special interest groups be encouraged. As long as these do not become esoteric and exclusive, but open to all who seek to grow, the more small groups where Christians are edifying each other, the better.

What we must look for, and work for, is the growth of smaller groups

who will seek to realize among themselves the relations of mutual trust and support and responsibility which are characteristic of the Christian society. Such groups, while they may to begin with be small, must not become esoteric and exclusive. They must continually be seeking to enlarge their borders. The purpose of the leaven is to leaven the whole lump, but it is necessary first of all that there should be the leaven.<sup>38</sup>

These groups may be difficult to organize at first, because they will compete with the existing machinery of the congregation. Allan had the experience with a nearby congregation which he addressed where he was told that there was no time for special Bible study groups, because everyone was too busy running the organizations of the church.

We are so caught up in the conventional pattern of the Church's life, so busy keeping the wheels turning that we find it almost impossible to experiment with new forms of life within the church.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Oldham, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>39</sup>Allan, op. cit., pp. 79 f.

There are other forms of small groups within the congregation. The most well-known are the organizations; the youth group, the ladies' society, the men's club, and the married couples' club. These are fruitful areas of fostering stronger spiritual relationships among the members. Yet just here, churches have been most guilty of activism. Kirk Page has summarized the problem very well:

We should free our societies of money raising activities. I dare say that at the time of their founding there was no statement made that the primary purpose was to form an organization for the purpose of raising money for the church. Why then do so many of them concentrate their efforts in that direction? Why then do so many of them judge the success or failure of a meeting by how much money was "cleared" for the church? The leaders and members of these societies are sincere in their desire to accomplish something for the Lord and spend countless hours and no little money in carrying out such money raising events. Why not direct them instead toward leading their friends and neighbors into our church through the door of Christian fellowship? Build their programs around personal mission work, personal Christian service; for example--contacting of unchurched parents, visiting sick and old, arranging transportation of those without cars, follow-up on Lutheran Hour contacts, greeting strangers, . . . They can take an active part in Bible study, family altars, reading of Christian literature. <sup>40</sup>

Thus Hillmer lists possible things that various groups can do.

For instance, the youth group can:

form youth choirs, teach in Sunday School and Vacation Bible school, reclaim straying youth, serve as junior ushers, team up with others in Every Member Canvass, beautify church property, call on the unchurched youth, distribute tracts, visit the sick and needy, help the aged, do secretarial work, serve as news reporters, present stewardship plays, cultivate Christian fellowship, assist finance committee, establish a library geared to needs of youth, serve as apprentices to congregational boards and committee, use hobbies for Christian

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<sup>40</sup>Kirk L. Page, "Stewardship Applied to the Congregational Pattern," American Lutheran, XXXIII, I (Jan. 1950), p. f 1.

service, mimeograph bulletins, be in charge of church bulletin board, etc.<sup>41</sup>

The men's group can:

sponsor evangelism services, start and manage a church library, call on delinquent members, visit the sick and needy, contact all new members, greet after service, usher, canvass, youth counsellor, increase voting membership, sponsor lay retreats, transport the physically disabled to services, put on a family night, care for the unemployed, keep church properties in order, teach in Bible class, finance branch Sunday School, publicize church, put on mission rallies, etc.<sup>42</sup>

The women's groups are generally the most active in the church, and they are a great reservoir for Christian service. However, it also must be said that they are the most apt to fall prey to the evils already mentioned. Thus Oscar Feucht mentions three things that a women's group needs:

1. adequate, well-planned, thoroughly spiritual program, with balance between Christian knowledge and service.
2. organizational plan which gives each woman her place, and breaks the program down into small neighborhood groups.
3. plan that builds up around Christian home and puts emphasis there.<sup>43</sup>

To do this, he advocates that the women pick their own topics, that they divide into groups for service, such as soul winning, soul keeping, Christian welfare, altar care, Christian fellowship, etc., that in each locality there be a circle with officers which

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<sup>41</sup>Hillmer, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Oscar E. Feucht, "Circle Meetings for Lutheran Women," American Lutheran, XXV, 3 (Mar., 1942), p. 8.

would meet monthly, and that at these meetings, the topics be divided between mission themes and parent-home themes, which would partially be taken from the Christian Parent, or some such source.<sup>44</sup> By following this plan, any number of service projects could be undertaken by the different committees, or new committees could be formed where the need arises, and at the same time, within the ideal situation of small groups, the women could edify each other in fellowship and Christian discussion. At these small meetings discussions on such topics as the liturgy, worship, and the meaning of Church membership could also be easily held.

There is also a growing realization of the need for organization for both parents, such as a married couples' club, or a day-school or Sunday school P.T.A. There is much to be said in favor of such groups, for they can be great mission agencies, develop Christian fellowship, meet the needs of the parents better, can help build the teaching staff and the adult department of the Sunday school, and can help enlist the cooperation of parents. It is suggested that the program be simple, growing out of the needs of the couples themselves, and that they might not be more frequent than once a quarter, especially if the Cottage meeting system is in operation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-10.

<sup>45</sup>Waldemar A. Thiele, "A Sunday School Parent-Teacher League," Advance, 3, 1 (Jan., 1956), pp. 13 f.

The final type of small group gathering oftentimes involves more than a "small" group. This is the retreat. Most of the experiments in community living listed in Chapter III would be classified under this heading. Wherever they have been used, they have been found very valuable in giving the participants added insight into the meaning of Christian fellowship in inspiring them to greater efforts when they return to the "world," and in stimulating Christian growth. The Walther League LSV schools, and the correlated Youth Worker's conferences are perhaps the prime examples of this in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. At the LSV school the young people, many just confirmed, worship, play, discuss, and share spiritual experiences together. The emphasis is on participation and group activity. The program is set up by each group at the beginning of the school. Although the leaders in the various areas of discussion (worship, group work, Bible study, and recreation) are usually youth leaders and pastors, much of the actual planning and execution of the program is given to the young people. They lead the devotional periods. They work in committees with the leaders, planning the recreation, the topic discussions and activities, and the worship. They all write and give mediations on some event or thing in their spiritual life which might help the group. The idea of helping the group, and being aware of the needs of all the members of the group, is stressed. Those who have participated in these schools have gone back to their home congregation eager to put into practice the things they learned. Often they will persuade

others to go with them the next summer, and soon a large number of the league are not only acquainted with the League's program, but also understand better what it means to be a Christian in a group.

There are other types of Retreats with a similar program, although geared to a particular group. There are retreats for clergy,<sup>46</sup> for laymen,<sup>47</sup> for married couples,<sup>48</sup> for Church councils,<sup>49</sup> for different vocational groups,<sup>50</sup> and even for entire congregations and confirmation classes. In all instances, there have been reports of success, especially in developing Christian fellowship and mutual edification. Where practical, then, these retreats might well be used in the congregational program, especially in training leaders, confirmands, teachers, etc. It has been the general experience that in this situation, the participants are highly motivated, and there is a concentration of time and effort which could not be duplicated in weeks and months of normal congregational life.

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<sup>46</sup>Adolf Meyer, "A Lutheran Retreat," American Lutheran, XXIV, 2 (Feb., 1941), p. 17.

<sup>47</sup>Herbert H. Jordan, "Churchmen's Retreat Changes Men," Advance, 2, 3 (Mar., 1955), pp. 18, 19, 37.

<sup>48</sup>Elizabeth Sudlow, "Retreat for Young Married Couples," Church Management, XXIII, 3 (Dec., 1946), p. 45.

<sup>49</sup>Fred Schurmann, "We Pause to Wonder," American Lutheran, XXXV, 1 (Jan., 1952), p. 9.

<sup>50</sup>E. G. Homrighausen, "What is Christian Vocation?" Christian Century, LXV, 44 (Jan., 1948), pp. 1171 f.

## CHAPTER V

### ADMINISTRATING THE CHURCH TOWARD STRONGER

#### SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ITS WORSHIP

##### The Pastor

Although it is evident from the New Testament that Christian worship is essentially corporate act, because of the emphasis on personal religion in our time, the idea of corporate worship is one area that needs the special attention of the Pastor. By and large, American Protestant Christians have not been taught, or at least do not realize, the corporate nature of Christian worship. So it is a common occurrence to hear arguments from people who call themselves Christians, justifying their absence from congregational worship on the grounds that they can worship just as well alone and so see little value in "going to Church." It is against this misconception that pastors must warn their people, for this points up all the more the need for stronger spiritual relationships among the members in worship. Nor is this simply found in those who are classified as "delinquent" members. No doubt even most "good" members are not conscious of the values of corporate worship, nor are they aware of the possibility of edification one to another. The pastor is perhaps the only one who can remedy this situation.

He can do this first of all if he himself worships, and secondly if he really leads his people in worship. This means

that he makes his part of the liturgy meaningful and alive, not monotonous, with the impression that it is also boring to him. An indication of this is the reading of prayers. If they are printed out for him, the poor leader of worship is apt to hurry through them, using unnatural inflections and meaningless phrasing. If they are ex corde, they are apt to be horizontal prayers, which have more the effect of preaching to the people than of talking to God for the people. "Again and again we have had the unhappy feeling that the man who was 'leading in prayer' was consciously or unconsciously banking his shot off the ceiling of heaven, to his target in the pew."<sup>1</sup> A Pastor, if he wants his people to worship at all, to say nothing of worshipping as a community, must worship himself and be concerned that what he says and how he says it is a God-pleasing vehicle for the prayers of God's people.

But once we are sure that the pastor is doing all he is able to really to help his people worship when they are assembled for that purpose, we must also see what he can do to train them to worship better, as a group. First of all, they must understand what they are doing in corporate worship. This means, for a liturgical church such as the Lutheran church, that the pastor should be teaching the use of the forms which we have inherited, so that his people may not be saying empty nonsense

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<sup>1</sup>"Those Horizontal Prayers," editorial, American Lutheran, XXXVIII, 5 (May, 1955), p. 4.

syllables. He should be sure that the Sunday School worship is training for adult worship by worshipping as children. This means that his teachers should be trained, that they know how to lead in proper worship, that they will teach the children parts of the liturgy, with the proper meaning, that they will be choosing the proper hymns, and not always subjective hymns, which only hinder learning the benefits of corporate worship. He should be training his parents, so that they can have meaningful family devotions, so the children of the parish know what it means to worship, even before they reach confirmation instruction. He should use every opportunity to reinforce this training, as he helps with topics for the various organizations, plans sermons using parts of the liturgy, etc. Above all, he should view the liturgy not as worship itself, but simply a set of symbols which are used to help people worship. If the symbols lose their meaning, even after much training, the pastor should feel free to create new symbols which his people can use, so that they really can worship. The best training for worship is worship itself. As Gockel says:

As our church steps into the second half of the twentieth century and into the expanding fields of evangelistic opportunity which the Lord is opening up before us, it will pay us to restudy some of our Sunday morning merchandising methods. Surely, we shall not be accused of tampering with the gift if we favor better wrappings!

Thus the pastor should explain the liturgy in the context

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<sup>2</sup>H. W. Gockel, "Something's Happening," American Lutheran, XXXII, 12 (Dec., 1949), p. 13.

of a corporate act. When he explains it, for instance to his confirmation class, he should show them all the passages that are phrased in the first person plural, or in the second person, and how little is phrased in the first person singular. He should use responsive readings and litanies with them, explaining beforehand the value of this give and take in a congregation (cf. Eph. 5:19). This is also true of hymns and the creed. So often many hymns and the creed are thought of simply as prayers, when upon examination, they are dialogues between the members of the congregation. "Now let all loudly sing praise to God the Lord; Christendom, proudly Laud Him with one accord," or "Go to dark Gethsemane," or "A Mighty Fortress is our God," or "Oh, rejoice, ye Christian, loudly," are examples of this type of hymn.

The Sacraments also are acts of the whole community, but often the congregation is unaware of this. For instance, Baptism is the act whereby a person is brought into the Christian fellowship, yet it usually is a sacrament which involves only the one baptized, his parents and sponsors. Would it not be more in keeping with the corporate aspect of the Sacrament if members of the congregation, such as the elders, also participate in the ceremony, affirming the congregation's concern and responsibility for this new member? At the same time, a preface to the intercessory prayer which the congregation prays for the baby could be added, explicitly pointing out the meaning of Baptism as a corporate act. The pastor also should meet with

the parents, and if possible, the sponsors, to show them what is involved in a Baptism. Not only does God do something for the child, but the Church, the parents and sponsors take on a new responsibility, that of a new member in the community who will need help in his Christian life which has started in Baptism.

The Sacrament of the Altar is perhaps the climax of corporate worship. There our Lord not only gives His Body to His Church, but in this act visualizes for His Body the Church their oneness with Him. For that reason, Fred Lindemann could say, in answer to the question, "What can be done to awaken greater spiritual life in our church?" "The Sacrament every Sunday and private Confession."<sup>3</sup>

So the pastor should be stressing this aspect in his teaching, and not just the dogmatical problems involved. But this is something which cannot simply be learned in a class. For that reason, it would be very beneficial for the pastor to establish personal Communion announcement. Because of the physical limitations, it might be advisable to stress the benefits of such personal confession and absolution in teaching and preaching and tell the people that on a certain day you will be available if any would wish help in examining himself. At this time, then, the pastor could ask questions, as "What progress have you made in your spiritual life?" "What rule do you follow

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<sup>3</sup>Fred H. Lindemann, "The Churchmen's Digest," American Lutheran, September, 1940, quoting H. M. Allison in the Trinity 1940 issue of Sursum Corda.

about the frequency of your communion attendance?" "Have you ever noticed any appreciable difference in the blessings received from the Sacrament when you prepared conscientiously and when you did not prepare so conscientiously?"<sup>4</sup> or "Do you feel that you are at peace with all in the congregation?" "Do you feel that there is one special area in your spiritual life, especially in your contacts with your fellow Christians, with which you need the Lord's help?" etc.

Above all, the pastor should always be urging his people, in every situation, to more frequent communion. He should be stressing the benefits of partaking of the Lord's Supper, also those coming from taking it with the rest of his family. Therefore, it should be obvious that the pastor himself should commune with his people. If he does not ask the congregation that an elder assist him and give him communion, then he at least should ask them if it is all right to commune himself. For he needs its blessings, and this is an opportunity for him to come to the most intimate fellowship with his people.

One of the most blessed ways that the pastor can help his people through worship to edify each other is by training and encouraging laymen to lead in worship whenever possible. Often laymen would welcome the opportunity, but feel they lack the know-how. The pastor can show them that there is no special skill or qualification needed, only a genuine desire to help

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<sup>4</sup>Arnold H. Grumm, "Making the Most of Communion Announcement," American Lutheran, XXIII, 6 (June 1940), pp. 12 f.

other Christians worship their God. With some training and hints on writing prayers and meditations, the laymen can profitably lead in worship, especially in small groups, to the mutual edification of all. This will be discussed more fully in the following section.

### The Laity

As Brunner has put it, the worship of the early Church was not simply being together, but an "act of vital co-operation. They signified the performance of something in fellowship, a reciprocal giving and taking." Thus all were active, there were no passive worshippers.<sup>5</sup> This is the ideal toward which we strive. When the worshippers are all active in worshipping God they will be edifying each other.

When a congregation is assembled with the realization that they belong to one another and have something together to offer to God through Christ, when the congregation is expressing its corporate life, in its worship, then the service is vibrant with life.<sup>6</sup>

There are several ways in which the laity can help to bring this about. One way is to learn to worship intelligently, which we have discussed in the previous section. Another way is to participate more actively in worship. This means that in family devotion, the family create their own worship services, perhaps using the liturgical heritage of the Church or planning something

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<sup>5</sup>Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1953), p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Paul Rowntree Clifford, The Mission of the Local Church, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., c.1953), p. 39.

else which can better fit their needs. The one concern would be that all be involved and that all understand as much as possible. For that matter, laymen should be encouraged to lead worship in all the small groups in the church. But this will be discussed later. At this point, there still can be mentioned other ways in which laymen can participate in the worship of the congregation.

There is a precedent for this. Herbert finds this in the early Church:

In the early church the deliberate effort was made to divide up the functions of worship among as many people as possible. The Bishop was when possible the celebrant, and was surrounded by his priests, who (at least at Rome) con-celebrated with him; the deacons, headed by the arch-deacon, and the sub-deacons had their share in the reading of the lessons and the ceremonial of the altar; chanters and choir, acolytes and doorkeepers all had their place; the people too had their share in the action, in the offering of the gifts and the kiss of peace and the communion.<sup>7</sup>

Today, the people are more apt to think of congregational worship as a show at which they are spectators, rather than an event in which they are actively participating. Despite the fact that in the Lutheran Church, the people have a large part in the service, in the hymns, responses, etc., there is still the tendency to refrain from involving oneself in the worship. To overcome this, the pastor will have to train his people as to the meaning of the worship. At the same time, it would seem to be the greater part of wisdom to include some laymen from time

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<sup>7</sup>Arthur G. Herbert, Liturgy and Society (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., c.1935), p. 75.

to time in the service, at least to remind the people that the pastor is but their representative. Thus, for an evening service, an elder might read the lessons. In a communion service, a layman designated by the congregation could help deliberate. On Good Friday, the pastor could use the Bidding Prayer, with a layman assisting. Instead of making the Psalm a dialogue between the pastor and the people, from time to time, it could be a dialogue between the two sides of the church. In Youth services, the service could be entirely planned and carried out by the young people themselves. Indeed, the pastor, if he will use some imagination, and the imagination of his laymen will find there is no limit to which the liturgy and special services can be adapted to include both clergy and laity leading in worship. Green gives an example. In one of his charges in an industrial area, he held services each evening. Early each morning, he met with interested members and outlined the theme for that night's sermon. The members would jot down in notebooks their thoughts on the theme. Then, in turn, they read what they had written down. If they had nothing, or were reluctant to read, they simply said, "I pass." If any of these thoughts fit in with the sermon, Green met with these people before the evening service for prayer and discussion to help clarify the way of saying what they wanted to say. Then after the sermon, he remained in the pulpit, while one by one, these people came up and stood by the pulpit and expressed their thoughts. Green reported that these expressions were often more

effective in getting across the message, simply because a layman said it.<sup>8</sup>

Another very important contribution which laymen can make is in connection with intercessions. Not only should laymen be encouraged to intercede for others in the fellowship, for when he does this, it becomes impossible to dislike, condemn, or hate a brother,<sup>9</sup> but they should be urged to counsel and help the pastor in determining the needs of the congregations for which to intercede before the throne of grace.<sup>10</sup> When a layman knows of a problem of a brother, he should pray for that brother personally, but also should give the whole congregation the opportunity to intercede, by informing the pastor that such a problem exists.

There is an interesting feature of the worship of the early church which survives in the Greek Orthodox Church and the Church of South India. This is the Kiss of peace (cf. Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; I Thess. 5:26; I Peter 5:14). It signified forgiveness and reconciliation. Each member of the congregation thus indicated to every other member that he forgave him and asked to be forgiven for any ill-feeling that might have arisen.

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<sup>8</sup>Bryan Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), pp. 57 f.

<sup>9</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, translated by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1954), p. 86.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

The South Indian "Peace" was used in a Eucharistic service at the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Ill., several years ago. Hunt quotes the explanation given at that time:

When the Peace is given, the giver places his right hand against the right palm of the receiver, and each closes his left hand over the other's right hand. The Peace is given before the offertory (Cf. Matt. 5:23-24) as a sign of fellowship, and the offertory sentences recall St. Augustine's teaching that the sacrifice we offer is our unity in Christ. The celebrant gives the Peace to those ministering with him and these in turn give it to the congregation. Everyone who receives the Peace will pass it to the person sitting next to him. It is suggested that each person as he gives the Peace will say in a low voice, "The peace of God be with you."<sup>11</sup>

Although a pastor would need to exercise restraint in introducing something like this in his worship, it would seem that this could be very effective in a small group, or retreat, or even at a special service on Christian Fellowship. If properly introduced, it could have a profound effect on those participating.

Aside from actually participating in worship, or leading it, laymen can help each other by encouraging better church attendance. This is the purpose of the several types of lay visitations. One type is aimed at encouraging better church and communion attendance among lax, new, and prospective members. In general, such plans as the Sharing Christ plan, are organized in the following way. A check on attendance is kept by elders or a special "Loyalty" committee. This committee may be made

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<sup>11</sup>George Laird Hunt, Rediscovering The Church (New York: Association Press, c.1956), pp. 101 f.

up of representatives of the different organisations who would take turns every Sunday, thus assuring wide participation. At the same time, the people involved would be more likely to know their own group. This committee could also act as greeters to get the names of all visitors. The result of this attendance checking, plus the pastor's communion records, form the basis of determining who are the members who are considered inactive and lax. These can then be called on regularly by the pastor, or the elders, or the zone committee, if the Cottage plan is in operation, or a special effort can be made at Lent which would use more members. If a special effort is planned at Lent, a committee is in operation by January, outlining the program, recruiting the visitors, and preparing the publicity. Before Lent, the visitors are recruited and trained, lists are prepared --either of just the lax members, or as in the Sharing Christ plan--of these plus the unchurched Sunday School parents, Confirmation class parents, and prospective members, and the congregation is prepared for the visitation. This is done by a special service the day of the visitation and by distribution of prayer cards and candles to be used on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of the visitation, and by sending a letter to those who will be called on. The prayer card and candle are devices to be used in family devotions to encourage prayer for the visitation. In this way, the entire congregation is supporting the endeavor, if only with their prayers. On the Sunday afternoon, the calls are distributed, either arbitrarily or as

individuals volunteer. After the calls have been made and the results tabulated, the visitors are asked to look for those on whom they called, and call back if necessary. The content of the calls is very definitely on a spiritual level, as the members attempt to share Christ with those who are not so close to Him.<sup>12</sup>

Another type of visitation is that in which all the members are contacted and encouraged to attend church service. This is usually in connection with Lent or some other special series of services. Although it would be impractical to conduct something like this on a house to house basis, it has proved effective to organize a telephone campaign. Indeed, an intensive house to house campaign among all the members would be unnecessary if the Cottage meeting plan is working effectively. However, the use of the telephone can use more members and stimulate additional concern for each other. In this plan, a few weeks previous to Lent, announcements are inserted in the bulletin to build interest, perhaps with a phrase such as "50-50 Lenten Group." There need not be much detail, except that this involves testifying to others. Then a letter is sent out to all explaining the plan, and asking for participation. All the members' names are then put on cards

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<sup>12</sup>John A. Nevasch, "The Sharing Christ Plan," American Lutheran, XXXVI, 12 (Dec., 1953), pp. 6-9. Cf. also Carl Berner, "Solving Absenteeism in the Church," American Lutheran, XXVII, 7 (July, 1944), p. 12; A. H. Schleaf, "My Brother's Keeper," American Lutheran, XXIII, 4 (April, 1940), pp. 18 f.; The Sharing Christ Plan, (New York: The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, c.1955).

and classified as to age, etc. Then each week during Lent, fifty of these cards are mailed out, one each to another member. The member is asked to telephone the member whose name appears on the card, to remind and encourage him to attend the Wednesday night service. Suggestions are also given, and the caller is urged to make arrangements to meet the person he calls after the service. Then the caller is asked to pray for that person every day. The next week fifty other cards were sent to fifty other members. This plan not only succeeded in getting the members better acquainted, but it afforded an opportunity for many to testify and to give spiritual encouragement whom might otherwise have never done so on their own. This sort of thing would do much to make corporate worship a mutually enriching thing.<sup>13</sup>

#### Planned Program

The Lutheran Church is historically a church with a planned worship program, the Church year. Such things as Parish Activities are only amplifications of the church year system. This means that if the congregation is aware of the values of such a system through the emphasis in week-day activities and their worship programs, they will more readily worship on Sundays because they will know what is happening. To this end, the pastor should

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<sup>13</sup>Ernest K. Scherer, "Telephone Testimony for our 'Fifty-Fifty' Lenten Group," American Lutheran, XXXVIII, 1 (January, 1955), pp. 8 f.

use the existing system, as we have outlined above, but only after explaining and amplifying it in every possible way. This means that in a planned program, the worship emphases of the organizations should be geared to the emphasis of the Sunday. This, in turn, means that if the emphasis on Sunday involves any phase of Christian fellowship and brotherly edification, this emphasis will be explored in different ways throughout the week or month.

Aside from this, all that we have said about visitations, the worship program of the church, attendance encouragement, etc., presupposes some plan and organization. For all these things, committees are needed which will thoroughly plan each activity. Only in this way can the optimum benefits come of any of these endeavors.

### Small Groups

We need to remind ourselves that the Early Church did not begin with services of worship. It began with fellowship. They met together from house to house, sharing in meals and having all things in common. Their worship seems to have sprung directly out of this fellowship. They were together in their belief in Christ and therefore together they had to express their devotion.<sup>14</sup>

It is only as Christians live together in fellowship that they can come to the fullest realization of corporate worship. Of course, it is undesirable that Christians should forsake the world and live monastic lives. But a partial solution is the encouragement of Christians to join themselves to small groups

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<sup>14</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 39.

which are dedicated to furthering the fellowship of the Church. Out of these situations can come the deepest worship experiences, as any who have been to a retreat or participated in an edifying Cottage meeting would testify. After one has participated in such an experience, it is easy to understand the corporate values of congregational worship. It is easier to participate in a larger worship service and to sense the reality of the Church worshipping and edifying each other, if one has first learned this in a smaller group. Thus if the pastor wants to foster better church attendance, and assure himself that those who are in attendance are benefitting and edifying each other in a greater measure than before, he could wisely give more of his time to working with the worship programs of the small groups in the congregation. This includes the family, the Cottage groups, the classes, the organizations, and the retreats of the congregation.

In family devotions, the pastor should have demonstration groups available for families who wish to improve their devotions. He should have at his finger-tips information that families may want. In the organizations opportunity should be given to discuss family devotions. Indeed, no trouble is too great if it means that more families will inaugurate a worthwhile family altar. For in the family, where Christians live together, in the real testing ground of Christian fellowship. There is where the finest worship should be. A few suggestions may be in order. The worship programs should be varied enough so that they are

still meaningful. To do this, it may be wise to encourage ex corde prayers and careful planning by the whole family. It may also be valuable, when the children are old enough, to take turns in planning and leading family devotions. At the same time, there should be enough similarity so that especially the younger ones will be able to participate intelligently and enjoyably. Correlation with the parish program, the church year, the Sunday School or Bible class lessons, contributes to this. It is important that the devotion period not only be readings, hymns, and prayers, but, if possible, there should be mutual sharing of ideas, and a real sense of fellowship. To be thoroughly consistent, a Christian family should be aware of sins and the availability of forgiveness. Thus family prayer should include petitions for forgiveness both from God and fellow Christians.

It is a decisive rule of every Christian fellowship that every dissension that the day has brought must be healed in the evening. It is perilous for the Christian to lie down to sleep with an unreconciled heart. Therefore, it is well that there be a special place for the prayer of brotherly forgiveness in every evening's devotion, that reconciliation be made and fellowship established anew.<sup>15</sup>

In short, the family should be all the Church is. It should be the Church in miniature. Only in this way can the Church universal be stronger.

In worship in other small groups, the laymen should lead if at all possible. Especially in the Cottage meetings and the

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<sup>15</sup>Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 74.

organization meetings where the pastor will not always be there, the laymen should be ready to exercise their function as royal priests. In doing this, all will receive great benefit, and at the same time, will come to know what corporate worship really is.

To worship truly with other men we must know them as men, whose burdens we may share. The requirements of true corporate worship are not fully met by large congregational services. These need to be revitalized and enriched by the worship of smaller groups, in which a more intimate human fellowship is possible.<sup>16</sup>

These truths are especially evident in regards to retreats. Here for several days, Christians can live together, actually in the atmosphere of worship. It is this experience of a worship-filled life that does so much to make these retreats a meaningful experience.

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<sup>16</sup> J. N. Oldham, "The Function of the Church in Society," The Church and its Function in Society, edit. by Willem A. Visser 't Hooft (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., c.1937), p. 155.

## CHAPTER VI

### ADMINISTRATING THE CHURCH TOWARD STRONGER

### SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ITS STEWARDSHIP

#### The Pastor.

In Stewardship, perhaps more than in any other phase of the Christian life, the witness of layman to layman is most effective. Thus the role of the pastor is one of guidance and leadership. He should by all means teach the principles of Christian stewardship to his instruction classes. When New members learn from the start the right way to look at their possessions, the intensive campaigns to encourage them later on to give more readily to the Lord would not be necessary. The pastor should include themes on Stewardship in his sermon planning, just as he does for the other aspects of Christian life. He should above all, stress the motivation forgiving which is ours, as redeemed children of God through Jesus Christ. But when all this is done, it still remains the laymen's job to encourage each other to a stronger stewardship life. Only by seeing the essential role that the laymen play in this, can the pastor successfully administer a stewardship program which involves the total stewardship of the individual and the corporate stewardship of the community.

### The Laity

There are two things that the laymen have to emphasize one to another. One is that all we have belongs to God, and the other is that, because of this prior claim by God, it is also true and all we have belongs to each other, "because all alike are brethren redeemed by Christ, because all alike are called to share the spiritual wealth," which Christ came to bestow.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these things is most effectively discussed by laymen because often what the pastor may say is easily dismissed by laymen who feel that he is not in a position to know the difficulties of a laborer and his family living on his insecure wage. So, for instance, it must be the tithers in the congregation who are used to encourage others to take this step. Often only a layman, one like themselves, can convincingly tell other laymen of the blessings of such a stewardship life. This is true of the sealed pledge and Stewardship of self programs.<sup>2</sup> This latter program stressed the fact that Stewardship not only involves money, but all that we are and have, including all our talents. So, in connection with the sealed pledge, each

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<sup>1</sup>L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, c.1942), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Kirk Page, The Christian Steward and the Sealed Pledge (St. Louis, Mo.: The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, c.1951); A Better Way, Dept. of Stewardship, Missionary Education, and Promotion (St. Louis, Mo.: The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, c.1951); Wm. Hillmer, editor, Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers (St. Louis, Mo.: Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, n.d.), pp. 60-62.

member is asked to pledge himself and whatever he can do for the church, as teaching, soul-winning, soul-keeping, youth work, office work, etc. All these things are in a list, and each member simply checks off what he pledges to do.<sup>3</sup> The experience has been that often many after pledging in purely physical areas, soon shifted to more spiritual activities.<sup>4</sup>

Still and all, there is a reluctance to talk about Stewardship among laymen. This is partially eliminated by creating situations in which it is expected that laymen will speak of these things, such as visitations, and this seems to make the task easier. But as Norton points out:

In nothing have we more completely succumbed to the tyranny of individualism than in the avoidance among Christians of any discussion of this. We have inherited from an age of economic individualism the tradition of the stewardship of money. And there are in the church many who are generous and many who are most disciplined in the personal use of their money. But we have accepted also the tradition that a man's money matters are the one thing that he must not discuss our personal prayer life. We are now willing even to discuss our personal relationships. In these ways we have to a certain extent broken down that wall of privacy which prevents any true Christian community. But we have kept the privacy of the purse impregnable. Until we begin to realize that this, the most determining factor in our lives, is something that we must discuss with our fellow-Christians, we cannot hope for any creative social life in the church.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Hillmer, op. cit., pp. 60-62. Cf. Norman D. Kretzmann, "Giving our Laymen the Joy of Service," Advance, 1, 2 (July, 1954), pp. 12, 13, 39.

<sup>4</sup>Kretzmann, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Ralph Norton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, c.1954), pp. 127 f.

So the laymen must see their responsibility to learn for themselves and talk to others about the truths of Christian stewardship. They must see that all they have, their money and their time and their abilities, are the Lord's. Going even further than this, a Christian owes a responsibility to God for what he does with all his money, time, and abilities.

If our lives are in any sense at all to be lived in the Lord's service, then the question of how we spend our money on our homes, on our children, and on ourselves is really of greater importance than how we spend the residue on others.<sup>6</sup>

Not only are laymen to be concerned about the use of all they have, and also how the other Christians are using all they have, but they are to be concerned about being all that they possess for others in the Church. Although most congregations have some kind of welfare fund, and give to missions of all kinds, and perhaps even are adopting a Refugee family, still there is the need to assume a greater responsibility for all of the members of the local congregation. This seems to have been the thinking of the early church when it had all things in common.<sup>7</sup> Thus there is a corporate responsibility, not only for the spiritual welfare of all the members, as we have discussed before, but for the physical welfare as well. So some churches maintain a credit union among the members,<sup>8</sup> others operate through

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>7</sup>Thornton, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>Morton, op. cit., p. 149.

their small groups and organizations, while others may operate on emergency cases. But until some satisfactory arrangement is made, the responsibility of the community is only half assumed, for Christians live whole lives, not compartmentalized into physical and spiritual.

#### Planned Program

Thus the program must be planned in such a way that laymen have opportunities to talk to one another about stewardship, and do something about it together. One of the best ways is to have an annual campaign where the visitation or the cottage meeting programs are used to reach each member. Although there are varying methods, the objectives are generally the same. Through this campaign, the congregation endeavors to enlist every member in pledging in money and abilities to the Lord's work. At the same time, weekly envelopes can be distributed.

To make any such campaign successful, much planning needs to be done. Committees need to be working weeks in advance. Instruction should be given to the members through all possible media. If it is to be an every member canvass, the visitors need to be recruited and trained. Above all, the proper motivations must be stressed, and the entire endeavor should be very spiritual. This is possible by the proper use of publicity, a spiritualized budget, and the kind of training given to the callers.

But the best type of planning goes on in the Sunday school

and the youth groups. It is here that the members learn about the facts of stewardship life. Here it is that the Stewardship committee should be devoting much of its time. By the use of a long-range plan which stresses early stewardship education, the congregation can build a stronger fellowship, alive with the sharing of finances and abilities.

### Small Groups

Small groups are valuable in stewardship because they give a better opportunity to talk about the responsibilities of stewardship, and at the same time, offer a concrete opportunity to the members to use what they have for other Christians. This is perhaps best seen in the Christian family, although it may not always be evident. In the family, all share with one another, contributing what each has to offer to the welfare of the others. Thus the father works, the mother cooks and sews, the children do errands, etc. All are being stewards of what they have. It becomes Christian stewardship when the motive is the love of God, and the giving is complete and unselfish. The Christian parents will then be wise to teach their children early the principles of Christian stewardship that all we have belongs to God, because He has redeemed us, and that, since He wants us to look after each other, all that we have goes to help each other. In this context, it will be easy to teach the children to contribute to church through savings from their allowance, etc. At the same time, the whole family can be recruited to

help the parents give generously, or even tithe, to the church. A repository, perhaps called "The Lord's Share," could be the center of the family's stewardship life, just as there will be a worship center. The family will be stronger if it works together to return to the Lord what is His.

The Cottage meeting groups can be helpful in any stewardship campaign the congregation may be conducting. Instead of a house to house canvass, these groups may be used to distribute envelopes and pledges, and to instruct on Christian giving. Rev. R. Kingst of Lakeland, Fla., reports the following experience. After the congregation had effectively used a canvass, the pastor still felt that many were not getting the spiritual message, so he tried Cottage meetings. The pastor instructed several laymen who had themselves experienced the joys of stewardship. All organizational meetings were cancelled for two weeks, and all the members of the Church were invited to different homes on different nights. After the group had become acquainted, the lay leaders made their presentation. After an opening prayer by the laymen, the budget was presented, explaining the needs of the church, district, and synod. Then the second layman discussed aspects of Christian giving and motivation, emphasizing proportionate giving. This was followed by a filmstrip on the subject. The third layman then returned last year's sealed pledges with a record of each member's offerings. After they had had time to compare the two, the new "prayer pledges" were distributed, with explanation and discussion. At this point, before the people signed their pledge,

the pastor read selected passages from the Bible and led in prayer. Then these pledges were filled out, to be placed on the offering plate the following Sunday. It was found that the enthusiasm displayed by the leading laymen prompted a favorable response on the part of the other laymen.<sup>9</sup> This experience shows what can be done when laymen speak to other laymen in small groups about Christian Stewardship. These Cottage meetings may also be useful for special charity projects. The members of one group could take it upon themselves to be responsible for a needy family, or a worthy charitable cause that is vital to them all.

The organizations in the church all are raising money for their purposes and for the congregation. As has been pointed out, this should not be the only reason for their existence. However, they can be useful again as means of instructing the people, and implementing this instruction by actual giving. So the interest groups in the ladies' society may want to assume responsibility for some cause. The Walther League may want seriously to try to see their proportionate giving plan.<sup>10</sup> In these and similar ways, the organizations are implementing the stewardship program of the congregation, and at the same time, by their corporate efforts, are establishing stronger spiritual relationships among each other.

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<sup>9</sup>Reinhold A. Hingst, "We Raised our Sights in Cottage Meetings," Advance, 2,8 (October, 1955), pp. 15-17.

<sup>10</sup>Proportionate Giving (Chicago: Walther League, c.1948).

## CHAPTER VII

### ADMINISTRATING THE CHURCH TOWARD STRONGER SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ITS EVANGELISM

#### The Pastor

It is the exceptional Christian who will go out on his own and tell others of the Lord. This sad but true. Thus it may be a losing battle for any pastor to attempt to make his congregation soul-conscious simply through periodic exhortations on mission work. Instead, his emphasis should be on group evangelism. This means he will have to train his people through united campaigns and evangelism through the neighborhood gatherings. Thus his job is to give his people a sound training in what their faith means, and what the Church is, so that when the time comes, they all will be able to give an answer concerning the hope that is within them, and at the same time, live in the Christian community in a manner not contradicting the verbal witness, and be able to assimilate the new members into the community. For it is not enough simply to be able to speak certain Biblical truths. As Thornton says, "Men are reconciled to God, not by argument, but through the witness of the reconciled community to the crucified and risen Lord."<sup>1</sup> So the members need the rest

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<sup>1</sup>L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Sacre Press, c.1942), p. 107.

of the community in evangelism, for support in united efforts, and as the recipients of their love which will be a witness in itself to the world. The pastor must make his people aware of this fact that effective evangelism is a corporate endeavor. He will then help them learn this truth by organizing such joint efforts as have been mentioned. When the whole community is aware of its corporate responsibility to the people in their neighborhood who are without Christ, then the pastor has done his job.

#### The Laity

Since it is true that the pastor cannot do all the evangelistic calling that needs to be done, and since today no minister can truly be all things to all men, only with the diversity in the congregation of laymen who are working for souls, can evangelism be effective.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is necessary--if the congregation plans a house to house campaign, or participation in a larger mission endeavor, as the Area Preaching, Teaching, Reaching Mission or similar affair--to recruit as many members as possible. This takes careful planning, as we will discuss it in the next section. But any evangelistic effort must be an effort of the entire congregation. The members must feel that this is their job, even if all they are doing is praying for it. This means that the entire congregation must support some intensive campaign, and, perhaps more important, the entire congregation

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Rowntree Clifford, The Mission of the Local Church (London: SCM Press, Ltd., c.1953), p. 87.

should be exhibiting to the outside world at all times, a united and love-filled community. For new members are asked to join themselves to a fellowship which calls itself Christian. If it is no different than any secular society, the outsider will see no point in joining such a group.

This brings us to another point in our discussion of the place that laymen can play in evangelism as a means of strengthening each other. Once new members are accepted, they must be assimilated. This is only possible if the old members see these new members as Christians whom they are to love and edify, especially since they are neophytes (cf. Matthew 18). Evangelism leads to another opportunity to show God's love to a fellow Christian. Yet it is here that so many Christian churches fail. Allan gives three reasons why those gained by evangelism drift away.

1. The newcomers are simply chilled out of the church by the attitude of the old members.
2. There is nothing for the new members to do in their new-found faith. The week-day activities usually give precious little opportunity for spiritual exercise.
3. The separation between the Christian style of life and that of the secular culture which they have left is not so different that they are receiving any benefit from their membership.<sup>3</sup>

No evangelism program or campaign is complete unless it makes the people aware of their new responsibility toward the new members. "A Church can only evangelize those whom its corporate

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<sup>3</sup>Tom Allan, The Face of My Parish (London: SCM Press, Ltd., c.1954), pp. 34-37.

life is strong enough to absorb.<sup>76</sup> The more the members are given the opportunity to witness as a group to their common faith, the stronger they will become. The more they offer their fellowship of love to the newly acquired members of the Body of Christ, the stronger the Church will become. The more the newly acquired members are shown the joys of sharing what they have from God with their fellow-Christians, the stronger the Church will become. The small groups give a wonderful opportunity to fulfill all this, as we will discuss later.

#### Planned Program

Any evangelism campaign, whether it is house to house, or through the small groups, must be well planned. The more completely it is planned, the more at ease the people participating will be, and the more effective the work. This means first of all that the congregation be sold on the idea that they see the need and their responsibility. This can be accomplished by sermons; interested laymen speaking to organizations; holding a special congregational get-together, perhaps a social affair, at which the case is presented; and training in classes, especially with prospects and youth. Once the congregation is ready to assume their responsibility, a lay committee should be formed which will do the enlisting of the visitors, etc. If the congre-

<sup>76</sup>Clifford, op. cit., p. 75.

gation has conducted Stewardship of Self campaigns, the committee will have a start with those who expressed a willingness to help in such evangelism efforts. The rest can be recruited through organizations and Cottage groups. As the date for the drive approaches, the training program should begin and become intensified. There should be frequent meetings of the planners and the visitors, with prayer and mutual encouragement. There may be need for outside help. Most denominations have specially trained men available to help congregations with such efforts. By the time the drive begins, each visitor should know just what is expected of him, and the congregation should be helping the visitors with its prayers and its encouragement. After the calls or cottage meetings are over, the results should be tabulated. The work is far from over. A lay committee again should be calling back on prospects, and strengthening the contacts.

This program is a little complicated in areas where the neighborhood is changing. If negroes are moving in around the church, the first step of gaining the cooperation of the congregations may be handled a little differently. The people will have to overcome their sin of prejudice first before they will want to go out and invite negroes into their fellowship. So the pastor must be especially sure that his people understand what it means to be a member of the Christian Church. Rev. Richard Klopff, the pastor of a Lutheran church in Brooklyn, who has been successful in integrating his congregations, presents the problem:

During the process of population change in a city the church gradually becomes a cultural island catering to a few elect and gradually withering away. . . . When a church no longer serves the community in which it is located, it has no right to exist. . . . The Church must help all men, and perhaps most of all the city man, who is caught in the web of a fast moving and complex society, find purpose and peace. . . . It sometimes seems much easier to have feelings of love for the Negro in Africa and the Chinese, in China four sic our negroes or Oriental neighbor. . . . "People can't be changed, their prejudices are too deeply rooted." These are but a few of the objections raised when the question of human relations in the church is approached. If people can't be changed, then the church is that which the unbeliever contends it is, a failure and a hoax. The very mission of the Church is to change people, the Son of God died for that, and He gave us His Gospel with its changing and transforming power.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Rev. Klopff's vestry resolved "not to preach to the Negro or any particular person, but to continue to preach the Gospel to all men, and to continue to extend the Kingdom of God in our community."<sup>6</sup>

Rev. Alfred Schroeder gives some principles in integration:

1. Prepare congregation to accept change in the community and the complexion of the congregation.
2. Approach the Negro prospects in a normal manner, without prejudice, without paternalistic favor.
3. When the member of another race steps into the church, he must not be treated like a hot potato which no one quite knows how to handle, nor should he be treated like "exhibit A" with very uncomfortable attention showered upon him.
4. Because it takes some Christians longer to mature than others, count on losing some members. This is unwelcome but necessary.

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<sup>5</sup>Richard Klopff, "It Can be Done," American Lutheran, XXXV, 12 (December, 1952), pp. 6 f.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

5. Remember, the new people in the community must be won by hard work and evangelism and prayer, just as we must win anyone. Negroes are not going to invade your churches in droves simply because you have opened the doors to them.<sup>7</sup>

This situation presents a challenge to the Christian community. With careful planning and sound Christian leadership, it can turn into a wonderful experience, as the Christians realize within their fellowship the meaning of the unity of the Church, which knows no limits to membership, only belonging to Jesus Christ.

The service in which new members are received into the fellowship can be very impressive if well planned. In the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod's Rite of the Receptions of converts, nothing is said of the convert's joining a fellowship, or his responsibilities, or of the congregation's responsibilities toward him. The prospective member simply affirms his faith in the truth of the teachings of the Lutheran, and his determination to become a member of this church and to make diligent use of the means of grace, and to lead a righteous life. Might it not be better to ask for some kind of statement from him as to his faith in Jesus Christ and his desire to join in Christian fellowship with others of His Church?<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the congregation could also voice its joy at his joining and its

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<sup>7</sup>Alfred Schroeder, "Is Your Community Changing?" American Lutheran, XXXV, 9 (September, 1952), pp. 3 f.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. The practice of the Congregational Church, Clarence T. Craig, edit., The Nature of the Church (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Co., c.1945), p. 51.

desire to serve him in love as a Christian Brother. Following the service, the congregation could have a parish get-together to meet the new members. In this way, the new members would from the start join the church as one individual among others, but as a member of Christ's body joining himself in fellowship with others in a community.

### Small Groups

A method of evangelism which has recently been found to be very successful is by using the Cottage groups as missionary agencies. This was perhaps first used in the mission fields, where the Christian church existed only in small household groups. The prospective members were invited into this group, and in this way were introduced to the Christian church. If one were converted, he joined this small fellowship.<sup>9</sup>

In the setting of the American culture, it would work much in the same way. The congregation would be broken up into these small units. The members of these groups would be encouraged to invite non-members to participate in their fellowship, discussion, and worship. This is much easier to do for many than to invite or be invited to go into a church building. Many who would never work up enough courage to ask a friend to go to church with him might very readily invite him to a home gathering. At the same time, many who would never go to church, could

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<sup>9</sup>George Laird Hunt, Rediscovering the Church (New York: Association Press, c.1956), pp. 124 f.

still be introduced to the Church through these group meetings, which few would fear.

In addition to inviting non-members to join with them, these groups could also meet as an action group. Prior to inviting any outsider, the group could train each other for evangelistic activity. Thus the influence of the group could extend into the lives of the members as they went about their daily tasks. Each member could strengthen each other member to greater courage in talking about their faith to others. After an effort is made, the group could meet again to discuss their successes and failures and again strengthen each other.<sup>10</sup> Out of this situation came Allan's experience, when his members asked to form groups for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> He found that "the only way to prepare a church for evangelism is by the work of evangelism."<sup>12</sup> (The two things are inextricable bound together:

the imperative need to re-examine the pattern of our church's life, and to find our way towards some more dynamic and relevant form of Christian community; and supreme urgency of finding some answer to the problems of communicating our gospel to the masses outside the Church.)<sup>13</sup>

The answer, at least partially, seems to be in the existence of these Christian "cells," both for realization of fellowship, and as a means of approaching the non-Christian with the

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<sup>10</sup>Bryan Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), pp. 170 f.

<sup>11</sup>Allan, op. cit., pp. 68-71.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Gospel in the context of a Christian community, at the same time in the setting of realistic everyday life. Edification in a cell leads to evangelism; evangelism shows the need for more edification; and so it goes, with the church growing stronger from within and from without.

Now, how can this program be carried out? The first step is to establish spiritual relationships among the members of the Church. In the New Testament, we found that in order to carry out the Gospel in the Christian community, the members were first to be edified, edify, strengthen, and give testimony. The members were to be united in their lives, and in their witness. The Church was to be a body, with the Lord Jesus as their Head. Thus they were to be united in their responsibilities in those areas where they were to witness.

But throughout its history, the life of the members has kept the Church from realizing these things. This is especially noted especially the results of this sin, its selfishness, its individualism, its materialism, and its lovelessness. These sins have wrecked the fellowship and love. It has been the kind of fellowship that the Lord intended it to be. They have been apart, and when they are apart, if not geographically, then spiritually, they cannot love or edify. So this theme was an attempt to design a program which could help eliminate these sins, and lead the Church toward stronger spiritual relationships toward each other in the Church.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Our task was to set down a congregational pattern which would follow the example of the New Testament church. This meant that this pattern would attempt to establish stronger spiritual relationships among the members of the Church. Examining the New Testament, we found that in person to person contacts in the Christian community, the members were urged to admonish, edify, strengthen, and show Christian love to their fellow-members. We found this to be true also in the Church's worship, its Stewardship life, and its evangelism. In all these areas, the Church say itself as a living community with the Lord Jesus as their Head. Thus they were urged to be aware of their responsibilities in these areas toward their fellow-members.

But throughout its history, the Sin of the members has kept the Church from realizing these ideals this side of glory. We noted especially the results of this Sin, in activism, or misguided purpose, individualism, and lovelessness. These sins wreck the fellowship and keep it from being the kind of community that the Lord intended it to be. They keep people apart, and when they are apart, if not geographically, then sympathetically, they cannot love or edify. So this thesis was an attempt to devise a program which could help eliminate these sins, and lead the Church toward stronger spiritual relationships toward each other in the Church.

It was early noted, and is here said again, for emphasis, that no man-made program or scheme can substitute for the Holy Spirit. He is the Energizer of the Church. Any program that would succeed must be, first and always, a means through which the Holy Spirit can work. Thus this means that no psychology or group technique should be allowed to take the place of the Word and Sacraments.

But these Means of Grace must be brought to bear on men where they are, to their problems, and their problems here are wrong purpose, individualism, and lovelessness. Thus we set up a four-fold program. The four elements of this program must all be working together to do God's purposes, or there is an obstacle in the way of the Holy Spirit. The pastor and laymen must both work on a planned program to realize real Christian community, and one essential part of this program is the establishment and strengthening of small groups within the congregation.

These four elements work against the sins which we have mentioned, and work for the attaining of the New Testament pattern. They combat the activism which comes from a wrong purpose of existence for the congregation by carefully planning the program, setting down the Biblical goals, and together, as pastor and laymen, attempt to find the best way to organize the congregation to meet these goals, implementing this especially through small groups. They combat the lack of fellowship, or individualism, through: (1) a careful planning of the ways of training the congregation to assume their responsibilities toward one another;

(2) giving opportunities for the members to exercise their functions as priests for one another through worship, education, stewardship, and small groups meeting to cooperatively solve problems. They combat the lack of love by strengthening each other in faith and love towards their common God through worship, brotherly admonition, edification, and thus enable each to be filled more and more with God's love with which to love others.

As these four elements work together against these common problems, the Church is strengthened from within, for the Word and Sacrament are being employed by all the members to strengthen each other. At the same time, through these very same things, the community in corporate witness to the non-Christian world grows from without, as the world sees how the Christians love one another. As the Church is concerned about its own spiritual life inside its community, and as it attempts to improve with the help of God, so it can less and less be content to keep this Help of God from those who know Him not. Thus through edification comes evangelism, and new blood in the Church means more edification and opportunity to edify.

Necessarily, this thesis has limitations. It is the product of one unskilled in the administration of a parish. It perhaps has oversimplified the problems, and thus oversimplified the answers. Nevertheless, it has these lessons; solutions to these problems must be found if the Church of Christ is to remain being just that, especially in these troubled times, and at the same time, it has brought the conviction that God will not leave His twentieth century church without help or guidance. He has

given to His Church today His Word, Sacraments, and the Church itself, with its vast reservoirs of human insight, guided by the Spirit. The Church has the resources to solve these problems; God has given His Holy Spirit who still helps the Church through the Means of Grace and the community. As we study the Word and receive the Sacraments, we find our goals. As we sit down with other Christians we can find insight into the solution of the problems and the reaching of the goals.

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