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### A Study of Lutheran Church Work in Blighted Areas

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**A STUDY OF LUTHERAN CHURCH WORK  
IN BLIGHTED AREAS**

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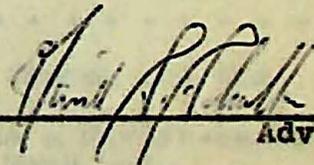
**A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Practical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity**

by

**Charles Manske**

**June 1958**

Approved by



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The Christian city needs the voice of the Lord and the witness of His people everywhere.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was certainly associated with a city in the Bible as He spent much of His time in urban centers of Galilee, Nazareth, and Jerusalem. In the New Testament all the city was gathered at the door to receive the ministrations of God. At Jericho the blind beggar Bartimaeus received his sight from the Master. In Jerusalem the lame, sitting city beggar lying near the watering pool of Bethesda rose up his bed and walked. Yes, Christ was always seen in ministering to the city.

Early Christianity also was a religious movement which had its beginnings in cities. The birth of the Christian Church took place in Jerusalem and quickly spread to the neighboring urban centers of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. So much was Christianity a movement of urban beginnings that the very word "pagan" (from the Latin paganus, which means peasant or rural dweller) was used to characterize one who was not an adherent of the new faith.

Matthew 24:17.  
 Luke 1:15.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"The voice of the Lord cries to the city,"<sup>1</sup> wrote the prophet Micah many centuries ago. Particularly in this century the American city needs the voice of the Lord and the concern of Christians everywhere.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was certainly concerned with a ministry to the cities as He spent much of His time in urban centers of Capernaum, Jericho, and Jerusalem. In Capernaum "all the city was gathered at the door"<sup>2</sup> to receive the ministrations of God. At Jericho the blind beggar Bartimaeus received his sight from the Master. In Jerusalem the poor, filthy city cripple lying near the watering pool of the stockyards took up his bed and walked. Yes, Christ was interested in ministering to the city.

Early Christianity also was a religious movement which had its beginnings in cities. The birth of the Christian Church took place in Jerusalem and quickly spread to the neighboring urban centers of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. So much was Christianity a movement of urban beginnings that the very word "pagan" (from the Latin paginus, which means peasant or rural dweller) was used to characterize one who was not an adherent of the new faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Micah 6:7.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 1:33.

In America, however, "it is evident that there are vast numbers of city people who give very little time and attention to the churches,"<sup>3</sup> and "organized religion plays only a minor and usually insignificant role."<sup>4</sup> In the blighted areas Christianity, Lutheranism in particular, has been relatively ineffective. Leiffer points out that "the people in the areas of underprivilege, poor and often exploited, belong to the class to which Jesus devoted much of his ministry. . . . Yet in this area of special need the church has had most difficulty in maintaining a foothold."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps Christ weeps over the city now as He wept over Jerusalem. There is much to weep about. But unless we forget, Christ did more than weep over the city. Although Christ went into the suburbs of Bethany for overnight He came into the inner city of Jerusalem for His last great battle. It was there that He was condemned to be crucified and finally on a hill overlooking that city He died for the sins of all. But in the blighted inner cities of America, Christ's redemptive work has been more neglected and overlooked than anywhere else on the American scene.

Within the limited confines of this thesis the writer wishes to examine the problem of Lutheran church work in the blighted

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<sup>3</sup>Stuart A. Queen and David B. Carpenter, The American City (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., inc., c.1953), p. 304.

<sup>4</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (New York and Nashville: Abingson Press, c.1955), pp. 14-5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

areas of our cities.<sup>6</sup> In order to set the stage for such an evaluation he believes that a brief overview into the physical and social conditions which exist in the blighted area might be helpful. Secondly, the writer wishes to summarize briefly the type and extent of programs which are presently being carried out by other church bodies in the blighted areas of our cities. Thirdly, he wishes to examine the present policies and programs carried on by Lutheran Churches in the blighted area. Finally, the writer will present an overall critique and evaluation of the type and scope of church programs which the Lutheran Church may use to serve the redemptive cause of Christ in the best possible way.

The scope of this research thesis is so large that out of necessity the writer must limit certain areas of consideration. For the most part the thesis will not attempt to reduplicate background materials which are already available to those who are interested in this general area, but rather attempt to synthesize and evaluate material which directly relates to the Lutheran aspects and are not so readily available. It is hoped that this methodology is most helpful for those students who are interested in a study of Lutheran Church work in blighted areas.

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<sup>6</sup>An effort will be made to give a general overview of church work in several American cities. Since the author, however, has had most of his experience in the city of Chicago, a large proportion of the illustrative material will be taken from this locality.

"But seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Jeremiah 29:7.

The welfare of the city is related to church growth. A study of Lutheran church work in blighted areas necessarily begins with a brief analysis of the blighted area. In the past few decades many sociological studies of religious institutions have shown consistently that there is a definite relationship between church growth and the area in which it operates. Green and Carpenter in their text-book on *The American City* point out that "churches like other social institutions do not exist in a vacuum but are involved in larger social situations. They vary with the whole social context of the area in which they are located."<sup>1</sup> In 1932 the Institute of Social and Religious Research published the results of a study of Protestant churches in sixteen representative cities of the United States,<sup>2</sup> demonstrating that the growth or decline of individual churches is associated with social and economic conditions of the surrounding districts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Robert A. Green and David E. Carpenter, *The American City* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., c.1933), p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>David E. Carpenter, *The Strategy of City Church Planning* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932).

<sup>3</sup>David E. Carpenter and Robert A. Green, *St. Louis: The Social and Religious Situation* (St. Louis: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Washington University, c.1934), p. 167.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROBLEM OF THE BLIGHTED AREA

#### The Church Area Is Related to Church Growth

A study of Lutheran Church work in blighted areas necessarily begins with a brief analysis of the blighted area.

In the past few decades many sociological studies of religious institutions have shown consistently that there is a definite relationship between church growth and the area in which the church exists. Queen and Carpenter in their textbook on The American City point out that "churches like other social institutions do not exist in a vacuum but are involved in larger social situations. They vary with the whole social complex of the area in which they are located."<sup>1</sup> "In 1932 the Institute of Social and Religious Research published the results of a study of Protestant churches in sixteen representative cities of the United States,<sup>2</sup> demonstrating that the growth or decline of individual churches is associated with social and economic conditions of the surrounding districts."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart A. Queen and David B. Carpenter, The American City (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., c.1953), p. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Ross W. Sanderson, The Strategy of City Church Planning (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1932).

<sup>3</sup>David B. Carpenter and Stuart A. Queen, St. Louis: The Social Life of a Modern Metropolis (St. Louis: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Washington University, c.1954), p. 107.

Ross Sanderson would summarize this relationship for Protestant churches this way:

as a rule churches making the most progress are located in districts undergoing favorable social trends, while churches making least progress or losing ground are as a rule located in districts undergoing relatively unfavorable social change. Most of the churches in better territory were found to be making progress at maximum or above-average rates. Most of the churches in poorer territory were found to be making below-average progress or actually losing ground.<sup>4</sup>

"More recent studies in Cincinnati and St. Louis lend support to Sanderson's finding."<sup>5</sup>

The Rev. Marcus T. Lang did a sociological study of Missouri-Synod Lutheran Churches in the St. Louis area to determine if these same factors were operative in that denomination. He found that

there is a very definite relationship between the church and the class of community in which it is situated, thus substantiating the findings of other studies and showing that the pattern which is followed by protestant churches in general is the same general pattern which Missouri-Synod Lutheran Churches follow; that the community has a very definite influence on the structure of the Missouri-Synod Lutheran Churches in an urban area.<sup>6</sup>

Lang found that for Lutheran Churches significant coefficients

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<sup>4</sup>Sanderson, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>Queen and Carpenter, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>6</sup>Marcus T. Lang, The Relationship of Church Progress in Missouri-Synod Lutheran Churches of the St. Louis Metropolitan District to the Status of the Communities in Which They Are Located (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Washington University, 1946), pp. 2-3.

of correlation<sup>7</sup> were found with the following items on this community index:

Sex Ratio of Community	.857
Change of Population	.736
Cases on relief (rank reversed)	.604
Schooling	.587
Home Ownership	.516 <sup>8</sup>

"In short, it is clearly demonstrated that for Missouri-Synod Lutheran Churches during the decade 1930-1940 there was a significant set of relationships between socio-economic conditions in their immediate districts and the rate of church growth."<sup>9</sup>

Since, therefore, there is a significant relationship between a Lutheran Church and the area in which it exists, the writer would like to examine briefly the notable aspects of the blighted area which are likely to be most determinative in the existence struggle of a Lutheran congregation. No exhaustive effort will be made to explain the social problems which are apparent in the area of blight. If the reader desires this type of information, he may consult any of a number of textbooks on urban sociology. It was thought, however, that a brief descriptive section of the blighted area might be helpful in understanding the problems which face the Lutheran Church.

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<sup>7</sup>The coefficient of correlation may be thought of essentially as that ratio which expresses the extent to which changes in one variable are accompanied by--or act dependent upon--changes in a second variable.

<sup>8</sup>Lang, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>Carpenter and Queen, op. cit., p. 111.

The Blighted Area Usually May Be Defined  
Geographically as Being Near the Inner City

The blighted areas are usually found in large urban centers. These centers or cities may be defined as a collection of people and buildings large for its time and place characterized by distinctive activities. Since the United States is more urbanized than any other country in the world with the exception of Great Britain and Germany, it is not unusual that the problem of blight should be particularly acute on the American scene. In 1950 already sixty-four per cent of the United States population was considered urban. By 1975 it is estimated that only seven per cent of the population will be rural-farm. Blight, therefore, as a necessary correlary of American urbanization, is not likely to diminish in the United States unless some definite planned direction is given to this problem.

Blighted areas on the American urban scene have usually been found in and around the inner-city. This geographical designation of the blighted area has been so common that many textbooks in urban sociology have used the terms "inner city" and "blighted area" synonymously. This identification has probably been made because of the wide acceptance of Burgess' theory of concentric circles as a possible explanation of social phenomena in the city. Burgess believed that he could identify in most metropolitan areas five characteristic zones which would extend on a tontinum from the inner city to the outer city: (a) the loop; (b) the transition or the inner city; (c) the workingmen's homes; (d) the residential area; (e) the

commuters. Actually, the concentric zone theory is probably no more valid than the sector theory or the multiple nuclei theory as a possible explanation of an identifiable social or cultural pattern in the city.<sup>10</sup> This writer personally believes that future American cities will follow the multiple nuclei<sup>11</sup> theory in larger proportions than they presently do. The reason for the above discussion is that at the present time blighted areas can usually be identified geographically as being close to the inner city. In the future, however, blight will probably remain as a part of our American urban scene, but it will not be so easily identified geographically. Future blight is likely to extend into the third zone of Burgess' concentric circles. Because of racial, ethnic, or economic "invasion" of certain areas, blight is also likely to be found in sectors extending from narrow corridors or strips outward as well as in certain spots which may be anywhere in the metropolitan area. There is a very definite possibility that many Lutheran churches which are presently serving stable neighborhoods may soon be faced with an area of blight.

#### The Blighted Area Has Interacting Social Problems

The blighted area is characterized by having many interacting social problems. It is difficult to say that one social

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<sup>10</sup>Arthur Hillman, Community Organization and Planning (New York: The Macmillan Co., c.1950), pp. 60-61.

<sup>11</sup>The multiple nuclei theory states that the city consists of fairly separate areas devoted to commerce, industry, transportation, wholesaling, retailing and residence according to socioeconomic class. People and functions are scattered over an urban landscape in clusters which are termed multiple nuclei.

problem is more important or even the causal factor for other social problems. One only knows that the blighted area seems to bring together all the problems and pathologies which we have in modern society. Carpenter and Queen write, "the same districts are the centers of all these 'pathologies.'"<sup>12</sup>

tracts in which houses were very old had high death rates and many families on relief, illiterates, employed women, delinquents, Negroes, and tenements. They had small families, few homeowners, cheap houses, and low rents. In another study residential mobility was found to have a high correlation with relief and other social services, juvenile court cases, venereal disease, deaths from tuberculosis, employment of women, Negroes, multiple dwellings, and vacancies in residential property. . . . Thus mobility, obsolescence, poverty, disease, delinquency, illiteracy, juvenile delinquency, infant mortality, highest birth rates, and the largest percentage of males single.<sup>13</sup>

It is also interesting to note that generally "each index of 'social pathology' decreases as one proceeds from the center toward the outer city limits."<sup>14</sup>

The blighted area is not only marked by blighted real estate but also by blighted human lives. We do not know whether blighted areas draw people with these pathologies into its geographical confines or whether the blighted area actually breeds these types of pathologies. The writer suspects that both of these factors are involved.

Because of the inter-action of these social problems within the blighted area, it would be naive to say that any one remedial measure would completely alter the complexion of the neighborhood, e.g., new housing, education, health measures,

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<sup>12</sup>Carpenter and Queen, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>13</sup>Queen and Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

<sup>14</sup>Carpenter and Queen, op. cit., p. 126.

etc. "Poverty, disease, vice, and crime are identified with far greater frequency in these areas than in other parts of the city."<sup>15</sup> "Any effective corrective measures will probably have to take them all into account."<sup>16</sup>

### Poverty

One of the very important distinguishing marks in the blighted area is poverty. Lang found that for Lutheran churches significant coefficients of correlation were found with cases on relief (rank reversed) .604 and home ownership .516, which are both indications of poverty.

Probably the most obvious identification mark in the slum area is inadequate housing. But even here the deplorable rat-infested inside dwelling units are likely to be worse than a casual examination of the external structures might suggest. In the square block which surrounds a Lutheran church serving a slum area it was found that ninety-four per cent of the dwelling units had no private bath facilities, and over 30 per cent had 1.51 persons or more per room which symbolized a badly over-crowded situation.<sup>17</sup> This type of inadequate housing is likely to be typical in the poverty-stricken regions of the

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<sup>15</sup>Queen and Carpenter, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>16</sup>Carpenter and Queen, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>17</sup>Bureau of Census, Chicago 1950 Census Tract (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), tracts 124-25.

slums. Much of the present housing deterioration is intensified because of the over-crowded conditions which existed during the last war and because of the rapid influx of rural migrants which is presently taking place.

These housing conditions mean tragedy in terms of human life. Many times fire will sweep these apartment buildings in which over a dozen people will perish. Health problems are aggravated by the existence of rats. One Lutheran church serving the blighted area had planned to baptize a year-old girl in the near future; however, their plans were never realized because her rat-bitten body had been found dead in her crib.

In many cases it is inadequate finances which have forced people to move into these dwelling units. Some of these areas have over half of their residents supported by governmental relief funds. The fund known as Aid to Dependent Children is responsible for large amounts of this relief.

No analysis of poverty in the blighted area would be complete without at least mentioning the phenomena of skid row. The United States spends over forty-five million dollars annually for jailing skid-rowers for vagrancy, intoxication, hospitalization and burial.<sup>18</sup> The Lutheran Church has not been effective in meeting the problems of skid row. Fortunately, however, other church bodies have devised some means by which at least a small percentage of the skid row occupants may find a meaningful Christian existence.

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<sup>18</sup>Sara Harris, Skid Row, U. S. A. (New York: Doubleday Co., Inc., c.1956).

All of these poverty-related problems obviously have a relationship to the institution of the church. In order to survive the church must have money to carry out its Christian objective. How is the church to get this money from a geographical area where poverty is so prevalent?

### Crime, vice and lawlessness

Another characteristic of the blighted area is crime, vice and lawlessness. There are many different types of these social deviations. The extent to which these items are present necessarily depends upon the given circumstances.

Organized crime which is behind most of the profitable vice in the blighted areas is operated by a powerful gangster organization called the syndicate. In Chicago, for example, the Capone syndicate, which is now operating under boss Tony Accardo, directly operates all the vice within a three-block radius of one of our Lutheran congregations. This includes the largest heroin distribution center in the midwest, three burlesque theaters, approximately twenty taverns, the most active illegal gambling center in the midwest, two large homosexual hangouts, as well as percentage cuts from all the organized prostitute trade. It is important to take note, however, that no one in the blighted area talks openly about the syndicate. Perhaps they remember the bombed tavern on the near north side of Chicago or the eight men that were chained together and thrown into New York's East River.

Law enforcement, apparently, cannot stop this powerful

organization. Chicago, for example, now has more police than in any previous time in its history and has a higher police-population ratio than any other city in the U. S. Virgil Peterson, who is the operating director of the Chicago Crime Commission, points out that "the continuous growth of power and wealth of the Capone syndicate over a period of several decades rests in no small measure on the alliances it has maintained with public officials."<sup>19</sup>

Drug addiction, which has been called "the sacrament of the meaninglessness of life," provides an illustration of how the syndicate operates. The Chicago syndicate will allow a heroin distributor who has gotten out of hand to be raided by police authorities. Consequently, the general public believes that law enforcement is successful; the syndicate can warn its one thousand Chicago distributors that protection is a necessity; and finally, the drugs are raised thirty-five per cent in price according to the law of supply and demand. In this entire procedure the syndicate gains.

There is also much unorganized crime which exists in the blighted areas. Where indirect social controls are not effective because of the lack of primary and secondary relationships, individuals are likely to take advantage of those people who are in relative proximity to them. Shoplifting, pilfering, or smuggling of minor articles is likely to be normative behavior. Violations of the societal sexual code are widely

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<sup>19</sup>Virgil Peterson, Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine, October 7, 1956, p. 20.

observed. Many occurrences of initiation and experimentation in crime are evidenced on the individual level.

Robbery, murder and other forms of violence are all likely to be encountered by the minister who serves the blighted area. He may observe, for example, that some of the automobiles in the neighborhood have bullet holes in them or that his own car has had its tires slashed by long switch blades or the windows broken by rocks. For self-protection many Lutheran pastors in these areas will go out in the evening only if they are wearing their clerical collars. There are many personal illustrations that the writer could inject at this point to emphasize the situation as it really exists. The writer remembers, for example, when he and his wife were the second party to stumble upon what was probably a very horrible and bloody murder. This item, because it was really such a common occurrence, rated only a three-inch column in the morning newspapers.

How do all these items affect the Lutheran congregation that exists in the blighted area? Obviously, these areas claim their toll upon the Christian congregation. One Lutheran congregation reports that within two years four of its members were cruelly slashed, robbed and beaten. Among these four members was an elderly pastor's widow, the janitor, the recording secretary for the congregation and the vice-president of the Lutheran Laymen's League. One Lutheran congregation found that on its prospect list for adult confirmation class there was one family where a brother and sister were married, another family where the four children had four different fathers, and still

another where the four children represented four different nationality groups.

Church buildings in blighted areas are likely to be involved in a very expensive upkeep operation. Expensive windows are broken too often, and burglars enter the premises in search of valuable items or money. Vice, crime, and lawlessness are evident in the blighted areas.

### Diversification

The blighted area is also characterized by a wide diversification of racial, ethnic and language barriers. "Urban dwellers are diverse in language, customs, codes of behavior, occupation, education, religion, wealth, appearance, and status."<sup>20</sup> At the present time, in Chicago alone, there are nearly three thousand migrants a month who are streaming into the city. All of these people have different patterns of living which are difficult to adjust into the mainstream of city life. Kincheloe summarizes the early waves of migration which came to Chicago:

The Original settlers, largely of British origin, started democratic traditions, founded Protestant churches, and gave a trend to future developments. The next great wave was that of the sturdy, home-loving, industrious Germans, following them came the neat, methodical Scandinavians; both of these groups have dominantly Lutheran backgrounds. With them, and immediately following, came the good-natured Irish of the Roman Catholic faith. Then the source of growth shifted to the south and east of Europe, with the coming of the Polish, Italian,

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<sup>20</sup>Queen and Carpenter, op. cit., p. 20.

and Russian populations, and numbers from smaller countries.<sup>21</sup>

To this list we might add rural white immigrants, Negroes, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Orientals, etc. Although many of the earlier groups are no longer in the inner city, many of these groups have a few stragglers left. Thus at the present time there is a very wide diversification of people but with a particular emphasis on the latter groups which include Negroes, Puerto Ricans, "hillbillies," Orientals, etc. Within the parish area of one of our Lutheran congregations in the blighted area there are representatives from these racial, ethnic, and language groups: Negro, German, Scandinavian, Polish, American Indians, Jews, "hillbillies," Puerto Ricans, Central American, Spanish, gypsies, Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Assyrian, etc. The Chicago police department, as well as the Chicago newspapers, recognized that the most troublesome ethnic group in that area is the southern rural white, or the "hillbilly." Probably the most misunderstood people in Chicago at the present time are the Puerto Ricans.

Usually, when the problem of racial diversification is brought to our attention, we immediately think of the conflict between Negro and white races and the associated problems of integration and segregation. Negroes are increasing rapidly in many northern cities: "In 1950 Chicago had half a million Negroes; it may add another four hundred thousand in the current census decade, if it continues to increase its Negro

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<sup>21</sup>Samuel C. Kincheloe, The American City and Its Church. (New York: Friendship Press, c.1938), pp. 7-8.

population at eight per cent per year."<sup>22</sup> This rapid invasion has resulted in a much publicized divisive conflict. It is by no means, however, the only problem or even the most difficult in the area of racial, ethnic, and language diversification. The Negro has been part of the American acculturation process for many years and has been strongly influenced by the integrating actions of the armed forces and the educational systems. Other groups of people with Oriental or Spanish language barriers to overcome as well as mores and ethnic patterns from other countries are likely to have even more difficult problems. In the midwestern city of Chicago, for example, there are approximately seven thousand Buddhists being served by six Buddhist temples where the services are conducted in the Japanese language.<sup>23</sup> Many Lutheran pastors in the inner city know very little of the cultural patterns of the Orient or the language which they speak. Many Lutheran pastors also do not understand the Spanish language and are quite unfamiliar with the traditions of people who come from Central and South America. For the most part Lutheran ministers are poorly prepared educationally to overcome these racial, ethnic, and language barriers which are so evident in the blighted areas. The problem of how to integrate these widely diverse groups into the koininia of congregational life has not been met very successfully by Christian churches.

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<sup>22</sup>Sanderson, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>23</sup>Norma Lee Browning, "Church Thrives in Blighted Area," Chicago Daily Tribune, CXV (December 19, 1956), 1.

## Mobility

Finally, we come to one other crucial problem which the writer would like to discuss. Certainly one of the most outstanding characteristics of the blighted area is mobility. Lang found that for Lutheran Churches a significant coefficient of correlation was found with change of population .736. In the United States today nearly twenty per cent of the population moves every year.

Americans are still on the move--thirty million strong! United States Census for 1950 revealed that nearly thirty-two million people had moved to different addresses during the twelve-month period immediately preceding the taking of the census, on the basis of the information given the census taker.<sup>24</sup>

"Since World War II more families have been on the move than in any prior period."<sup>25</sup> Although mobility has significance for all churches, no matter where they are located, it plays a particularly important role in the blighted area. The inner city or blighted area usually has the highest mobility rates. For example, on the near north side of Chicago "the average turnover was three hundred per cent a year."<sup>26</sup> Because of such rapid mobility the church in the blighted area must learn to make contact quickly with the resident who will be at his present address for an average of only four months.

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<sup>24</sup>H. Conrad Hoyer, "America on the Move," Christ for the Moving Millions (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, c.1955), p. 103.

<sup>25</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1955), p. 35.

<sup>26</sup>Queen and Carpenter, op. cit., p. 9.

When one reflects upon this rate of mobility, immediate questions come to mind: What type of educational facilities will meet people that move this rapidly? How is it even possible to have adult or children confirmation classes? How can one educate people to Lutheran liturgical church services this quickly? Is it possible to operate a parochial school? The writer of this thesis served as a vicar in an area of this type. In March of 1956 he had accumulated the addresses of over three hundred prospects in the immediate neighborhood of this Missouri-Synod congregation. By the end of 1956 approximately sixty of these prospects were still living at the same address. There can be no question about it; mobility cripples the local congregation. "Southern Baptists estimate that in 1954 a million and a half of their people failed to transfer membership when they moved to a new community."<sup>27</sup> "The Presbyterians (U. S. A.) estimated in 1953 that they had enough members AWOL to make up a thousand congregations of three hundred members each."<sup>28</sup>

The Lutheran Church serving the blighted area is at a distinct disadvantage. All of the characteristics which we have mentioned thus far are serious detriments to the survival of the congregation. In all the groups that we have mentioned--and the surrounding characteristics of these groups--we must recognize that the Lutheran Church has not effectively communicated or appealed to any of these factors. "However, regardless

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<sup>27</sup>James W. Hoffman, Mission U. S. A. (New York: Friendship Press, c.1956), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

of variations in age, sex, birthplace, economic status, educational achievement, occupation, or place of residence, the individual has religious needs which require the service of a local church."<sup>29</sup> The Lutheran church that is working in the blighted area is likely to get very few transfers from the groups of people that are moving into the vicinity. At the same time the church is probably issuing many transfers to its members that are moving away from the church. Faced with all of these factors, the church in the blighted area of necessity must conceive its role as a front line mission agency. The nature and character that the Lutheran church should assume in serving effectively the blighted area will be more completely discussed in part five of this thesis.

#### The Government Is Redeveloping Blighted Areas

On the American scene today blighted areas are being replaced by giant government rebuilding programs. City planners recognize the danger and disintegrating forces that are at work in the blighted areas, and, therefore, have organized neighborhood redevelopment programs. For example, in St. Louis nearly one-fourth of the dwelling units are so badly blighted that they need complete rebuilding while another one-fourth of the dwelling units need major repairs. Throughout the United States we need two to five million new housing units. Blight is expensive. One city reports that "forty per cent of its

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<sup>29</sup>Frederick A. Shippey, Church Work in the City (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1952), p. 100.

relief funds, thirty per cent of its hospital expense is used for six per cent of its people."<sup>30</sup>

A typical city reports a new loss of \$373,315 in a blighted area . . . a net gain of \$468,900 in a good residential neighborhood. . . . One large city estimates it spends thirty million dollars annually more on its blighted areas than it takes in.<sup>31</sup>

"Federal housing administrator Albert M. Cole warned today that American cities face bankruptcy in 1965 unless they move quickly to wipe out slums and rundown areas."<sup>32</sup> With these facts in mind cities have been acting rapidly to rebuild blighted areas. The Chicago Housing Authority has developed new low-cost housing with a value which exceeds two hundred sixty million dollars. St. Louis at the present time is in a one hundred twenty-seven million-dollar improvement program.<sup>33</sup> These new housing developments bring in approximately fifty per cent more taxes than were previously collected when slum dwellings were occupying the land. The population replacement in new low-income housing is approximately eighty per cent of the number that previously used to live in the slums. Other areas within the city which are not classified as slums are being labeled as conservation areas. In these neighborhoods

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<sup>30</sup>Robert Van Deusen, "Renewal of the Cities," The Lutheran, (October 12, 1955), p. 11.

<sup>31</sup>United States Housing and Home Finance Agency, The Workable Program. What it is. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, c.1957).

<sup>32</sup>St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (November 29, 1955), p. 14.

<sup>33</sup>Time, (December 5, 1955), pp. 25-27.

strict housing regulations are attempting to prevent further slum neighborhoods from developing.

All of these recent slum clearance and neighborhood conservation projects are very important for the existence of the churches. If a church does not occupy a given land area when slum clearance takes place, it probably will be impossible to relocate in that area. It is important, therefore, that in many blighted areas Lutheran churches continue to serve the present populace. If a church continues to occupy a desirable location after the neighborhood has been redeveloped with low-income or middle-income housing, the congregation is likely to find itself in much less precarious surroundings. When a neighborhood goes through a blighted period, it is actually on the bad end of a cycle. If the church can continue to survive while the area is being rebuilt, it is likely to find itself serving an area where neighborhood groups are more reinforced by primary and secondary contacts. The entire scope of community organization may be such that larger groups of people will be appealed to the ministrations of the Lutheran church.

to people of different racial, ethnic, and national character. On the other hand unsuccessful programs where the church had failed to reach out into the community are usually superseded by Roman Catholic sponsorship activities. The points are a Roman Catholic's Master's research conducted through levels

The Interracial Spring willows at 55 West Street, New York, N. Y. 10014, seems to be directed particularly to Negroes. Community published at 4233 South Madison Avenue, Chicago 37, Illinois, seems to be directed primarily to Puerto Ricans.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHURCHES SERVE THE BLIGHTED AREA

#### The Roman Catholic Church Serves the Blighted Area

The Roman Catholic churches are very often located in the blighted areas. It is difficult, however, to determine how effective this group of churches has been in meeting the problems of blight. Definite efforts have been made by the Roman Catholics to appeal to the newer migrants of the area. The Romans have many publications and magazines which are written specifically for such minority groups as Negroes and Puerto Ricans.<sup>1</sup> At the present time, particularly in Chicago and New York, the Roman Church holds special community parties which appeal to Puerto Rican national holidays to bring this group of people into the confines of parish life. It is still, however, difficult to evaluate the over-all effectiveness of the program.

The official Roman Catholic press is always quick to publicize the favorable efforts which are being made to communicate to people of different racial, ethnic, and national character. On the other hand unsuccessful programs where the church has failed to reach out into the community are usually suppressed by Roman Catholic censorship authorities. Some years ago a Roman Catholic's Master's research conducted through Loyola

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<sup>1</sup>The Interracial Review published at 20 Vesey Street, New York 7, New York, seems to be directed particularly to Negroes. Community published at 4233 South Indiana Avenue, Chicago 15, Illinois, seems to be directed primarily to Puerto Ricans.

University in Chicago attempted to discover the effectiveness of Negro and white integration in Roman Catholic parochial schools. When it became evident that the research would show the Roman Catholic Church in an unfavorable light, it is reported that the research was suppressed and the student was told to begin on another research project. Even established Roman Catholic scholars such as Joseph H. Fichter cannot bring research to the public when the evidence is unfavorable to the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident, however, that Roman Catholic parishes in the blighted area participate in community functions to a much larger extent and bring more secular<sup>3</sup> concerns within the parish boundary than most Lutheran parishes do. Perhaps a case illustration of a Philadelphia Roman Catholic parish which is serving the blighted area will point out these factors.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Father Joseph H. Fichter earned his doctorate at Harvard University and is presently head of the sociology department at Loyola University in New Orleans. On a heavily endowed research project supported by the Carnegie Foundation and the University of Chicago Press, Father Fichter worked with ten other priests on a four-volume work of a southern parish in an inner city. When it became evident that the volumes would show the Roman Catholic Church in an unfavorable light, the Commonweal on November 30, 1951, reported that the Roman hierarchy suppressed the last three volumes and did not allow them to be published.

<sup>3</sup>The writer uses the term "secular" as an antonym of spiritual. "Secular" applies to those areas that are not immediately involved with the sacraments of the church or its worship patterns nor in the verbal witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by its clergy or members.

<sup>4</sup>Anna M. McFarry, "Parish in a Changing Neighborhood," Interracial Review, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (February 1954), 26-29.

In 1937 Father Edward Cunnie took over the pastoral duties of St. Elizabeth's Parish when it apparently was dying from the blighted conditions in the immediate area. Father Cunnie was instrumental in changing the parish from being primarily Irish and German to one that served many different groups, but particularly Negroes. The priest, seeing the needs of the neighborhood, instituted a wholesome hot lunch program, stocked and sold "reject" shoes under a cooperative plan which made them available at a very low cost, began the Martin Credit Union so that the neighborhood people would not have to pay high interest rates to local loan sharks, started a kindergarten and nursery school for the service of parents who were both working, began evening adult education classes to teach the people in the neighborhood how to read and write, started a scholarship fund that local talented but poor high school graduates might continue their education in Roman Catholic colleges, and worked with local organizations to bring about legislation to improve employment opportunities for Negroes. Father Cunnie even invited a neighborhood Jewish leader to use the rectory for special meetings, activities and dances. Has this type of program been successful? Apparently so. The parochial school has eight hundred twenty-two students (twenty-two more than in 1937) and several hundred adults of whom about ninety-five per cent are converts. As this illustration shows, many Roman Catholic parishes are involved in many secular activities.

Protestants are many times disturbed by the secular ways in which Roman Catholic parishes are involved in many secular

activities. Protestants are many times disturbed by the secular ways in which Roman Catholics gather money to keep churches in the inner city alive. Sanderson reports that one church had a bar as its chief source of revenue.<sup>5</sup> A sociological thesis at Loyola University in Chicago points out that one parish in the blighted area received over sixty-five per cent of its total church budget from sales, carnivals, and games of chance. The carnival which attaches itself to Roman parishes in blighted areas during the fall months is quite a phenomena. It involves the usual carnival rides, the sale of much food which is cooked in the open, many games of chance, particularly bingo games, the raffling of a new automobile for one dollar tickets, and sometimes the "parade of a religious picture."<sup>6</sup> This entire carnival as well as the weekly Friday night bingo games seem to provide an adequate economic base for the continuance of the parish in the blighted areas.

One final point should yet be taken into consideration. Roman Catholic parish priests have been very successful in joining and influencing neighborhood conservation groups. "They have really led the way in the United States in pioneering in self-help organization."<sup>7</sup> Because of this influence

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<sup>5</sup>Ross W. Sanderson, The Church Serves the Changing City (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1955), pp. 64-65.

<sup>6</sup>The children are allowed to kiss the picture of the patron saint of the parish if the parents will tape dollar bills to the platform holding the religious picture.

<sup>7</sup>National Conference of Catholic Charities, The Church and Neighborhood Conservation in Chicago (Washington, D. C.: 1346 Connecticut Avenue N. W., c.1955), p. 11.

some neighborhood housing projects have been named after Roman saints, i.e., Mother Cabrini Housing Project in Chicago, etc.

An over-all evaluation of Roman Catholic work in blighted areas would probably find this church body doing somewhat better than Protestant churches, even though the methods that are employed are somewhat questionable. The Episcopal-type ecclesiastical organization is obviously a help in keeping Roman Catholic parishes located in and serving the blighted area. In the city of Chicago only three Roman Catholic parishes have moved because of the community situation. The arch-diocese which operates the local parishes simply commands the churches to stay in their present locations and continue serving the area as well as they can.

The Congregational Christian Churches reported, "Fifty years ago there were forty Congregational Churches in the forty-square-mile heart of Chicago. . . but only eight of these churches are open today. . ." Out of forty-five United Brethren Churches in Chicago only fifteen are still operating today. In the near north side of Chicago twenty-five Protestant churches have died in the past twenty-year years. The mortality rate for Protestant churches in the blighted areas has been extremely high.

In evaluating the established Protestant denominations the writer does not believe that a great deal of illustrative material is necessary. Concrete examples of church progress by

<sup>8</sup> Chicago Daily News (October 17, 1955), p. 27.

The Established Protestant Denominations  
Serve the Blighted Area

The established Protestant denominations have had great difficulty in serving the blighted area. Wherever one examines the records of churches of the major denominations serving the inner city, he finds evidence of them dying, merging, or moving out of the area. Some years ago the research department of the Chicago Church Federation discovered that over three hundred Protestant churches in that city had died--by far the greater proportion of these were in the blighted areas of the inner city. The Rev. John Schwenke of the Chicago City Missionary Society for the Congregational Christian Churches reported, "Fifty years ago there were forty Congregational Churches in the forty-square-mile heart of Chicago. . . . but only eight of these churches are open today . . ." <sup>8</sup> Out of forty-five United Brethren Churches in Chicago only fifteen are still operating today. On the near north side of Chicago twenty-five Protestant churches have died in the past twenty-seven years. The mortality rate for Protestant churches in the blighted areas has been extremely high.

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<sup>8</sup>Chicago Daily News (October 17, 1956), p. 27.

these congregations are available in many textbooks.<sup>9</sup> The Writer does, however, wish to point out several important trends which are presently taking place.

In the first place the established Protestant denominations are uniting with the metropolitan church federations to provide a united program of worship and service. The Chicago Church Federation, for example, has a united program among Protestants for evangelism, citizenship education and action, social welfare, radio and television, ministry in institutions, church development and comity, and union fellowship groups with men, women and children of different ages. Particularly in the blighted areas the church federation plays an important role in determining which churches should stay and in what functions they should serve the community. Similarly when the City Land Clearance Commission clears slum areas for rebuilding, the advice of the church federation concerning the churching of the new area is often accepted.

Secondly, it is important to understand the social theological framework of established Protestantism to understand why these churches have undertaken a particular type of church program in the blighted areas. In attempting to relate Christianity to the culture in which it exists Protestants have for the most part accepted what H. Richard Niebuhr would call "Christ the Transformer of Culture."<sup>10</sup> Protestants having seen the

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<sup>9</sup>There are many texts available. The foremost example among recent works is Ross Sanderson, The Church Serves the Changing City (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955).

<sup>10</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 190-229.

unchristian cultural situation in the blighted areas have resolved that the type of Christianity which should be taught should transform every possible cultural relationship. American Protestants also have been very much concerned in realizing a portion of the "Christian hope" in temporal and tangible areas usually on the American continent. All of these social principles have resulted in a church program for the blighted area which to many Lutherans would appear to be too secularistic.

Consequently many established Protestant churches are involved in caring for the social, recreational and health needs of the community as well as the religious needs. After an extensive writer for the Chicago Daily Tribune wrote:

Today's church is not only a house of worship, but a social center that must compete with TV, canasta and other attractions . . . In an all-out effort to keep up with a fast changing, faster paced world, most churches today have even installed baby sitter services --complete with bottle warmers, disposable diapers, graham crackers and apple juice in church nurseries. There are volunteers on hand to feed, bathe or change your infant on schedule or bounce him on the church teeter-totter.<sup>11</sup>

Several decades ago many Protestants were even more involved in meeting these daily needs of mankind than they are at the present time. In the earlier part of the twentieth century many Protestants were convinced that the church-sponsored settlement house would be the agency whereby the community could be transformed to a Christian culture. Generally the dreams that were built with the settlement house approach did not find fruition.

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<sup>11</sup>Norma Lee Browning, Chicago Daily Tribune. (December 20, 1956).

Over thirty years ago H. Paul Douglass believed that one church in particular was an ideal settlement house to accomplish these goals:

An outstanding example of adjustment to a polyglot area is . . . , an institution so large it almost is a super church. Organized with a broad base of social ministrations, the church maintains a large staff (37) and holds some 200 meetings and activities per week about three-fourths of which are groups of different kinds not designated specifically as religious activities. Its constituency is said to number over 6000.<sup>12</sup>

Today this settlement house is being supported by funds from the Community Chest while the church has been separated from the community program. Three-quarters of the pews in the large gothic church building have been torn out because the thirty or forty members who attend morning services do not need all the extra room. The present pastor told the writer that the denominational body is "not happy" with the church, and that it is the "sickest church in the Presbytery," and, furthermore, it has been "written off by church officials a long time ago."

The failure of the settlement house approach can be seen in numerous illustrations. Halstead Street Institutional Church in Chicago was often cited as particularly effective in meeting the needs of the blighted area. The governing body of the Methodist Church told the Halstead Street Institutional Church in 1957 that it was dissatisfied with the present program which allowed social service to take precedence over religious programs. The Methodist Church gave the Halstead Church just one year to

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<sup>12</sup>H. Paul Douglass, The Church in the Changing City (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927), p. 485.

"develop a program of religious service"<sup>13</sup> or all financial aid would be discontinued from the parent church body.

Many examples could be cited of churches which have given up the settlement house approach in the blighted area. Recently the Presbyterian Church decreased the number of its settlement houses from eight to three in the city of Chicago. In illustration, the settlement programs of Howell House and Erie Chapel in Chicago and Grace Hill House in St. Louis are examples of church-initiated programs which are now run completely by secular agencies. Although the number of these church-supported programs is diminishing, Dr. William J. Malone, head of social welfare for the National Council of Churches in Christ, reported that in 1955 there were still five hundred fifty settlement-house programs run by Protestant Churches in the United States.

After many years of work in the blighted area Protestant leaders are finally taking a more realistic view of what the church might hope to accomplish in this situation. Leiffer admits, "The Church cannot be expected to eliminate the slums"<sup>14</sup>. At the present time Protestants are organizing and operating community programs with religion in a much more prominent position. Sanderson points out:

It is a matter for rejoicing, however, that there seems now to be on foot a new crusade, which goes deeper, and

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<sup>13</sup>Delores McCahill, Chicago Sun Times (June 19, 1957), p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1955), p. 111.

is unapologetically more religious, or at least more churchly, than the "college" settlement often dared to be, and adds a plus, in a generic sense more frankly sectarian, on the rebound from excessive secularism.<sup>15</sup>

There are at the present time continual experiments by Protestants to capture the centrality of religious teaching but yet be effective in serving community needs. Father C. Kilmer Myers who serves as vicar of the Lower East Side Mission of Trinity Parish has attempted a program of this type.<sup>16</sup> The West Side Christian Parish in Chicago is another illustration of attempting to carry out a social program that is in conformity with Protestant principles of Christ and culture.

For Lutherans that are attempting to develop a workable program for the blighted area both the success and the failures of the established Protestant denominations should be significant road signs.

#### The Churches of the "Disinherited" (Cults and Sects)

##### Serve the Blighted Area

The churches of the "disinherited" are another interesting phenomena in the blighted area. The ability which cults and sects have in being able to communicate certain types of religious values to the constituency which they serve is phenomenal. From time to time a sociological paper will theoretically attempt to analyze the religious experience which is

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<sup>15</sup>Sanderson, op. cit., p. 240.

<sup>16</sup>C. Kilmer Myers, Light the Dark Streets (New York: Seaburg, 1956).

## Queen tells us

A sect is a small group in rebellion against the established church, appealing to persons who lack security and recognition, making ethical demands, and frequently requiring some definite type of religious experience as a prerequisite of acceptance. . . . Their members are in the main poorly paid, unskilled workers, many of whom have recently moved in from rural areas. It appears that, being separated from their country churches, they do not feel at home in the town and city churches. Lacking social security and status, they seek compensation in religious groups of their own class.<sup>17</sup>

The theological relationships which cults have with the general culture is what H. Richard Niebuhr would say is "Christ Against Culture."<sup>18</sup> Liston Pope in the book, Millhands and Preachers, gives a very adequate description of the types of needs that are met by the sect-type religious:

It is composed of the propertyless . . . economic poverty, . . . cultural periphery . . . renunciation of prevailing culture and social organization . . . self-centered religion . . . non-cooperation or positive ridicule toward established religious institutions . . . suspicion of rival sects . . . moral community excluding unworthy members . . . unspecialized, unprofessionalized, part-time ministry . . . psychology of persecution . . . voluntary, confessional bases of membership . . . principal concern with adult membership . . . emphasis on evangelism and conversion . . . stress on a future in the next world . . . adherence to strict Biblical standards . . . high degree of congregational participation in the services . . . fervor in worship services . . . large number of special religious services . . . spontaneous "leadings of the Spirit" in religious services . . . the use of hymns resembling contemporary folk music . . . and emphasis on religion in the home.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Stuart A. Queen and David B. Carpenter, The American City (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1953), pp. 287-289.

<sup>18</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 45-82.

<sup>19</sup>Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942).

The above description gives a penetrating insight into the types of people that are served by the sect and also shows the type of religious experience which appeals most to these individuals.

The Lutheran Church also faces the very difficult problems

of the blighted area. With approximately sixty per cent of its members living in urban centers,<sup>1</sup> it is reasonable to understand why the Lutheran Church might be involved in the determination of blighted areas. Bishop Sewall speaking before the Protestant Episcopal Church Convention in Miami during 1935 said:

"We have entered Chicago as a church. They are spending great sums of money for they know the problems of the city of Chicago will affect their whole world throughout the middle west."

In this case the bishop was primarily referring to the work that is presently being carried on by the National Lutheran Council. There are many other indications that Lutheran churches have not been very successful in meeting the problems of the blighted area. In the city of Detroit alone twenty-one Lutheran churches have closed down, moved, and put up for sale in recent years.<sup>2</sup> The Lutheran Social Relations Association of America estimates that over one hundred Missouri-Synod churches have vacated their premises when faced with the problems of blight. The

<sup>1</sup>Joseph A. Gresh and David G. Carpenter, *The American Church* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1953), p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago Daily Tribune (September 8, 1955), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>New Yorker, LUTHERAN CHURCH (June 18, 1957), p. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE BLIGHTED AREA

#### A General Survey of the Lutheran Church in the Blighted Area

The Lutheran Church also faces the very difficult problems of the blighted area. With approximately sixty per cent of Lutherans living in urban centers,<sup>1</sup> it is reasonable to understand why the Lutheran Church might be involved in the deteriorating neighborhood. Bishop Burrill speaking before the Protestant Episcopal Church Convention in Hawaii during 1955 said:

The Lutherans have entered Chicago as a church. They are investing great sums of money for they know the problem of the city of Chicago will affect their whole church throughout the middle west.<sup>2</sup>

In this case the bishop was primarily referring to the work that is presently being carried on by the National Lutheran Council. There are many other indications that Lutheran churches have not been very successful in meeting the problems of the blighted area. In the city of Detroit alone twenty-one Lutheran churches have closed down, moved, sold out or merged in recent years.<sup>3</sup> The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America estimates that over one hundred Missouri-Synod churches have vacated their premises when faced with the problems of blight. The

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart A. Queen and David B. Carpenter, The American City (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1953), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago Daily Tribune (September 8, 1955), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Elmer Kettner, Lutheran Witness (June 18, 1957), p. 7.

flight of Lutheran churches from the areas of deterioration is a sad commentary on the effectiveness of Christian teaching. The Lutheran churches should be serving these areas with a Christian message, particularly since the population in the inner city has for the last decade or two remained fairly steady and even in some cases has increased.<sup>4</sup>

But to understand the reasons behind the approaches which Lutheran churches have employed, the writer would first like to make clear the theological position that Lutherans have taken toward culture. The first theological formulation of this problem was suggested by Martin Luther. He taught that God had two commonwealths. The one commonwealth is that of power which is ruled by the law of God, and the other is the commonwealth of grace which is ruled by the Gospel of God. From this early formulation Lutherans developed a relationship toward culture that H. Richard Niebuhr would call "Christ and Culture in Paradox."<sup>5</sup> For the most part Lutherans have believed that the business of the church is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not necessarily to transform the community in which the church exists. Although individual Christians are urged to work within the commonwealth of power to maintain a just and orderly culture, American Lutheranism has not felt that this

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<sup>4</sup>The population of the inner city in Chicago has remained fairly steady during the past decade at approximately one million two hundred fifty thousand. The writer in checking fifteen census tracts of a mid-western inner city found that thirteen of them had population increases between 1940 and 1950.

<sup>5</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 149-190.

same objective was the primary concern of the church. In many cases this has resulted in a somewhat detached attitude toward the cultural phenomena which the church faces. The possibility and probability of Lutheran Churches dying because of a certain social situation developing is really the first major crises which is forcing American Lutheranism to re-examine its relationship to the cultural surroundings.

Case Studies of Lutheran Churches That are Existing  
in the Blighted Areas

The writer believes that a few brief summaries of programs of Lutheran churches in the blighted areas might be helpful in evaluating the types of programs that are being carried on. For reasons that should be obvious the churches will not be identified but simply referred to by letters. In these illustrations there will be no attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the entire church program but rather to lift out features which the writer believes are distinguishable. All of the churches that are being described are approximately equally divided among the cities in eastern United States, in Chicago or Detroit, and in St. Louis.

Lutheran Church "A" is found approximately four miles from the heart of the city. Its present membership is about one thousand members of which one-half live within one mile of the church, one-fourth live from two to five miles, and one-fourth live over five miles from the church. Church "A" is located in a low-class, all-white neighborhood with less than ten

per cent mobility. The majority of the church leadership which lives over five miles from the congregation provides the economic base of the congregation. It is reported that one man in the congregation provides exactly half of the budget. The congregation has a large parochial school in which three-fourths of the children live within one mile of the school. The congregation reports great success in using the school as a mission agency. As long as the financial base continues, Church "A" will continue to use its parochial school as its primary and most effective mission outreach.

Lutheran Church "B" is fighting desperately for survival in a blighted area which is sixty per cent Roman Catholic and twenty per cent Protestant and twenty per cent unchurched. Its primary mission outreach is a playground which they have recently constructed. In three months the playground has served five thousand children. It is reported that the interaction on the playground has broken down racial hostility and has generally decreased vandalism in the area. The playground has won for the pastor and his church the good will of the neighborhood including many Roman Catholics. The pastor of Church "B" hopes that these contacts will be fruitful mission prospects.

Church "C" serves an inter-racial area (primarily whites and Negroes) near the downtown area of one of our cities. The church had planned to relocate in a more desirable community, but the new pastor saw the opportunities and need for serving the immediate community. With only one hundred twenty active

communicants the church has worked hard through much pastoral calling, teen-age clubs, Sunday School, and foreign language information classes to reach to the people in the area. The pastor, recognizing the problems of a dual constituency--one of wealth traveling from a distance and one of poverty living in the immediate area--decided to concentrate his efforts on the immediate community. This resulted in many of the older members with economic support withdrawing their membership from the congregation. At the present time the congregation is receiving a subsidy of eight hundred dollars a month to continue its present mission program.

Church "D" serves one non-white racial and ethnic group. With the firm belief that this one group will continue to inhabit the present neighborhood the church has adopted the architectural forms, the language, the racial and ethnic patterns of the community. By providing a wide base of educational and social programs the church has been able to appeal to many hundreds of people. The communicant membership, however, is only a small percentage of the large numbers that participate in the programs of the church.

Church "E" is located in an all-white area which is strongly reinforced by Polish and Roman Catholic backgrounds. Whenever other racial groups have attempted to enter the area, they have been warned by violence or riots that this is not the proper place for them to live. The neighborhood is determined to stay all white for a good many years yet. Negroes, however, do live to the north and the south and "trash" lives to the west. In

the ten years that the pastor has served this congregation the communicant membership has increased by one hundred twenty members even though another one hundred twenty members were lost by death or transfer in the last two years. The pastor of Church "E" contributes much of the success of his ministry to the policies which are presently in force in the parochial school. When the pastor first came to this congregation, the school had all types of non-Lutheran students with habits that the pastor considered inconsistent with Christian standards, i.e., stealing, lying, lice and bed bugs in the hair, filthy clothes, etc. The minister cleaned out the "trash" from the school and set up standards. Now children may not enter the school until their parents have been confirmed, and even then they are put on probation for one year. A neighboring Lutheran church which is located in a more blighted situation and is interracially mixed has attempted to send children to the parochial school of Church "E." The pastor, however, has made it clear that he does not want Negroes or "trash" from the neighboring congregation to enter his school. The pastor simply explains that the situation at Church "E" is different from the problems of the neighboring churches.

Church "F" has a very large church building. It is located in a deteriorating neighborhood which is rapidly turning all Negro. Within the communicant membership at the present time there are no Negroes. Although the pastor is a dynamic leader he has found stubborn resistance among the lay leadership in his attempt to serve the people in the immediate area of the church.

Church "F," seeing that many of its members were moving into one particular suburb, decided to build a mission church in this area. The pastor is presently serving both of these congregations. Both churches are operating on one budget. In just a few years, however, the mission has grown so rapidly that it is now helping support Church "F" in the blighted area. The relationship between Church "F" and the new mission are becoming more strained, however, and it is possible that both churches may insist upon separate budgets and church administrations in the near future.

Church "G" was ready to seel its property in the blighted area and merge with a neighboring congregation. Upon the urging of the district mission board it was decided not to leave the area but to continue serving the people that are living there. By the means of a block-to-block telephone canvass many prospects were found in the area. Laymen and pastors within the city made many follow-up calls on the prospects. Although the congregation is served only by part-time pastoral help, the Sunday services do average forty people, and over fifty are enrolled in the Sunday School.

Church "H" exists in an area where a wide diversification of races exists. Negroes, whites, Orientals and Puerto Ricans live in the immediate vicinity of the church. Although the Sunday School is integrated, the communicant membership consists only of members of the white race. The pastor believes that the primary responsibility of the church is to serve those people who are already members of the congregation. For this reason a

large number of members who provide a strong economic base for the congregation continue to come long distances to return to the old congregation. Although the congregation loses approximately fifteen more members a year than it gains, the finances have continued to increase because the members recognize the necessity for continued economic support that the church might survive. Some of the young adults that attend church there have come to see the need of serving the immediate neighborhood. Through their determination and interest many children in the neighborhood have been brought to Sunday School and eventually baptism.

Church "I" has been serving a lower-class white neighborhood for many decades. During these many years the church has never really attempted to serve the community in which it exists. Nearly all of the members come from long distances because of the previous memories and associations that are connected with this congregation. At the present time some of the area is being cleared for government low-cost housing redevelopment. The church is somewhat perplexed as to how it should reach out to this group of people. Some years ago the neighboring church, which is also located in a blighted area, was forced to close its parochial school. Church "I," which also operates a parochial school, refused to accept the students from the other school because the children were not "our kind." Gradually the church is beginning to recognize that it has a Christian obligation to witness to the people in the area.

Finally we come to Church "J." This church served an apartment area which is not badly blighted. Only two per cent of the congregation's members own their own homes; the remainder live in rented apartments. The community is composed of fifty per cent Jews, forty per cent Irish, and ten per cent "other people." The pastor believes in every type of mass publicity for the congregation. Every year at least sixteen thousand tracts are distributed. The church building is used as headquarters for the Red Cross drives, cancer drives, polling for city and state elections, etc. The pastor is part of the community council, civil defense, political campaigns, civic and social projects, and any other activity that will give him an opportunity to witness for Christ. The church operates a parochial school which is looked upon as a mission agency. Fifty per cent of the students come from non-member homes. Because of high tuition costs at the school (members have to pay five dollars more a month than non-members) the school is completely self-sustaining. The Jewish members in the congregation comprise about fifteen per cent of the communicant membership. There are also Negroes, Chinese, Japanese, Spaniards, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Arabians, etc., communing at the Lord's Table.

The writer hopes that the ten churches which he has described briefly will help the reader understand some peculiar and outstanding aspects of Lutheran church work in blighted areas. In Chapter V the writer will comment critically on the principles and programs which are described in this chapter. Generally

the writer will attempt to interpret the principles as outlined in the first four chapters of this thesis as they are applicable to interpreting an effective program in the blighted area for Lutheran churches.

A Comprehensive Study of the Church  
and the Community Should Be Made

It is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study of the church and the community in order to evaluate accurately parish assets and community needs. An evaluation of the status quo is a necessary starting point as one begins to plan the strategy for a particular church in a specific area.

The ways and means of conducting such a study can be found in the works of Douglas,<sup>1</sup> Lattin,<sup>2</sup> Salpico,<sup>3</sup> etc. The Lutheran Church has developed a very good study guide.<sup>4</sup> For churches within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a Self-Study Guide for the City Church, compiled by Richard Sommerfeld and issued by the Board of Missions in North and South America, is

<sup>1</sup>W. Paul Douglas, How to Study the City Church (New York: Doubleday, Garden, N.Y., Inc., 1963).

<sup>2</sup>Lattin, Murray H., The Effective City Church (New York and New Haven: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>Salpico, Frederick A., Church Work in the City (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954).

<sup>4</sup>Committee on Urban Church Planning, Board of American Missions, Lutheran Church, A Look at the City Church (Hannover, N.H., 1954).

## CHAPTER V

### THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MEETS THE BLIGHTED AREA WITH AN EFFECTUAL PROGRAM

#### A Comprehensive Study of the Church and the Community Should Be Made

It is necessary to complete a comprehensive study of the church and the community in order to estimate accurately parish assets and community needs. An evaluation of the status quo is a necessary starting point as one begins to plan the strategy for a particular church in a specific area.

The ways and means of conducting such a study can be found in the works of Douglass,<sup>1</sup> Leiffer,<sup>2</sup> Shippey,<sup>3</sup> etc. The Augustana Lutheran Church has developed a very good study guide.<sup>4</sup> For churches within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, A Self-study Guide for the City Church, compiled by Richard Sommerfeld and issued by the Board of Missions in North and South America, is

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<sup>1</sup>H. Paul Douglass, How to Study the City Church (New York: Doubleday, Doran, Co., Inc., c.1928).

<sup>2</sup>Leiffer, Murray H., The Effective City Church (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949).

<sup>3</sup>Shippey, Frederick A., Church Work in the City (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952).

<sup>4</sup>Committee on Urban Church Planning, Board of American Missions, Augustana Lutheran Church, A Look at the City Church (Minneapolis, 1954).

probably the most valuable self-analysis booklet.<sup>5</sup> An article written by Ross Scherer entitled, "What Is Congregational Effectiveness?" may also be helpful critical analysis for members of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.<sup>6</sup> The Urban Church Planning Commission of the National Lutheran Council suggests that the following thirteen items are most helpful in evaluating a Lutheran church:

1. Membership Distribution Map
2. Sunday School Distribution Map
3. Leadership Distribution Map
4. Distribution Map of Members Received in Last Ten Years
5. Age-Sex Pyramid
6. Membership Graph (for the Last Thirty Years)
7. Sunday School Enrollment Graph
8. Financial Trends (Last thirty Years)
9. Age-Sex Pyramid of New Members (Received in Last Ten Years and Who Are Still Active)
10. Age-Sex Pyramid of Leadership
11. Bar Graph of Congregational Leadership
12. Congregational Mobility
13. Contacts of New Members<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Sommerfeld, Richard, A Self-Study Guide for the City Church (St. Louis: Board for Missions in North and South America, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1957).

<sup>6</sup>Ross P. Scherer, "What Is Congregational Effectiveness?" The American Lutheran, Vol. XL, No. 4, pp. 11-13, 25.

<sup>7</sup>Urban Church Planning, Division of American Missions, National Lutheran Council, Description of Study Aids and Sample Charts (Chicago, 1955).

The congregation should also be aware of local governmental plans for redeveloping the area. This type of information is usually available through city governmental agencies, e.e., land clearance commission, housing authority, human relations department, etc. The church should be aware of its role in the community as it is conceived in the office of the city planning commissioner. A good book in the area of the "Church and City Planning" has recently been published by the National Council of Churches of Christ<sup>8</sup> and will be helpful to the student that is attempting to evaluate the church's place in city planning.

It is often urged that churches do a self-study analysis of their church and community. The self-study technique is a valuable item because it helps the individual members firsthand to understand the situation. The analysis of the material, however, should be completed by a trained individual who is an authority in the area. William J. Villaume warns us:

It takes a man with keen analytical powers, a wealth of knowledge about church and community, ability to synthesize, and withal a warm, sensitive appreciation of the efforts of his fellow men to make objective firsthand studies of changing social and ecclesiastical phenomena. The sands in the heart of an American city shift rapidly, and an amateur observer may often find himself looking at the wrong dune, the really significant conformation behind his back.<sup>9</sup>

The first step in formulating an effective program for the Lutheran Church in the blighted area is to complete a comprehensive study of the church and the community.

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<sup>8</sup>Robert G. Hoover and Everett L. Perry, Church and City Planning (New York: N.C.C.C., c.1955).

<sup>9</sup>Ross W. Sanderson, The Church Serves the Changing City (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1955), p. 8.

The Lutheran Church Should Use a Christ-Centered Program  
with Emphasis on the Word and Sacraments

The Lutheran Church in the blighted area should emphasize a substantial Christ-centered theology with an emphasis on the Word and Sacraments. The congregation that exists in the deteriorating neighborhood should be particularly aware of the scope and the extent of Christian love that we know through our Redeemer. While Christians were still sinners Christ's love was so great for mankind that He died on the cross for the complete salvation of their sins. Lutherans were not worthy of this great love, but God in His goodness and mercy through Jesus Christ gave this love freely to His people. In the very same way members of a Christian congregation are to show love not only to people who are worthy of their love or to people who are of "their kind," i.e., people that have the same skin color and speak the same language or drive the same type of car or live in the same kind of house or wear the same kind of clothes.

Christians always have the powerful example of Jesus Christ, who served the residents of the blighted areas in Palestine. To the various people that came to Him, Christ showed mercy, compassion, and love as well as a real interest and concern for their spiritual welfare. Christ ate with a dishonest tax collector named Zacchaeus. He took time out to tell the foreign woman at the well who was also an adulteress that He was the Water of Life. Christ dealt with rich young rulers, smelly fishermen, jealous Jews, mentally deranged individuals, and those who had been caught

in illicit sexual relationships. To all of them He brought the message of hope and life through the redemption from God. The Holy Spirit established the Christian Church in Jerusalem when there were in attendance those that were dark-skinned, medium-skinned, and light-skinned. On that first Pentecost there were representatives from many countries who spoke many different languages. But Christ was for everyone, and, consequently, the early church as described in Acts witnessed to prisoners, jailers, kings, philosophers, and even the Ethiopian Eunnuch who was a Negro. It is unfortunate that the Christian Church in the United States has become so class conscious that the people with whom Christ and the early church dealt are no longer considered good enough to receive His message. But the work and the example of Christ's redemptive love continue to live on. The Lutheran Church in the blighted area that catches the vision of Christ's unselfish love has the sure foundation for an effective program.

The Lutheran Church must not only draw upon the redemptive power of Christ's love, but it must also call upon the virile and dynamic Lutheran doctrines. The city church dare not "water down" its major doctrinal emphasis, but it must teach these God-given formulations with new enthusiasm and cross-cultural clarity. The people who are living in the blighted areas, faced with cultural factors that are continually changing and ending, need something fast and firm, something positive and definite, and something unchangeable and unending. The church can provide these needs by speaking clearly in definite terms concerning major doctrinal issues of life and death--child baptism,

hell, sin, lodge, etc. In the blighted areas of our cities where the temptations for sinning are more obvious than in other areas, the people will not be content or satisfied with a "recreational" gospel. Nothing less than the clear scriptural truths as revealed in the Lutheran formulations of doctrine can give hope and life. Dr. James G. Manz has stated this principle in the following way:

The Church must be the Church, faithful to its Lord and in the administration of His means of grace. When the Church has tried to meet the world on its own ground it loses the battle. Only a "Thus saith the Lord!" can enable one to cope with Satan and all his works and ways. One stands on firm ground with an "It is written!" Only the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, can enable the Church to exist and win the battle when the lines are clearly drawn, as they are in the inner city church. Only the living Christ in Church and among the people is adequate.<sup>10</sup>

The Word and the Sacraments are the means by which the Holy Spirit strengthens the individuals to face the physical and spiritual dangers of the blighted area. The Word, however, is not only spoken by the ordained clergy behind pulpit and altar, but it should also be in the daily conversation of confessing Christians. With the continual use of the Sacrament of Holy Communion the members within the fellowship of the body of Christ are edified and strengthened. By the means of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, little children can be brought into His kingdom. Yes, the Lutheran Church in the blighted area should emphasize a substantial Christ-centered theology with an emphasis on the Word and Sacraments.

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<sup>10</sup>James G. Manz, "Word and Sacrament in a City Church, First St. Paul's, Chicago, Illinois," American Lutheran, XXXIX (September, 1956), p. 239.

## The Lutheran Church Meets the Religious Needs of the Community

The primary concern of the church in the blighted area is to serve the religious needs and concerns of the community. This statement should be so obvious that it need not be written. But the writer wishes to emphasize this point once again. The primary business of the Lutheran Church in the blighted area is to supply the spiritual need. In previous sections of this thesis we have seen that where the established Protestant denominations have emphasized a service of the secular needs at the expense of effectively serving the religious needs, these churches have died out. The death rate of Protestant institutional churches should be an example to us. It is interesting to note on the American scene as a whole during the last fifteen years, that those churches which have neglected doctrinal and religious values have grown less rapidly: Liberal Jews, 23 per cent; Disciples of Christ, 26 per cent; Congregationalists, 19 per cent; Unitarians, 24 per cent. Those churches which have emphasized doctrinal and spiritual values have grown most rapidly: Seventh Day Adventists, 107 per cent; Southern Baptists, 92 per cent; Church of God in Christ, 1,025 per cent; Assembly of God 474 per cent; Mormons 81 per cent; Lutherans, 61 per cent. It is also interesting to note that sects which have increased rapidly in the blighted areas provide a type of doctrinal emphasis. Yes, the primary concern of

the Lutheran Church in the blighted area is to serve the religious needs of the people.

At the same time, however, the Lutheran Church must be flexible enough to meet the spiritual needs of the people in the community as they find expression in their own cultural situation. Too often Lutheran churches have been under the impression that they are presenting a strong religious program to the community when in reality they have been presenting cultural traditions of a class church which are only vaguely attached to the central Christian message. Lutherans dare not teach the racial, ethnic and cultural clings of the in-group members and mistakenly believe that this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. H. Richard Niebuhr warns us that many churches "function as political and class institutions, not as Christian churches."<sup>11</sup> It is the primary obligation of the church not necessarily to transmit its own churchly cultural tradition but rather to present the true Christian message to the spiritual needs of the people in the community as they find expression in that culture.

Vernon Schreiber summarizes his research in this area in the following way:

The church has many barriers to break down before it can discover and identify itself with the community. The presence of the church in a residential area means that its responsibility concerning its message of salvation has geographical connotations. To meet this responsibility the church--and that means the people in it--must solve the following problems: They must

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<sup>11</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Meridian Books, c.1957), p. 24.

not turn their church into another urban institution which has no relation to its surroundings; it must own a claim for existence other than that people of a certain sort have chosen to transport themselves to it. The church must beware of the danger of becoming a bulwark against change instead of a source of Christian life for the people in it and about it. It must face the interference of materialistic desires, class distinctions, and typical urban indifference to the needs of one's neighborhood companions. This is necessary because the location of churches throughout a city means little if some of those churches are not actually identifying themselves with their communities.<sup>12</sup>

The church must serve the religious needs of the community in which it serves. The institutional traits of the church which support the group solidarity of the existant (and sometimes distant) membership, which at the same time are blocking important segments of the contemporary community, should be carefully avoided.

Well, what are the religious needs of the community?

The blighted area is a community where the social interaction is very weak. Mankind feels most secure in a culture that has a common body of tradition and understanding to which the individual can be concretely attached. Since the blighted area usually lacks a common body of tradition and understanding, the individual is likely to be in a state of unrest because he cannot understand his own position in the culture. Generally this means that the blighted area is marked by restlessness and lack of security.

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<sup>12</sup>Vernon Roy Schreiber, The Urban Church in a Transition Community (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1949), p. 41.

Secondly, it is well to remember that every individual has certain social, biological, and psycho-genic needs which must be filled by the society in which he lives. When these needs, aims, objectives, urges, and actions are blocked, frustration takes place. The people that live in the blighted areas are generally the down-trodden and suppressed people of their society. The social mores dictate that overt aggression may never be directed toward individuals which are higher on the social order. Consequently, when the needs of these people are blocked and when their aggressions cannot be verbalized or directed in overt actions, they are likely to internalize the frustration within their own selves.

The emotional and revivalistic religion of the cults provides these individuals with accepted societal ways of releasing these frustrations in an expressive non-directive way. We do not suggest, of course, that the Lutheran Church should meet these total personality needs with a type of revivalistic service. We do suggest, however, that the Lutheran Church should recognize these needs and supply religious answers for them. Where there is unrest and insecurity the redemption of Jesus Christ can provide the needed peace and security. When people are rejected and suppressed by their fellow peers, the Lutheran Church can assure them that they are so important in the eyes of God that Jesus Christ came to this world especially to accept them.

It is also important to remember that many people living in the blighted area have a rural fundamentalistic background.

Many times these people identify religion with a cultural morality of their own, i.e., no tavern drinking, no card playing, no dancing, no smoking, etc. In the tradition of the Lutheran Church many of these items have remained as adiaphora. The church, however, that is interested in appealing to the community would do well to forego some of these items to avoid offending possible congregational prospects. Just as St. Paul refused to offend some Christians by eating meat, in the same way the Lutheran Church in the blighted area must be careful that she will not offend.

The doctrinal preaching of churches in the blighted area would do well to emphasize the "other world." To these people the present world looks like a dreary mess. They would like to look forward to a hope that tells them that heaven awaits them at the end of this life.

But most important of all it is necessary that the people of these areas be accepted, wanted, and loved. For this they do not find in other areas of the social order. If the Lutheran Church can show these people that the love and total acceptance of Christ finds reality in the actions of the Christians in this congregation, then Lutherans will have gone a long way in meeting the spiritual needs of these people.

The church in the blighted area should also seriously consider the possibility of adapting worship forms which are more readily accepted by the community and perhaps less acceptable to Lutheran historical and liturgical tradition. If the congregation can be educated into the richness and the meaning of

the Lutheran liturgical service, then much depth can be added to the worship experience. In areas of high nobility like the blighted area, however, there is not time to educate people to worship forms which are unfamiliar and foreign to them. The writer does not suggest a complete overthrow of the Lutheran liturgical heritage but rather a very careful evaluation of how the Lutheran Church in the blighted area can best communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the Lutheran Church could add evening services to its worship program where the service could be less formalized, and thereby adjust to the needs of the people.

The Lutheran Church in the blighted area should be ready to accept anyone who has prayerfully accepted the doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus Christ. Christian pastors have not always been ready to accept the idea that a person may be justified although his level of sanctification has not reached the proportions that we would like to see. The people in the blighted area may be dirty, ignorant, uneducated, etc., but these are not Christian reasons for eliminating these people from the Christian fellowship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns us:

The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; in the poor brother Christ is knocking at the door.<sup>13</sup>

The Christian faith means that we are to accept people as Christ accepted them.

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<sup>13</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1954), p. 38.

Finally, we come to the very difficult problem of evaluating the effectiveness of the parochial school in meeting the needs of the blighted area. There is a wide difference of opinion whether the parochial school is or is not an effective means of reaching the deteriorating neighborhood. Most case illustrations have pointed out that when neighborhoods are experiencing a slow and orderly deterioration, the parochial school may be helpful in meeting the new constituency. The writer of this thesis believes, however, that if the community has been the result of a mass invasion, or if the community has deteriorated to a very low level, the parochial school is not likely to be a very effective agency. The writer knows of at least four parochial schools that were forced to close by the above factors.

The school like other agencies in the community is an institution. If mass invasion or bad deterioration has taken place, the school like other institutions will have great difficulty surviving as a felt need of the local community. It should be recognized that the parochial school as an institution is culturally selective, and, therefore, does not reach out to the entire community. The public school can compensate for this situation by specializing to a much larger extent than parochial schools can. The parochial school may eliminate pupils with insufficient I.Q., improper health habits, inadequate former education, unfamiliarity with the English language, etc.,--none of which are compulsory correlates of the Christian faith. The result is that the school will not reach out to everyone but only to a select few who represent certain cultural standards.

The Lutheran Church in the blighted area must continually and prayerfully search for ways in which she can most effectively communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the felt religious needs and concerns of the community.

#### The Lutheran Church Meets the Human Needs of the Community

The Lutheran Church should also be concerned with meeting the human needs of the community. Many Christian leaders have pointed out that Christianity is concerned for the whole man. Some have pointed out that a religion which separates the concerns of the soul from the concerns of the body is somewhat short of what New Testament Christianity should be. The words of the apostle John are significant, "If any one sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"<sup>14</sup> Yes, a Christian does respond to the needs of his brethren. Christ himself indicates that in the final judgment men will be judged by the way they acted to His needs, i.e., clothed, fed, visited, healed, etc. Christ expects a Christian answer to the human needs of fellow Christians. It is interesting to note that Christ speaks more about meeting the human needs of fellow Christians than He does about meeting the human needs of non-Christians.<sup>15</sup> Christ himself met the human needs

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<sup>14</sup>I John 3:17.

<sup>15</sup>Matt. 25 and I Tim. 5:8.

of people as He carried out His ministry in this world. For the most part, however, Christ mainly met the human needs of those who expressed faith in Him or who directly asked Him for help. In many ways the Lutheran Church would do well in following the example of their Savior in meeting the human needs of the community.

There certainly are many human needs to be met in the blighted area. Fortunately, most of the human needs are presently being met by community and state welfare agencies. Large amounts of relief are given to the poor and impoverished through government agencies which are supported by tax funds. Lutheran Churches in most large cities have at their disposal a referral agency called Lutheran Charities. Urgent needs are referred by local Lutheran pastors to Lutheran Charities where trained social workers are able to cope with the problems in the most adequate fashion.

There may be a time when a Lutheran church will find human needs in the blighted area which are not presently being met by some capable existing agency. When these situations do arise, the Lutheran church would do well to associate the care of human needs very closely with the central Christian ideology. An illustration of how such a program has worked effectively may be seen in the "baptism evangelism" program of First St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago. The church discovered that there were many children in the neighborhood who were not baptized. There was great difficulty in obtaining sponsors from the children's relatives and friends because generally these people were not

to Christian churches. Consequently, the church utilized college students and the old membership who acted as witnesses for the baptism of the children. Each Christian adult assumed the responsibilities of spiritual God-parent with enthusiasm and dedication. The children with their families would be brought to church. The God-parents would invite the children and their families into their homes (often there were different races involved), so that they might observe how Christian devotions and prayers are part of their daily living. On sunny summer days the children were often taken to the zoo where the animals would be an occasion to tell of the Bible stories where such animals were involved. The spiritual witnesses gave the children many gifts of a spiritual nature, i.e., Bible story books, religious jewelry, Bibles, prayer books, hymnals, etc. By this means it was even possible for the God-parents to suggest better habits of personal grooming, how to maintain clothes and how to cook wholesome meals. Although the program served the human needs of the people involved, yet it essentially served the spiritual welfare of the people particularly as it was rooted in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. This was not a program-centered or community-centered program, but rather a person-centered and Christ-centered program. The writer believes that whenever human needs can be closely associated with the redemptive love of Jesus Christ, then the total outreach is likely to be most effective.

The Lutheran Church Needs to be Identified  
With the Denominational Body

The Lutheran Church that is serving the blighted area should be closely identified with the denominational body. The Lutheran ministers in the immediate metropolitan area should understand problems which are facing sister congregations in the deterioration zone. Lutheran pastors must understand the mutual objectives and purposes for which the church in the blighted area stands. Work must be done in fellowship, not in variance with Lutheran brethren of the Missouri Synod.

A strong denominational church organization behind the local church serving the blighted area seems to be a necessity. The Episcopally structured church organization is most likely to survive in the areas of deterioration. In a study by Mel Ravitz in the city of Detroit he found that 93.7 per cent of the congregational type and 85.7 per cent of the Presbyterian type of city churches relocated while only 21.4 per cent of the Episcopally structured churches moved out.<sup>16</sup> It would seem that the more closely Lutheran churches could relate themselves to the church denomination, the greater the chance for survival would be.

One of the very important problems of the church in the blighted area involves finances. Any church organization needs a substantial budget to operate in a given area. In the blighted area it is particularly difficult to raise enough money to carry

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<sup>16</sup>Mel Ravitz, Church Relocation in the Changing City (Detroit: mimeographed copy, c.1956).

out the necessary functions of the congregation. There are probably three ways in which a congregation in such an area might be financed: (a) by the contributions of its members; (b) by the mission department of the denomination; (c) by a church endowment fund. Almost all people will agree that the best alternative is the budget which is entirely supported by the contributions of its members. "The chief financial resource of the church is the giving potential of its members."<sup>17</sup> All efforts should be made to carry through on this alternative, if possible. If, however, the Lutheran church in the blighted area should have to fall back on support from the mission department as the only possible alternative, it should not feel discouraged or defeated. For the church in the blighted area serves a very important link in the total mission program of the church. Many of the newer residents to the city will live for a short period of time in the blighted areas. As a front-line mission agency the church in the blighted area serves these transients and prepares them for the more stable Lutheran congregations in better areas. Yes, the affiliation of the Lutheran Church in the blighted area with the larger denominational body is very important.

#### The Lutheran Church Needs an Adequate Staff

The type and quality of the pastorate is especially important

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<sup>17</sup>Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1955).

in the continuance and extension of the church. A long continuity of service by one pastor is considered very desirable. "Short pastorates get nowhere in the inner city."<sup>18</sup> A pastor in the blighted area needs time to understand the needs of the area and the responsibilities of the church. The possibility of the group ministry in the blighted area should be seriously considered. This arrangement would make it possible for more intensive and extensive work in an area that badly needs the concerns of the Christian Church. A recent article in the Christian Century stated, "The need for a 'group ministry' (exists) in the inner city . . . ."<sup>19</sup>

Probably the chief functions of the minister in the blighted area are counseling, preaching and pastoral obligations. All obligations of the parish could be carried out better if there were a type of group ministry. "The Group Ministry idea marks a definite advance and meets an urgent vocational need."<sup>20</sup> When the writer speaks of the group ministry he does not necessarily mean that the church should be served by several ordained clergymen. It would seem to the writer that some interesting experiments could be tried in the blighted area in terms of church staff. Next to the minister probably the most important man on the staff could be a full-time educational director.

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<sup>18</sup>Sanderson, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>19</sup>James Gordon Gilkey, Jr., "City Church: A New Look," Christian Century, January 29, 1958, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup>Sanderson, op. cit., p. 243.

Other possibilities for church staff could be a vicar, deaconess, social worker, assistant pastor, parochial school teacher, secretary, etc. Another possibility for the blighted area would be the celibate ministry. It would seem that this type would have particular advantages because (a) he would need a smaller salary; (b) he would be likely to stay a longer period of time; (c) since the community is not likely to have as many families or children as other areas, he would not be so much at a disadvantage in the area of family counseling as he might be in another parish.

#### Spiritual Group Work Should Be Used With the Members

The Lutheran Church in order to survive in the blighted area must adequately and effectively utilize its membership. The training of lay leadership is an important aspect in the continuation and strengthening of the church program. The writer believes that the cottage meeting plan is a notably effective way of utilizing lay initiative and leadership. In January of 1957 the writer published an article in Advance explaining how to train lay leadership for Christian work in the blighted areas.<sup>21</sup> For effectively meeting the needs of the blighted area the minister in the deteriorating zone should solicit the help of his congregation through the cottage meeting plan.

Possibly the pastor in the blighted area should also

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<sup>21</sup>Charles Manske, "Solicit Their Help at Cottage Meetings," Advance, January 1957, pp. 14-17.

experiment with the "house church" plan. This plan utilizes the home as a focal point for Christian instruction and worship. People who are interested in the Christian faith invite other families into their homes to share with them their Christian worship. The "house church" was used very effectively by the early Christians. This approach has been used in modern times by the Mennonite missionaries in establishing mission centers in the large low-income housing projects. The "house church" eliminates many of the institutional hazards which would prevent people in the blighted area from coming to the formalized Lutheran liturgical services. The possibility of the "house church" should be considered seriously in future plans for Lutheran work in the blighted areas.

Finally, we should remember that the people who are attending a Lutheran Church in a blighted area are not as likely to be living in a family situation. Larger percentages of the members will be detached persons. In recent years many aged people have moved into the inner-city sections of our larger cities. Many large downtown hotels have been converted into homes for the aged. The inner city and the blighted area are likely to have many detached persons and the program of the Lutheran Church in that area should be geared to serving the needs of the people in such a situation.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The voice of the Lord continues to cry to the city. Particularly in this day and age the voice of the Lord needs to be heard in the city.

The problem of the blighted area is very difficult. The church is faced with many interacting social problems such as poverty, crime, vice, lawlessness, diversification, and mobility. In the face of these problems the church has difficulty in surviving.

Many different church bodies serve the blighted area. Lutherans like many other Protestant church bodies have not been too successful.

The Lutheran Church needs to establish an effectual program in the blighted areas. This program should begin with a comprehensive study of the church and the community. The Lutheran Church should use a Christ-centered program with emphasis on word and sacraments as it meets the religious and human needs of the community. The Lutheran Church needs to be closely identified with the denominational body. Both the staff and the members of the Lutheran Church in the blighted area should work together utilizing group work techniques to accomplish the Christian goals.

"Seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah 29:7.

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