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## Objectives of Parish Education

By ARTHUR C. REPP

Every religious educator, whether he be pastor, teacher, or Sunday school superintendent, must be aware of and have an understanding of the objectives of his parish program of education. Leaders of the Church must have before them specific goals which describe in concrete terms what they are trying to effect through their program of parish education. Several considerations prompt one to make such a broad statement. To begin with, there is a tendency for every one of us to become involved in an agency or an organization to such an extent that it becomes an end rather than a means for reaching our goal, and as a result we become completely absorbed in the administration, in particular methods, or in the number of persons involved. The formulation of objectives should take our mind off the methods and the means and direct our attention to the ultimate changes looked for in the lives of the persons under our spiritual care.

The undue stress on administration and the agencies causes us to lose sight of the educational changes in Christian growth which we want to bring about in the individual. Consequently if we, as leaders, become so involved in tools and organizations, it is understandable that congregations will follow our lead. They are led to assume those things to be important which we stress. They begin to judge the success of the parish program by our norms of large enrollments, smooth administration, and a general activity.

A second consideration for giving time to the study of objectives is that unless we have a general blueprint of the

entire task, large segments of our ministerial task may be blotted out or put in a secondary position. This imbalance is evident where there is a tendency to pit missions against education or to put the complete emphasis at the elementary level, with adult education of minor importance, if it receives any consideration at all. Fears have also been expressed that we have failed to give the proper directives for the Christian in his community life, which has resulted in the present quietistic attitude of the average Lutheran. A clear-cut set of objectives will keep the whole task of the Church before the mind of the religious educator.

Equally important for the consideration of objectives is the fact that without an over-all plan of action or set of objectives, organizations or agencies within the congregation have a tendency to compete with one another, to overlap, or even assume the attitude that theirs is the whole educational job of the congregation. If, however, a set of objectives for the parish program has been adopted and each organization within that congregation recognizes that it is to press forward toward these goals within its own limits and opportunities, the organizations will not compete with but supplement one another. For example, if the Sunday school has drawn up its objectives in the light of the general plan and if the parochial school has done the same, they will not be competitors but co-ordinating agents reaching for the same general goals, each within its own limitations and advantages.

Similarly, duplication can be avoided if each organization knows its specific sphere of activities. There can be greater co-ordination between the work done in the upper grades of the parochial school and the confirmation instruction or the program of the Walther League and that of the Bible classes.

With a set of objectives for the entire parish program of education we may hope to avoid the tendency to expect to do the entire job at the elementary level. In our elementary areas we have frequently assumed that we must not only prepare the individual for his present childhood, but also supply him with all the training for his complete adult life, the assumption being that the whole job must be done by the time he is ready to be confirmed. Realistically this is not only bad pedagogy, it is an impossible task. Because we have sometimes naively believed that we could accomplish this, we have

allowed our youth program to become secondary and our work with adults to be practically non-existent outside the Sunday morning sermon.

Thus a set of objectives for a parish program of education will assist us in keeping our ultimate goals in mind and subordinate all else, whether they be methods, agencies, or administrative problems, considering these only in the light of the goals we wish to accomplish. The objectives will help us keep the entire picture in focus lest we overlook certain God-given tasks or objectives.

That we are not accustomed to formulate objectives is seen in the fact that there is a constant stress on the organization and methods. Additional evidence is presented when pastors and teachers are asked to state their goals. The answer is usually given with a glib phrase or two or perhaps the usual Bible passages: Matt. 28:19-20: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; or 2 Tim. 3:15: to make men "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and sometimes verse 17 is added: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." While it is true that the objectives of our work will be found in these and similar passages, it is equally true that we are frequently unaware of the implications contained in such references. These Bible passages are so comprehensive that unless we investigate them in the light of the rest of the Scripture, we may fail to see all that is implied in them.

On the basis of Holy Writ, what is the educational task of the Church? It must be remembered that we are dealing with Christians in a Christian congregation. Hence we are concerned with the Christian's relationship to his God. This relationship expresses itself in a twofold sphere of living: one sphere relating to his own person, the other to society. Both of these must be reflected in the objectives which we draw up.

From the standpoint of the first sphere of living, we are concerned with the Christian's responsibility that he remain steadfast in his personal faith life, as Peter and Paul have summed it up in their exhortation: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18)

so that the "Word of God . . . effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). This growth is a lifetime process without restrictions to age, time, or place.

The Christian's relationship to God includes also the second phase of living, namely, that of his social responsibility. Unto this he has been sanctified. The believer is a part of society, both the Christian and the non-Christian. He is in the world though not of it, and in this world he is to be salt and light.

Broadly speaking, God has set the individual Christian in three social areas of living. First and foremost, because of its priority and its fundamental importance, is *the home* founded by God. Secondly, there is *the Christian Church*, the Christian fellowship (ἐκκλησία). Usually we think of the local congregation when we hear this term, though it must in no wise be limited to this; strictly speaking, not even to the Lutheran Church, though this is of pre-eminent importance because of the confessional obligations. Actually, in its fullest sense, it means all Christendom, as we have been taught to pray for and with all Christians in the Lord's Prayer. Realistically viewed, we know that other considerations come into play which will restrict our objectives in practice. Thirdly, our area of social living includes *the community*, which embraces another divine agency, namely, the government, though not to be narrowed to this. Other obligations enter into this area, such as our entire mission responsibilities, which in themselves enlarge the community to such an extent that it becomes the world, for the world is our field.

These two spheres, the individual and the social, are kept separate because only in this way can we give them the consideration they require. As a matter of actual practice, the two are constantly intertwined. We do not live in two separate airtight compartments. Just as the body and soul constantly interact in the living man, so there is constant interaction between the sphere of the individual and the social. Where this interaction or pattern fails to exist, there is something fundamentally wrong with either our understanding or our Christian living.

Bearing this in mind, we can now formulate our general aim of parish education according to these two areas of living.

## I. The Individual

*The indoctrination in the Scriptural truths for all members of the congregation in such a way that these truths make men grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus and further their godly living (the individual's faith life).*

## II. The Social

- A. The nurturing of individual members to build and maintain a Christian home on the basis of Scriptural principles (*the home*).
- B. The nurturing of individual members for greater participation and leadership in the work of the local congregation and of the church at large (*the church*).
- C. The nurturing of individual members in the evangelization of the community and the world at large as well as for Christian citizenship and community activities (*the community*).

Keeping these goals before us, we have a general directive for our task as parish educators. So broad is this directive that from it the unique objectives of every educational organization or agency within the parish may be drawn. Within the limitations of the spiritual and mental maturity of the individual this is true whether it is the nursery class, the Sunday sermon, the parochial school, or the adult Bible class.

### I

As they now stand, these general objectives are still too broad. Unless they are defined more specifically, large segments of our plan of action may still be blotted out. Let us begin by examining all that is implied in the first area of living, *the individual*, the Christian's responsibility to himself in his relationship to God:

*The indoctrination in the Scriptural truths for all members of the congregation in such a way that these truths make men grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus and further their godly living (the individual's faith life).*

This objective falls into two natural parts, which are separated only for the purpose of studying them more closely. In the actual teaching process they dare not be separated, the one being the indoctrination, the other the functional use of these doctrines.

1. *Acquaintance with the Scriptural truths for all members of the congregation at the various stages of spiritual and mental maturity: elementary (pre-school and school age); secondary (confirmation and post-confirmation age); adult.*

The Christian Church must begin with the indoctrination of Scriptural truths. The Christian religion is unique in this respect. Its truths are not derived from reason. They do not arise spontaneously. Nor can the findings which are formulated from nature serve as basic norms. The Christian derives his saving knowledge from divine revelation. These truths, being from above, are eternal verities in contrast to the world, to which they have been revealed, which is in constant change and subject to investigation and verification. Only through these central truths can the individual grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The individual's faith life is rounded and polished through the Word.

But this indoctrination, or, as we have called it, "acquaintance with the Scriptural truths," is not a one-time process, one that can be concentrated during the period of childhood. It is for every age from infancy to old age. While Paul tells parents to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), he tells all the members of the Colossian congregation:

"(We) do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10).

And, again:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

So also John wrote to children, to young men, and to fathers (1 John 2:13), and this not because they were ignorant of the truth (1 John 2:21), but that their joy might be full and they would not be seduced into unbelief (1 John 2:26) and ungodly living (1 John 3:7 ff.).

The methods, the agency, the organization, and the content to accomplish this goal will vary according to the mental and spiritual maturity of the individual and according to the cir-

cumstances of the congregation. For a general view of the whole congregation, we might include at least four subdivisions, without implying that the accomplishment of these four items will fully meet the objective set forth:

**ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BIBLE HISTORY**

The first will, no doubt, be an acquaintance with the fundamental Bible stories, or Bible history, and together with this:

**ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE**

Whether these two items are fused or separated in the teaching is immaterial. We are not concerned with the method involved as long as the method used actually achieves the objectives. This is important.

Along with this we might add:

**SKILL IN HANDLING THE BIBLE**

Ordinarily we might expect that this would follow from the above. Where else do we get the Bible stories and the Bible doctrine but from the Bible? But, because method has often crowded out the objectives, the use of the Bible itself has frequently been pushed into the background. The Catechisms, the lesson leaflets, the Bible history books, have too frequently been the only source of learning, so that the Book behind all these has been neglected. We have no brief against Bible helps. They have a necessary place. We must have them. We can't give a four-year-old a Bible for his lesson. A leaflet simplifies the content for him. Even adults profit from the use of guides and outlines. But when these cease to be aids and become ends in themselves, we have lost sight of our objectives in leading people directly to the Bible and training them to handle the Bible skillfully and intelligently. We can well appreciate the complaint of the Rev. Bernard I. Bell, D. D., pastor of the Episcopal Church at the University of Chicago, who bids his denomination to ponder the advisability of using Biblical material only as illustrative.

About all we get by the usual Sunday school methods is a scrabble-gabble of undigested Bible stories which "puts children off" the Holy Book, and also leaves them ignorant of any religious system which they can later hang on to (*Living Church*, Feb. 15, 1948, p. 13).

Perhaps the cry about the obsolete English of the King James Version arises partly from the fact that the simplified

texts have been used too long and through this we have accustomed our people to be spoon-fed with Christian "pabulum." Several generations ago people had less general education, fewer Biblical helps; and while the King James English was just as archaic then as it is today, these people nevertheless could read the Bible more readily than the average Christian family of today.

In addition to the general acquaintance with the Scriptural truths there should also be given:

**A REPERTOIRE OF PERTINENT PORTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES AND RELATED MATERIAL (CATECHISM AND HYMNS) FOR PERSONAL COMFORT, JOY, ASSURANCE, AND PROOF**

In considering the various specifics which might come under these aims, the general objectives should not be lost sight of. This is particularly true when considering this specific. Note, not merely a repertoire of Scripture passages for their own sake, but for personal comfort, joy, assurance, and proof, and all this to help the individual grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ and, as we shall consider in a moment, to further his godly living.

Here particularly it might be well for every religious educator to consider whether he is actually achieving this goal in the assignment of his memory material, particularly with the youth of the church. Judging by many statements and observations, we might do well to re-evaluate our methods of teaching memory work. Too often the memory work becomes an end in itself. Are we giving due consideration to the readiness of the child when we ask him to memorize a selection from Holy Writ or from the Catechism? Does he understand not only the meaning, but also the purpose behind it? Is he getting an appreciation of the "what for," or is it merely blind recitation, with a minimum of understanding? Has there been an overemphasis of the proof passages for the purpose of laying low the heretics or the gainsayers, with little importance placed on the value of Bible passages for the individual's own comfort, joy, and assurance? Has all the value been stressed on the "dim future," with little or no thought for present needs? When the congregation puts its chief emphasis on the elementary level of religious education, it necessarily feels that every foreseeable problem must be anticipated while the individual is still young and that he be equipped for it. This

"last chance" attitude overlooks the fact that unless the material is put to use at the time it is learned or at an early date thereafter, the laws of memory will see to it that most of it will be forgotten when the problem actually arises sometime in the distant future.

For this reason more stress should be placed in showing a child how the passage is of value to him now and under what circumstances it can be used. This should be followed by giving him occasions to use it under such circumstances.

We recognize that if we operate with such objectives in mind, the number of our memory selections will go down, but we can also be assured that the quality, usefulness, and retention will go up.

Teaching the Scriptural truths, training for skill in handling the Bible, and memorization, no matter how well done, cannot be divorced from the functional use of these God-given facts. For this reason we have set up our objectives with this in mind: *"in such a way that these truths make men grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus and further their godly living."* Hence we have set up our second broad specific to read:

**2. Functional use of these Scriptural truths in the life of the individual.**

It is here that we have somewhat fallen down on the job. We have indoctrinated, and that quite well, but often the functional use of these truths has been lacking. We often fail to see the Christian attitudes and behavior we might expect to find in the children of our schools, in the students at our synodical schools, to say nothing about the lives of our people who "know it" but do not "live it." Of course, we can piously put on blinders and refuse to see, and none is so blind as he who will not see. It is better, however, that we acknowledge the fact and investigate how the work of the Holy Spirit has been thwarted and to what degree we share in the guilt by our failure to teach properly.

The most difficult part of our teaching task will be to make Christianity function. We cannot rely upon our telling to bring about these changes. Here especially it is evident that telling is not teaching. While the Holy Spirit is effective in the Word, it is also true that we can destroy the effect of the Word by our own attitudes and behavior. We cannot get

people to love Christ by telling them to love Him. We must set before them the motivating power of Christ's love for us; we must in our own demeanor show that we, too, have been affected by that love; we must give evidence of this in a life of love lest our much telling about loving God be interpreted by our own lack of expression of it.

What are some of the Christian attitudes, habits, and behavior patterns which we wish to cultivate and nourish as far as the individual is concerned? The first which might be mentioned is

#### **THE HABIT OF DAILY BIBLE READING AND PRAYER (DEVOTIONAL LIFE)**

The Scriptural truths which we inculcate by our preaching must be deepened and confirmed by the Christian's own daily reading of the Bible and his prayer life. That our people are generally not reading the Bible is a fact to which we cannot close our eyes. Several studies recently made bear out this fact in an all too vivid way.

The same can be said about the prayer life, though perhaps not to the same extent. How mature, however, these prayers are; how far our people are able to get away from stereotypes is a problem that concerns many pastors and teachers and perhaps should concern them still more. It is a fact that we have not encouraged prayer by giving children, young people, and adults opportunities to pray and that we have not even taught them the essentials of a prayer through practice. Ask the average layman to lead a group in prayer, and you will have all the evidence you need. In desperation he might pray the Lord's Prayer or confess the Apostles' Creed; but to formulate a prayer arising out of the occasion and immediate needs, for this he feels inadequate. This may reflect what he does in his private devotional life, but we leave the conclusions to the religious educators.

A second item of Christian living might include:

#### **APPRECIATION AND REVERENT USE OF THE DIVINE SERVICES AND THE SACRAMENTS**

This means more than going to church, being baptized, and going the casual four times a year to the Lord's Supper. It also means more than merely telling people to go to church, checking up on their attendance, and being satisfied with numbers. It means that more and more stress be placed upon

the quality of the worship, which rises from an inner motive of love because of a personal union with Christ.

From this devotional life and reverent use of the means of grace comes another phase of the functional use of these Scriptural truths:

**HOLY AND SACRIFICIAL LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S LAW AS AN  
EXPRESSION OF ONE'S PERSONAL FAITH**

True, we have taught the will of God, which is the Christian's norm for a life dedicated to God, but it is equally true that it does not always function. This is not due to the fact that we have overlooked it in our objectives in the past, for surely every Christian educator has that as his goal. It is more likely that part of the solution to the problem lies in the fact that we have sometimes assumed that presenting the facts brings the results per se. As has already been said repeatedly, we must re-examine our methods to find out to what extent they have actually encouraged an intellectual Christianity instead of a functional one. More emphasis must be placed on giving our Christians direction and opportunity for expression in their sacrificial living.

**II**

Leaving now the area of the individual's personal responsibility as a child of God, we turn to the social phase of his responsibility. What does the teacher hope to accomplish in the individual so that he can take his place in society? We have already divided this phase of living into the home, the church, and the community. Concerning the *home* we have formulated our objective in general terms as follows:

***A. The nurturing of individual members to build and maintain a Christian home on the basis of Scriptural principles.***

The importance of stressing the home in a program of parish education is obvious to every religious educator and need not be defended. The stress and strain of a fast-moving materialistic age has had its impact upon every home, not excluding the parsonage. The church cannot neglect this fact. It cannot, with a special measure of Pilate water, wash its hands and simply blame the home for the effects of our age, nor can it simply take over the function of the home on the assumption that the latter is a failure anyway. Because the church also has felt the impact of the age in which it exists,

it has all it can do to carry out its divinely appointed task without taking on the duty of any other agency. Instead, it must redouble its effort to assist the home in doing its own task more effectively.

Beginning before the individual has established a home of his own, the first task in this area is

#### PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The basic steps for the establishment of a home are taken during childhood upon the part of both the home and the church. In our parochial schools we have perhaps done much by way of preparation and, in a limited way, also in the confirmation instruction. On the other hand, much of what we have tried to accomplish there has been premature. We have prepared children for some remote future time at an age when the felt needs were vague and for the most part wholly unrealized. During another important period of preparation, namely, that of the adolescent, we have already begun to lose contact with many, and consequently we are accomplishing still less. Considering that only about twenty-five per cent of the communicants of high school age are enrolled in Bible classes and about the same proportion in young people's societies, we realize that decisive years for this important phase of preparation are lost for the majority. An interesting question to consider here is: Are we losing our hold on these children because it's a hopeless task, or because we have not offered them what they felt they needed as young Christians, or because we took the attitude that we had given them all the necessary instruction before confirmation and that consequently young people's activities are at best a preventative measure to keep them away from worldly associations as much as possible? Whatever the reason may be, we cannot even approximate this objective if the young people are not with us for such instruction. What is true of the young adolescent is even more true of the older adolescent, who may already be in the period of courtship.

The next phase of this objective is:

#### THE ABILITY OF PARENTS TO BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN IN THE NURTURE OF THE LORD

Training for parenthood is no less important than education preparing for marriage. Perhaps the only difference is

that young parents, for the most part, are aware of their needs and more eagerly turn to the church for help when and if it is offered. Here, too, the necessary assistance is often lacking. This portion of the church's task is one of the several items overlooked in the program of parish education. As with other phases of our work, this is partly due to the fact that we are overconfident in the success of our elementary Christian education, believing that we have given them the foundation and all these things shall in some mysterious way be added unto them.

#### THE PROPER RELATION OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS

Much stress has been placed upon this phase of Christian living in the home, for it has always been recognized as the important area of Christian life. Since our major emphasis in our parish program has been centered in the child, and that at a time when these problems are real and within the learner's experience, this objective has rarely been lost sight of.

#### THE ART OF CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE HOME

The proper relationship between husband and wife, brothers and sisters, toward in-laws, grandparents, and anyone else that might live under the family roof is all within this sphere of Christian living.

Another important phase of home education is

#### THE PROPER USE OF LEISURE TIME BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

This includes the responsibility of helping the family in its play to help make it a well-knit unit. In our highly organized life, where the members of the family are often strangers to one another, where the church, too, has helped keep them apart with its long array of meetings, some thought should be given to allowing them to spend evenings together at home and assist them in achieving to some degree a mutual understanding between members of the family.

The second major area of living in our social relationship is, of course, the church. Here our objective is

*B. The nurturing of individual members for greater participation and leadership in the work of the local congregation and of the church at large.*

To achieve this objective, no fewer than the following five specifics should be included:

1. *Acquaintance of the individual members with the work of the congregation, Synod, and the church at large, with a view to greater participation in this work.*
2. *Leadership training for the activities of the congregation and the Church (administration, education, missions, charity, etc.).*
3. *A sense of stewardship in cheerful and proportionate giving.*
4. *Acquaintance with, and appreciation of, the history of the Church, including that of the local congregation.*
5. *An understanding and appreciation of the liturgical heritage of the Church.*

With the possible exception of the last item, the church has, for the most part, been aware of these objectives and has made a concerted effort to achieve them. What restrictions these aims have received has been due chiefly to the fact that we have not stressed our adult program of parish education as we might have and consequently have not achieved the success we had reason to expect. This is particularly true of our leadership training. Though we have one of the finest elementary programs of education, strangely enough it has not produced a lay leadership. This is particularly true of leaders for Bible classes. While all denominations feel this lack, many have been able to train lay leaders for Bible classes in spite of their meager program at the elementary level. Are we hesitant to use our laymen, lacking confidence in the foundational training which we have given them, or have we failed to make active laymen? Great strides have been made in administration, but there is still a woeful lack of lay leadership for an adult program.

As to the last specific in the five steps outlined above, the *understanding and appreciation of the liturgical heritage of the Church*, we have been strangely remiss. A liturgical Church with a laity that rarely understands the meaning of the order of services which it uses at every public worship! Whatever beauty and meaning lies in the liturgical form of worship, it is lost upon a membership that has completely formalized the service. Unless checked, we are only encouraging dead formalism in our public worship, from which even the public preaching is bound to suffer.

The last major area of social living is the *community*. We have stated this objective thus:

**C. *The nurturing of individual members in the evangelization of the community and the world at large as well as for Christian citizenship and community activities.***

This objective falls into two natural phases of activity: evangelism and Christian citizenship.

**1. *Evangelism***

Our Church has from its beginning been interested in mission work but on account of a number of circumstances has greatly restricted it according to nationalistic lines. This work has often been merely salvaging souls rather than mission work as we understand the term today. Since World War I we have become more aware of our responsibilities to the rank-and-file citizen regardless of his nationality. Thanks to the active work of our Home Missions Board this phase of our work has entered upon a more concerted activity than has ever been attempted before. In view of this we have had clearly set before us the various steps necessary to achieve this objective. They may be summarily formulated as follows:

**A SENSITIVENESS IN THE MINDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TO THE NEEDS OF THE MANY UNCHURCHED.**

**A TRAINED MEMBERSHIP FOR PERSONAL MISSION WORK IN THIS COMMUNITY.**

**PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH'S MISSION PROGRAM IN THE WORLD AT LARGE (HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS).**

**USE OF THE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES WITHIN THE CONGREGATION TO WIN THE UNCHURCHED IN THE COMMUNITY.**

**ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE HISTORY OF MISSIONS AND THE WORK OF OUR CHURCH IN THE VARIOUS MISSION FIELDS.**

**2. *Christian Citizenship***

The second phase of the Christian's community life, namely, Christian citizenship, is one of the areas which has sometimes been blotted out entirely. Various reasons have been ascribed to our Lutheran quietism. Some say it is because we fear that it may lead to preaching the social gospel; others, because we fear mixing Church and State; still others, because we fear contamination with the sinful practices of the world, suggesting in effect a Lutheran type of monasticism; and with still others it simply is an outgrowth of our foreign background. That some of these dangers are real must be readily admitted, but they do not absolve us from the many

admonitions in Scriptures to let our light shine, to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5: 13-16), to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10), in Christ's name to bring food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, hospitality to the homeless, clothing to the ragged, comfort to the sick, and cheer to the imprisoned, regardless of whether they are of the household of faith or not (Matt. 25: 31-46), to seek the peace of the city (Jer. 29: 7), and to render to the government "all their dues" (Rom. 13: 7). Considering these instructions of the Holy Spirit, we may break them down to at least four specifics:

**AN INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY BY PARTICIPATION  
IN SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

No one will challenge the statement that at least in some phases of this specific we have failed. One cannot but be reminded that we have not encouraged our members to take their place in the political life of the community. By and large, Lutherans have not made the impact upon American society which they should have made. We pastors particularly have often discouraged our people from taking an active political interest for fear that they might become soiled by the corruption of American politics. Is this some more evidence to lead us to believe that we lack confidence in the power of the Gospel and in the effectiveness of our own educational program? In a democracy a Christian certainly has the duty to identify himself with the State if the opportunity affords itself and thus spread effectively his "saltiness" and the power of his "light" in an otherwise dark and corrupt world.

The same may be said for encouraging our laity to participate in the charitable, cultural, and educational endeavors of the community and thus by their singular Christian philosophy of life bring men "to glorify their Father which is in heaven."

Another important objective in this area of living is

**THE REALIZATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYERFUL USE OF THE  
RIGHTS OF SUFFRAGE**

Not all our members can enter politics, but every adult member possessing the right of suffrage should be impressed with the sacred responsibility to use it in a prayerful manner. In a democracy the people are the government. On election day we make our selection of those whom we want to employ

as our representatives. Ours is the responsibility of every employer to get the best man for the job. We cannot, by default, allow only a part of the citizenry to choose. This is a sinful neglect of the Fourth Commandment, particularly when considered in the light of Romans 13. Yet we have been careless in the use of our voting rights, and we have too often failed to instruct our people to use their vote prayerfully in the light of their own Christian understanding of the issues involved.

#### **LOYAL CITIZENSHIP**

This is the next phase of the Christian's life in the community which needs emphasis. By this we include all that a Christian should do as a thoughtful law-abiding citizen, whether he is enjoying the great outdoors or the city parks, sitting behind the wheel of a car as he spins along the highways, or doing such a prosaic thing as paying his taxes. The Christian is a loyal citizen in peace as well as in war.

The final phases of the Christian's activity in the community should include

#### **LOVE AND SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING TOWARD PERSONS OF OTHER RACES, NATIONALITIES, AND RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS**

A Christian, above all, should strive to free himself from prejudices of every kind. We who recognize that there is one God who is over all; that we are one people through Adam; that all were destroyed in the same sin and are in the same condemnation; that all in like manner were redeemed by the same Savior through the same free grace; and that Christians adore the same Spirit who would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth, we Christians should be singularly free from prejudices. We know that prejudices are prejudgments caused by our failure to view all the facts. When persons are involved in our prejudice, it is a violation of the Eighth Commandment, which every Christian must try to shun.

The stereotypes of our literature, movies, and radios which make every Negro either a shuffling, drawling lackey or a dangerous rapist; every Italian a fruit peddler or a thug; every Irishman a policeman or a ward heeler; every German a jolly fool or a cold, cruel, calculating sadist; every Chinaman a laundryman or a knife-wielding tong leader; every Mexican a gay Don Juan or a sneak thief; every Jew a cheat or an in-

ternational banker, and so ad nauseam, all these feed our prejudices and prevent us from exercising our love and from having a sympathetic understanding of their problems and obstacles. For we must not only strive to free ourselves from prejudice, but ours must be a dynamic Christian love, which rises higher than a mere toleration of our fellow man.

Perhaps something needs to be said about those of other religious convictions, too. It is hard for us to separate the individual and his beliefs. Because a person may not be a Christian, or if a Christian, then not a Lutheran; or if a Lutheran, then not of the Synodical Conference, we have often left the impression that we must all but outlaw the individual in our community contacts. While we cannot tolerate error where Scripture clearly points to the truth, we must show our Christian love to all men. Where the opportunity affords itself, we will bear witness by word and, certainly, by Christian deeds of our own regenerated life. Too often incivility and downright bad manners are practiced under the guise of Christian love and confessionalism.

This, then, is the blueprint spread before us, the objectives of a full program of parish education. It is a big task that cannot be crammed into any single agency nor assigned to any one period of life. It is a lifelong program, with effort placed at every level of a person's life. It calls for a program for the child, the youth, and the adult. Out of it should grow the specific objectives of every educational agency in the church to assure proper co-ordination and the avoidance of any large gaps in the program of the parish. Through it the union of the Christian with his God is more firmly grounded as he grows in the knowledge of the truth, and by it he effects God's purpose in justifying us, for "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

