

# ISSUES...

## IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1977

Volume 11, Number 3



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### EDITOR'S NOTES

All of us are members of a society which encourages a life style that is in conflict with Christianity. It is a tragedy that many act as though they believe that there is no real difference between 1) living in harmony with the code of the people with whom they associate and within the law of the land and 2) living according to the precepts of Christianity. Contributing authors for this number of *Issues* have prepared materials which show that the difference between life-styles 1 and 2 are real and that it takes more to do the will of our Heavenly Father than is acceptable even to many church members in good standing.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mr. Cecil D. Andrus is Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. The Reverend Ronald W. Brusius is Director of Family Life Education for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Board of Parish Education. Mr. Charles Nuernberg is President of the State Bank of Young America, Minnesota. Other contributors are members of the Concordia faculty. Views expressed by the authors should not be regarded by the reader as representing the position of the Concordia faculty.

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### Values Education — A Problematic Area

There is presently an overt concern with values as a thrust in the American education system. Schools have always been concerned with values. Classical statements of the purposes of American education usually include some reference to transmitting values and value systems. This editorial proposes to identify four basic questions concerning values education and to provide a perspective within the parameters of Christian education.

1) Are some values and value systems more desirable than others? The era of the sixties with a very strong emphasis on personal liberties led some to believe that one value system was as good as another. Those who held to this view stated that it was highly presumptuous of one human being to impose his value system on another. Those human beings whose lives were ordered by value systems in conflict with national goals and Christian principles were to be "understood," or at least tolerated. There have been and will continue to be legitimate and harmless differences in value systems. Carried to extremes, such toleration of differences can lead to a society which understands but does not attempt to change the dangerous criminal whose value system allows for robbery or murder.

Some Christian groups have abandoned evangelistic and mission efforts believing that they have no right to pass judgment on the beliefs of another human being. Scripture clearly indicates that there is a better way. The Bible frequently presents listings of Christian virtues, sometimes in sharp contrast to those which are not Christian.

2) Can values be taught? Some highly regarded figures in American education have insisted that one cannot transmit values. They hold that one can only offer guidelines for values clarification as the individual becomes familiar with and possibly reorders his own value system.

To transmit values is admittedly difficult. The church strives constantly to improve its past performance. But to deny the possibility of transmitting values seems to deny the mandate of Scripture, "Train up a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." For one who does not care to accept the challenge of trans-

mitting values, questionable comfort might be found in rationalizing that it cannot be done.

3) Shall the school teach values? Recently the teachers of an elementary school faculty debated that question. After some discussion a consensus was reached. They concluded that the school had no right to invade this private dimension of life. The teachers would not engage in values education. It is difficult to comprehend how teachers can live with pupils for 180 days per year and escape teaching values. It seems that the real question is whether the school wishes to do this deliberately and systematically or merely incidentally.

The Christian educator has a clearly stated charge to be concerned about the values of the pupils. It would seem logical that he should want to carry out this charge with as much careful planning as possible.

4) Is values education synonymous with Christian education? Because there is so much overlap between Christian education and moral education, the possibility of confusion is ever present. Most Christian educators are not so naive as to think that they have a monopoly on a moral and decent life. Jewish persons have sometimes been insulted by the description of a loving act described as "the Christian thing to do." The popular song proclaims, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." Certainly, Christians ought to love one another, but loving one another is not what causes them to be Christian. So also it is quite possible to adhere to a moral life and to possess a highly desirable value system and yet remain quite unconverted to Christianity.

Teachers in the church have sometimes fallen into the trap of enthusiastically using instructional programs which promote clear thinking about values and then believing that they were involved in Christian education. It is quite possible to deal conscientiously with the issues of the energy crisis, pollution, equal rights, and responsible government, and yet remain totally unconvinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. There is reason to hope that the church will continue to address itself to values education, and that it will continue to do so within the framework of Christian education.

Lee Roy Holtzen

## editorials

### Why Has the Family Changed?

The family has changed. To deny this is to deny the existence of change itself. But changed how? For better? For worse? Or is this kind of value judgment impossible to make? Family sociologists point out that what we know as fact about the family and the actual moral behavior of individuals of the generations preceding us more than 50 years ago is very limited. Even what we think we know is covered with glowing idealizations and often downright untrue myths.

To discuss whether the family is better or worse, or whether the morality of individuals has deteriorated might be an exercise in futility. We can, however, discuss what has caused change in the family and the concern individuals have over the perceived effect these changes have had on the family and on the individual's attitude about morality and life styles.

It is generally agreed that there are four interlocking causal variables in family change: industrialization, urbanization, societal complexity, and modernization. These four contingencies are fact. We tend to think of the family as having had no control over these changes and as the recipient and victim of change. It was popular a few years ago to say that modernization dispersed the extended family geographically, gave us the isolated nuclear family, and caused a breakdown



in the family structure. There is no doubt that urbanization has given peers more influence over our children. It has made outside entertainment more accessible. Furthermore, societal complexity has caused the family to be dependent upon an industrial economy, politics, and the educational system.

Yet, the family is not just acted upon. The family is made up of individuals who very willingly have incorporated much of the good of modernization into their lives, and who at other times have resisted change when and where they felt necessary. Can we then lay the blame for the perceived changing values of the modern day family entirely upon outside forces, or do we tend to do so because we do not wish to take responsibility as individuals and as family units for the changes we view as negative?

Let us examine the changing family values from a microperspective rather than a macroperspective view. If we as individuals highly value our Christianity and the values that accompany it, what can we do to pass those values on to our children? A recent study of parent-child interaction and changing family values examined the variables which affected the conventionality of children's attitudes toward the family. They were more related to the nature of interaction between parents and children than any outside contingency. Children with radical attitudes and those reporting nonfamilial sources as important in their development of a life philosophy were most likely to be low on identification with their parents. The nonconventional children reported their relationship with their parents as one of conflict and/or indifference, which might be interpreted as both the cause and the effect of their failure to identify. The parents of these children lacked agreement on important values and they failed to exhibit a consistent set of values and norms. It was also found that nonconventional children did not have the reinforcement of other relatively conservative institutions such as the church. It was the children who failed to identify with their parents who found the prospect of communal living and group marriage attractive because they hoped it would provide the acceptance, security, and meaningful relationships which their own nuclear families failed to provide.

Let's stop placing blame on the outside world and begin to examine our own values and our own family and how we live out those values. Then let us look for ways in which we can effectively pass on those values we as individuals and families feel are important. Perhaps those in the helping professions should spend more time in learning how values are transmitted and in designing programs which will help the family of today cope with the changes a modern society imposes.

Barbara Brunworth

### What Is Your Vocation in Life?

Each of us has been assigned a vocation in our daily life. Are we serving the Lord fully in our vocation daily?

We have many opportunities to serve our Lord and Savior as laymen in the church and to help lead our fellowman each day as we go about our daily work. Many of us lay people have a great opportunity to witness each day, for we not only have business relationships with our fellow church members but also with many of the unchurched.

Each day in my profession as a banker I must deal with people and their finances. We find that both the church and unchurched have many problems due to money. Those who spend their money foolishly must be admonished, and this is not an easy task. The other extreme is those who build their entire life around how much they can save, but have forgotten from whom all their blessings have come. They too must be reminded in a Christian way of how foolish as stewards they really are. But as laymen of the church, do we always speak up, or are we afraid that the truth may hurt our business? If this is the case, then we are not helping our neighbor and fellowman.

People tend to be so engrossed in their personal affairs and so busy making a living that many times they do not take time to consider the source of their blessings. We must always remind our fellowman that God expects us to be good stewards of all that we have. We must never be so busy as to say "no" when asked to work for the church. We must all serve our Lord diligently while here on earth and spread His Word. We all need encouragement in church attendance, communion attendance and in studying God's Word daily.

Your personal life and sacrifices which you make to the Lord will be an example to others. Let your life shine forth as a good example. In business we often must give our assistance when people have problems which they do not wish to take to their pastor. In these matters it becomes very important to be a good listener and to offer our help in the best way possible. When dealing with financial matters it is very important to keep the problems confidential unless we feel a pastor must be called in for additional counseling, and we can arrange a meeting that is agreed upon by the parties involved.

Whatever our occupation in life, each of us can help someone each day. We may be able to bring someone back to their Lord and Savior by what we have said or done at a time when help was needed and assistance given. Don't let a day go past without using the opportunity to witness to your fellowman about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Charles Nuernberg



by Cecil D. Andrus

## Can I Be a Christian and Succeed in My Vocation?

Mention my vocation and many Americans immediately conjure up visions of smoke-filled rooms, illegal payoffs, and corrupt dealings. The cynical will say it is difficult or impossible to be a Christian and succeed in my vocation.

But when I am asked, "Can I be a Christian and succeed in my vocation?", there can be only one answer:

There is no way that I can succeed in my job *without* being a good Christian.

My vocation is politics. Although I spent some years in the business world, since 1960 I have been involved in politics as a state legislator, governor and now as a Cabinet member. What I have achieved during these 17 years can be attributed to religious faith, the support of a wonderful family, and the work of a great many friends who share my conviction that government should serve all the people and that we have a special obligation to preserve a large portion of God's blessings in natural and scenic resources for future generations. It is disturbing to me that "politics" is held in low esteem in today's society. To condemn all participants in "politics" is not only un-Christian, but it is also ignoring the selfless contributions of thousands of Americans who have served in public office with honor and often at considerable personal sacrifice.

### The Example of the Presidents

Virtually all of our Presidents have been devout men.

George Washington — "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen" — was an exceptional leader because of a nobility of character and a sense of integrity which came from his Christian background. He was both a professing and a participating Christian.

Whether or not he actually chopped down the cherry tree, the citizens of this fledgling nation had

good reason to believe that "he could not tell a lie." General Washington inspired a dispirited army and nation to continue fighting for what he knew to be right. And when the battles were won, when our infant nation was in danger of floundering, it was President Washington who served as our first elected National leader and who set standards every president since has been hard pressed to match.

When we think of Washington we do not think of ethical compromises or slick dealings or back-room deals. Neither do we think of a conqueror at the head of victorious armies. Many of us think of Washington as that silent, lonely figure kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge. We recall Washington's First Inaugural Address which thanks God for the opportunity to establish the new form of government and which asked Divine blessing for the Nation.

Another of our great Presidents, Abraham Lincoln, was not a member of any church, but he was most certainly a Christian. He was not only a student of the Bible, but one who sought to live by its precepts. His letters and speeches contain many references to the Bible.

The measure of Christianity, of course, cannot be determined by Bible quotations. More important was how Lincoln acted, both in his public and private life. As in the case of Washington, we find Lincoln acting in the ways of the Lord. Despite his reluctance to do so, he found himself, like David of old, leading a nation to war, not a war of conquest or power, but a war to save the nation and ultimately to free four million slaves. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." What more could a Christian have done to make Christ's teachings come to pass.

With the Civil War nearing its end, Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address closed with the immortal phrases: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see



the right . . ." In an era where retribution was the byword, in a time when conquering leaders were expected to punish the conquered, Lincoln sought to translate Christian principle into national policy to restore the brotherhood of both man and Nation.

In 1799 President John Adams, as strong in his faith as the granite hills of his native Quincy, Massachusetts, found himself in a moral dilemma. The nation was involved in an undeclared but shooting war with France. Our young nation had been insulted by one of the strongest nations of the world, and many people were clamoring for a declaration of war. President Adams' party was facing the upcoming election of 1800 with little chance of winning. If he asked for war, as the leaders of his party insisted, the chance for re-election of Adams and the party would improve immeasurably.

What did this man of God do? He sent new commissioners and made peace with France. Well, one might ask, "What does this prove — he lost the election?" Yes, he lost to Thomas Jefferson, but he had won a moral victory and averted unnecessary bloodshed. Adams asked that the only inscription on his tombstone be: "Here lies John Adams who took upon himself the responsibility for peace with France."

Was Adams a success or a failure?

It might be argued that those were earlier days, when things were simpler, and the choices were more clear-cut. While Washington, Adams, and Lincoln might disagree with that evaluation, let us look at more recent times, the 1976 presidential election. Let us look at the two men who were accorded the highest honor the nation could bestow. Certainly one would have to agree that the presidential nomination is a mark of success in that vocation. What kind of people did the two parties select as their standard bearers?

Gerald Ford, after many years in Congress, was selected as vice-president in 1973. Less than a year later he was catapulted into the White House during one of the most traumatic periods in American history. Where did this ex-Congressman get his strength to meet the challenge? From his religion which was a part of him for many years. Even when he was a relatively unknown Representative, he was part of a Congressional prayer group. It was not one of the high-powered, well-advertised, TV-covered sessions for all the world to watch, but a quiet meeting in a remote office, where a bi-partisan group knelt to ask their God for strength and wisdom to meet the problems of the nation.

From this kind of faith Gerald Ford met head-on the problems of our nation. Many disagreed with some of his ideas (I am one of them), but no one questioned his sincere dedication or his Christian approach. Political friends and foes, including his opponent in the election, have praised his devotion and sincerity.

There are few in the Nation not acquainted with the religious views of President Jimmy Carter. Much has been written of his Sunday School teaching and personal prayers. His simple, unabashed statements of his belief in God have become a good example for many Christians who previously were embarrassed to say aloud what they feel in their hearts. We would all be greater missionaries, in the true sense of the word, if we would follow his example.

President Carter took a portion of the Scripture, Micah 6:8, as the theme of his Inaugural Address: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

Then the new President rejected the splendor of the presidential limousine so that he could walk from the Capitol to the White House, not in a triumphal procession, but in a humble walk with his wife, children, and symbolically with all the American people.

In the 1976 election we had two dedicated Christians, divided on many issues, but united on the basic premise of a God-directed life. Although only one could win the election, both have served as President of the United States. Obviously, a Christian can succeed in politics and government.

#### Good vs. Evil in Government

So far I have discussed only Presidents. How about at the lower levels of politics and government? Do the same successes apply in the City Hall, Courthouse, State Capitol and Congress?

I have seen the "short-cutters" work in politics. There are those whose word is not good, who will promise one thing and then do another. Sometimes, in the short run, they will be successful and reach a position of some strength and power. But I have yet to see one of them succeed in the long run. Broken promises and false declarations have a way of catching up with politicians.

It is not a matter of partisanship. Some of the men and women with whom I have had the strongest bonds of confidence were of the opposite party and far from me on the political spectrum. When a matter came before the State Legislature that was vital, I could go to these people and ask for support. If they agreed to help, I knew they would be there when needed.

There are practices that go on in politics, as well as other fields, which the Christian must abhor, but over which he seems to have little control. What should a Christian do in politics when he sees wrong-doing? Should he ignore it? Should he say that since he is not involved it is none of his business? That hardly seems the Christian way.

One alternative is to broadcast the misdeeds to the world, and perhaps secure publicity for himself. The world might look upon him as a great reformer and

perhaps reward him with higher office. In that case, is the office holder thinking of the good of the community or of his own advancement? Is this the Christian way? In some cases it is the only way. But often a quiet talk pointing out to a participant that he is getting involved in something that is not right will correct the situation. The Lord tells us to hate the sin, but to love the sinner. Perhaps at times we can not only prevent a wrong action, but also save a fellow human being from going wrong.

Sometimes it is not possible by any of these means to prevent or halt wrong doing. One may have to fight it in the committees, on the floor of the legislature or wherever. And the Christian may lose the fight. But what he must never do is to give up the fight. Evil has always existed and will always continue to exist. The Christian must learn to live with its existence, but not to accept it as normal or correct. One must constantly be on guard against a complacency which equates what is in existence with what is right.

#### Executive Decisions and Christian Ethics

I have been discussing my personal experiences mostly in the legislature. Let me now look at some of the same questions from my six years as governor of a state and my much briefer time as Secretary of the Interior.

For one thing, the problems are much more complex at the executive level where I alone must make important decisions. Often there are a number of alternatives, and they are not labeled as "moral" or "immoral." Certainly, knowledge of the subject matter is important here, and without it the executive is lost, but here also is a place for Christian ethics. In order to make a decision, the executive must evaluate the effect the various alternatives would have. Which will do the most good for the most people? These are the times when the Christian draws on prayer and seeks that extra strength that comes from faith in God. For example, I am constantly faced with questions concerning the proper use of natural resources. Decisions must be made as to which can be used in what manner and to what extent. Usually there are valid arguments for several points of view, but after the experts have spoken, there are still questions as to which is the best. I must decide with what wisdom God gives me. Without that, I might as well draw papers out of a hat.

One of my predecessors in this office was faced with a dilemma. The nation at that time had a surplus of helium and could benefit from the economics of selling it. However, when the application came from Nazi Germany to purchase helium he refused to permit the sale. In his opinion a nation that was bent on world conquest and that was persecuting a minority religion should not have access to our valuable resources. This is what I mean by a moral decision.

#### Citizenship As Every Christian's Vocation

One of the things that makes my vocation different than others is the fact that it is, indirectly, everyone's vocation. The average Christian may have only a minimal interest in how a hardware company, or a major corporation, or a dairy is run. Unless one is a stock holder, employee, or makes considerable use of the product, he seldom pays attention or has anything to say, other than to complain when prices are too high.

But we are all stockholders, employees and consumers of the government. One may have no responsibility to watch how responsive a corporation's board of directors is to the general good, but one certainly does have a responsibility for monitoring the Board of Education, the City Council, or the other groups that make decisions that directly and vitally affect every day life.

This is where the Christian congregation has a vital role to play. Studying the issues and candidates in an election is only a beginning. The real question is how elected officials act when they are in office. Every citizen has a moral obligation to monitor what they do.

I agree that no church, as such, has a place in politics anymore than politics has a place in the church. But I do contend that every Christian has a place in politics, not necessarily as an office holder but as a participant in controlling government. In our form of government the final decisions are those of the people.

If the great body of our citizens were to fail to devote a portion of their attention and energy to the issues and to the political process, our system of government would deteriorate and there would cease to be the opportunity for true Christians to succeed in politics. But this is not going to happen. Despite the disillusionment of Watergate and public opinion polls which indicate a low regard for some political institutions, I have confidence that the American people will continue putting forth the effort to demand honesty, integrity and high ethical standards in their political leaders.

Christians across this country must and will lead in the efforts to maintain and raise these standards. The question, "Can I be a Christian and succeed in my vocation?" has been answered affirmatively in my case only because of the support of a great many people. The extent to which this question can be answered affirmatively by others in my vocation rests squarely with the American people.



# WHEN IS A FAMILY CHRISTIAN



by Ronald W. Brusius

A little girl was on her school playground when she noticed that two other children were fighting. She walked over to the struggling children and said to them, "Are you Christians?" They said, "Yes." She said to them "You don't act like it." The two children stopped fighting.

When is a family Christian? When it acts like it? When it stops fighting? How do we tell a Christian family today? Is the Christian family today any different from the Christian family of the First Century, or even from the family which looked forward to the coming of Christ? Is there "an ideal" Christian family? Do we rate one Christian family over against another? What does a Christian family do that is so different from just any other family in the society? Sometimes children of families where one or more of the people are fulltime workers in the church take a lot of kidding about what goes on in their homes. They are asked such questions as "What do your mother and dad do at home; do they go around praying all of the time?" The implication, of course, is that there is something different about the professional worker's home than about the average lay person's home.

As one observes families today, it seems that there are no boundaries, no standards. Any lifestyle goes, any value system is all right. Cain's question "Am I my brother's keeper?" has been carried through to the ultimate and is reflected in a "live and let live" philosophy. Christian pastors, teachers and DCE's find themselves faced with family situations in their schools and congregations which seem to indicate that there is no such thing as a Christian life anymore.

We were taught that marriage was a lifetime commitment of one man to one woman; that man

and woman became husband and wife and would also assume the role of mother and father. Together they would raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. As they drew closer to their Lord, they would also develop loyalties for their home, for their church, for their school, and for their country. Of course, there were problems with those families, too, but they were problems that could be worked out easily because there were answers to the questions. There was a hierarchy — a chain of command.

## Today's Social Order

Today that social order has been upset. We can no longer take for granted that the family is husband, wife, and their children. Instead, the unit may be mother and children, father and children, or even husband and wife and no children. The idea of a life-long commitment of one individual to another has seemed to pass into history. "Until death do us part" has become "until the spark of love has fled from our relationship." In the recent past, congregations spent time in divorce cases trying to establish the guilt of one party and the innocence of the other party. Today many areas of the country have "no fault" divorce. With it we are seeing "if at first you don't succeed, try and try again." Not try to make your relationship with *that* person work, but try it with another person. In addition to that, we also have the people who are not remarrying, but rather choosing to live as single persons because having to commit yourself to another person is too stifling.

The family isn't the only institution that is threatened. All of our basic institutions appear to be in trouble. Before we plunge into the depths of despair, though, we have to look back into history

and see what was happening. Have we ever been in such sad condition before?

## An Historical Perspective

As Luther looked at the church, he said that it wore the face of a sinner. Travel through the pages of Scripture and you will see time after time that God is trying to turn His people around, point them back to Him. St. Paul admonishes those whom he loves. He doesn't lord it over them; he doesn't constantly tell them how much better he is than they are or how they don't have a chance for succeeding. Quite on the contrary, he tries to point them back into the right direction, sometimes gently, sometimes not so gently, sometimes very firmly. He also lets them know that he has shortcomings, that he doesn't always make the right choice, that he has had a checkered past, that he worked against God, even when he thought he was serving Him. One of the comforts that we can draw from Scripture is not how *good* the people of the Old or New Testament were, but how *bad* they were and how loving their God was to them.

When we look at Christian families, we can apply the same comments as Luther did to the church. We can say that the families wear the face of sinners. Because of that face we are constantly being reminded of our shortcomings as people, as parents, as children, and as educators who deal with those people. It is easy to fall into the trap of remorse and guilt over what we aren't instead of marveling at what we are, what has been done for us and what we are becoming.

## Characteristics of Christian Families

In *Helping Families Through the Church*, Oscar Feucht attempts to answer the question "What is the Nature of the Christian Home?" He says that generally as we attempt to answer the question when is a home Christian, we do it by saying when certain things are done. So if there are table prayers, family prayers, if they read the *Bible* together, they are Christian. One time an elderly lady in a nursing home was trying to tell me how Christian her home had been and she said to me "You'll have to see our family Bible. I keep it right in the living room on a table and I dust it every week." She was rating her family as very Christian because she kept the Bible dusted. We so easily fall into rating traps. The Pharisee rated when he said "Thank God I'm not like other men, because I do all these great things for you, O God." Some have spoken of active and inactive believers. That is as inconsistent as being just a little bit pregnant. You are either pregnant or you are not. You are either a Christian or you are not a Christian. You are either wheat or chaff, and the ultimate division of the wheat from the chaff is God's responsibility.

When is a family Christian? When the family members are Christian. That's simplistic though, isn't

it? We are using that which we are attempting to define as the definers themselves. When is a family Christian? A family is Christian when it is a unit of individuals who are committed to Jesus Christ and to each other through their mutual commitment to Jesus Christ. Oscar Feucht chose to deal with these characteristics of the Christian home: "A common faith in Jesus, a Christian conception of marriage, a Christian attitude toward parenthood, Christian teaching and guidance, Christian harmony and right relations, accepting God's values and God's will, a Christian atmosphere." If you stop and look seriously at the list of characteristics, you can feel yourself convicted. You can be overcome by guilt and by shame. Probably there's not a point on that list that is not under attack today.

It seems that very often families are run on a trial and error basis, that we go from mistake to mistake. The family structure looks ever so fragile. It seems as if it is constantly being buffeted around, as if it is constantly being reshaped. Instead of growth we see deterioration, deterioration in the husband-wife relationship and deterioration in the parent-child relationship. Before we become overcome with despair, we have to look at what God has planned for us.

## The Importance of Growth

He said it is not good that man should be alone. He brought us together as male and female in the perfect relationship. He intended that we should grow together. When that growth process was interrupted He made the promise that things would be restored. He warned us of the difficulties we would have as people, but He gave us the Unifier, and that Unifier is Jesus Christ. And so God intends us to grow.

Reading through the Scriptures is a growing experience. God hasn't set any impossible goals for us because He has taken the impossible upon Himself. Through the power of His Holy Spirit He has given us Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and as our model. He has given us tremendous potential, even in our sin-weakened condition. He tells us that if we have faith as a mustard seed, we can move mountains. One of the mountains that we're faced with moving today is "how do we get along with each other?" We are tempted to ask "Can anything good come out of the present situation?"

Several years ago Billy Graham said that if God doesn't destroy the United States, He is going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. Instead of saying the United States must be destroyed because of its sin, we should all become Abrahams and pray for our country. We should commit ourselves, not to destruction, but to growth.

This is a year in which we as a Synod remind ourselves that we are growing in Christ. It's an exciting process to watch a little child grow, to see it grow physically, emotionally and psychologically. There is joy as a child recognizes sounds, as a child



finds a hand and attempts to get that hand into a mouth, as a child tries to bring together all the various parts. Instead of helplessness and hopelessness there is a simple beauty about it. Life is a maturation process. It's an exciting journey through various stages. Growth can be continuous. It doesn't stop at a certain period. How often haven't we heard somebody say, "I wish I would've taken a course on that in college." The implication is that learning takes place only in a formal setting. We are constantly learning things and so we can constantly be growing also.

The Christian model is a model which is predicated on growth. A Christian has to reach out and that reaching out can't stop, just as forgiving can't stop. How often do we forgive? When do we reach our limit? That was the question that Peter asked and the reply that he received from Jesus Christ was that there is no limit. We know enough about people today to know that they can continue to grow. Granted, not physically, but the process continues. It's time we give up the old cliché, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," because we can constantly be learning. St. Paul bemoaned the fact that there were those who should have been eating a meat diet and were still content to feed on milk. Those who limit themselves to that diet are missing out on a lot of exciting things. If we limit our study of the Word to that which we learned in confirmation class or that which we learned in courses in college or a seminary instead of constantly studying and probing and growing ourselves, we are stuck on milk and we will be giving our people milk.

First of all, we have to commit ourselves to very specific growth plans and then we have to be constantly prodding and urging those around us in growth attempts. Very often I find that I enjoy certain writers and speakers because they agree with the way I already think. They don't challenge me into any new experiences. There's the sad story told in jest about a man who is asked what he believes. His answer is that he believes what his church believes. When he is asked to explain what that is, his reply is "You'll have to go and ask my minister." Maybe he had known at one time what he believed; maybe he hadn't. Whatever the case, he has stopped taking in any food. He isn't growing. He is starving.

#### The Church's Role in Family Growth

When it comes to feeding Christian families today, there is no need to subsist on a starvation diet. We do have some solutions for the obstacles that face us. The church is right in the middle of a movement which is designed to improve the quality of human interaction. A great proportion of marriage and family enrichment programming is originating and being offered through religious organizations. It is estimated that already half a million couples have

gone through some sort of marriage enrichment experience.

Proponents of enrichment and encounter are gripped with an evangelical zeal which compels them to witness to others about the benefits that are to be gained. That fervor can be linked to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 which calls upon us to make disciples, teach, and baptize. Many churches, while wanting to carry out that exhortation, have found themselves hampered because their members were not seen as outgoing enough. Barriers seem to be erected which prevent communication within the congregation so that evangelism to the community becomes extremely difficult. Probably those barriers are present, too, in the family structures of the individual units which make up the parish. A systematic educational effort has to be made to break down those walls.

That effort should begin within the families of the professional workers and extend to every family in the congregation. The Marriage Education and Counseling Seminars presently offered by Synod are an excellent way to enrich workers both professionally and personally. There are many enrichment experiences available also which are suitable for couples and whole families and which can be helpful as starting points for renewal of the units and through the units for renewal of the whole congregation.

In order to have lasting effects, however, there must be a balanced program and follow-through. People who have been renewed feel let down when there is nothing else for them. A good effort should include enrichment, couples communication, Parent Effectiveness Training, Bible study, growth groups, and support groups. All of the resources to accomplish this are available today. We have always had the command, the power through the Holy Spirit, and the example and direction in Holy Scripture as we see our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we have the interactional tools which can aid us in doing what we so earnestly desire to do as Christian people living together. We want to live as brothers and sisters loving ourselves and each other as our Lord has loved us.

As we work with people in families we can move from asking "When is a family Christian?" to "How can we better help families to discover or rediscover their potential as Christians?" It may sound difficult, but it really is relatively simple because we already have all of the tools available to us.

# THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS VALUES

by E. George Becker

David Brower, founder and president of the Friends of the Earth Foundation, a tax-deductible organization devoted to environmental research and education, is a man of conviction and commitment. He believes that the most important thing young people can do to preserve the environment is to make room for what he calls "conservation consciousness" in their careers.

Brower travels the length and breadth of America and to other parts of the world proclaiming his doctrine and forecasting like a prophet what he considers to be the plight of the human race if mankind refuses to heed his warnings. He and his fellow "friends of the earth" predict that America's "new god" of greed and indifference requires sacrifices of nature which will not allow man to focus in comfortably on the twenty-first century.

Brower has been described by one of his cohorts, Garrett Hardin, as a "charismatic leader of crusades for the liberation of the temple of nature from its oppressors; archbishop of the church of the wilderness; archdeacon of the cathedral of the environment; archenemy of all who would sell our heritage in nature for a mess of pottage and, by universal and unchallenged acclaim, the first, the greatest, and indeed the only archdruid."<sup>1</sup>

#### Mission Impossible

Brower has tackled what he regards as an almost impossible task. Many human beings don't seem to get all fired up about putting out the fires in the forests or cleaning up the rivers and the oceans of the world.

The task of the church is similar. It has an assignment which the early Christians must have considered to be impossible. Christ's disciples were called to become conquerors for Christ through the Gospel. Perhaps the task is even greater today. After 2000 years of growth and expansion the church is

plagued with questions such as these: Is the Gospel the motivating power in the life of the average church member? and How can a local congregation raise the values of its members to the standards presented in the Scriptures?

An individual church member can recognize his own personal worth only in the mission assigned to him. The mission centers in that first command of our Lord to "go and share the Gospel — making disciples by baptizing."<sup>2</sup> This was the supreme statement of our Lord directly related to the life and destiny of that new community of faith which the Apostles spoke of as the Body of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Members of that first congregation understood this commission. Each member took it seriously. It became the centrifugal force of the primitive church. Whether the average member of the contemporary church understands this mission is by no means a moot question.

Some people view the church as a social institution. The sociologist studies it as a social or cultural given. When viewed in this perspective, the church runs parallel to the school system, the government and the family. Whatever his personal religious convictions, the social scientist is primarily concerned with the societal functions of the church when he engages in descriptive and scientific study. In fact, some students of the sociology of religion never consider the church as an object of faith because they get caught up in the basic premises of scientific study to the exclusion of personal faith and commitment. They would be inclined to agree with those who suggest that religious doctrine is primarily an outgrowth or culmination of the religious group and its functional patterns.<sup>4</sup>

As members of the congregation we must be aware of the social relations surrounding the church and of the role it plays in society. We must recognize the problems of class, prejudice, and indifference that plague the world with unnecessary human bondage. We ought to remember from our reading of history



that most civilizations have never been sympathetic toward the personal problems of mankind.

As Fenn points out, it appears to be characteristic of civilizations, and particularly modern societies, to transform questions of ultimate concern into propositions of proper management. He notes:

The "quality of life" in modern societies, at the least a very crucial issue in the 1970's, is likely to be defined in terms of facts which can be verified and performances which can be predicted. Health care, to take a less obvious example, may increasingly be discussed less in value-laden terms, such as the "sacred" doctor-patient relationship, than in terms of the effective delivery of medical services to the entire population.<sup>5</sup>

This transformation has infected the church. The so-called "practical business" of the congregation too often takes precedence over the "care of souls." The technological age of which we are a part has moved its impersonal forces into our homes, the pulpit, and the pew. The "quality of life" in modern churches and among its membership is also very likely to be defined in terms of mere "facts" that can be scientifically verified and performances which can be predicted statistically. Even the sacred counselor-client relationship which ought to exist between pastor and people, or for that matter between fellow-member and fellow-member, too often is expressed in terms of effective delivery of services to the "organization."

The study of beliefs as a functional dimension in the emerging social structure of a religious group may be a sound approach for the person interested in the scientific study of religion. But such an approach leaves little room for the Biblical principle that God has saved us and called us by the Gospel according to His will rather than our own performances and accomplishments and made us members of the body of Christ. Somewhere along that line which runs as a continuum between the extremes of life's problems, the sons and daughters of God must recognize the community of believers for what it is, men and women of faith who have been called for the purpose of helping the world to overcome its problems, the greatest of all still remaining that of man's relationship with his Creator.

#### Commitment Unlimited

But this requires commitment, a degree of commitment which is significantly more than many Christians recognize. In such commitment one's own personal time is of the essence. Talents and abilities must be shared and strenuously exercised. And then there is the pledge of one's financial resources.

Glock and Stark assert that "in the final analysis, the nature, the significance, and perhaps even the destiny of the church is determined by the kind and degree of commitment which it expects and receives from its parishoners."<sup>6</sup> They go on to say that there must be some degree of consensus if the church is to exist at all. Even at the parish level, they explain,

incipient disagreement can be great enough to limit seriously the kind and amount of authority which the church seeks to have and is capable of exercising in both the lives of its parishoners and in the life of the community-at-large.<sup>7</sup>

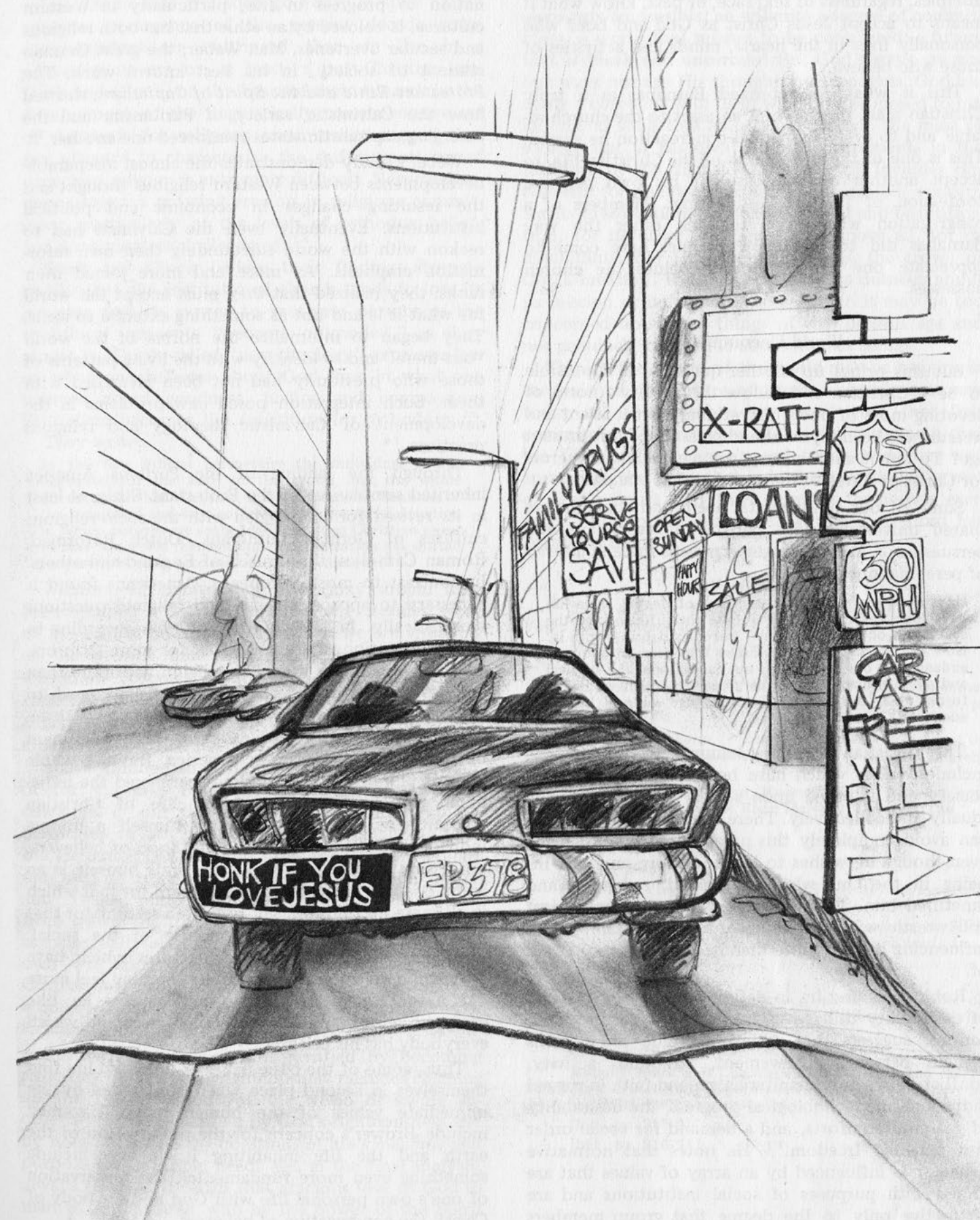
If we assume that the "authority" to which Glock and Stark allude is the Word of God, there ought to be a desire on the part of every believer to respond with a degree of commitment that would minimize the need for overt and extraneous discipline. In fact, the Word itself would serve as the discipline for that community of believers which constitutes the body of Christ in a given place. The members of a local congregation must help each other to cope with the demands upon their own personal lives by the various segments of society. Each member must be personally committed to the cause of the Gospel if the church is to grow in the grace and the wisdom of her Lord so that the world about her can recognize the body of Christ for what it really is.

One of the finest examples of personal commitment from the New Testament Scriptures is that of Barnabas. In spite of his weaker moments, he was one of the very first Christians who was willing to part with his earthly wealth and share it with the church. This he did honestly, not like Ananias and Sapphira who pretended to give more than they actually did. Barnabas shared, not only his treasure, but his abilities and talents, becoming with Paul one of the first great missionaries to the gentile world.<sup>8</sup>

But what is most significant about the activities of Barnabas, at least at this point in his life, is that he surrendered himself completely to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For the sake of the Gospel and the cause of the church Barnabas was willing to extend the hand of friendship, trust and brotherliness to a man like Saul of Tarsus. This was a man whom Barnabas had known only by reputation. And what a reputation it was! Saul of Tarsus: the church's most vehement enemy; a real Christ-hater and a decided Christ-killer; the "hit-man" for the Jerusalem "syndicate"; "enemy No. 1" of the church; the man of whom even the apostles were afraid.<sup>9</sup>

It is at this point in the history of the church that Barnabas utilized one of his extraordinary gifts: to be a brother. He was willing to accept Saul as a brother and to become his spokesman and sponsor before the Apostles. Barnabas saw no need to demand some kind of formal document, published declaration, or further credentials, legitimate though such requests may have been under the circumstances. He took Saul at his word because he believed that Saul's word was as good as his own.

But the trust of Barnabas was even more objective. This man trusted all of his brothers and sisters in the faith. He could never have helped Saul if he had mistrusted his fellow-disciples. As he faced the Apostles he must have believed that their sympathies and sentiments would be swayed more by the love for





their Lord than by their own human instincts regarding a mass killer. Barnabas knew what God had done for him and he apparently believed that all disciples, regardless of sex, race, or past, know what it means to accept Jesus Christ as God and Lord who personally lives in the hearts, minds and activities of those who believe.

This is what characterized Barnabas as a truly Christian man, making him an asset to the church-at-large and to every individual congregation he served. This is one of the ingredients of the Christian life, to accept another on the basis of his own personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Members of a congregation who relate to each other the way Barnabas did to his fellow-disciples have come to appreciate one of the greatest values the church possesses.

### World Unconquered

But this brings up another question. Is it possible to be a Christian and follow the society's norm of devoting most of one's discretionary time, talent and treasure to the enjoyment and pleasure of this present age? To put it another way, are we really conquerors for Christ or slaves to the world and its standards?

Some of our fundamental needs and concerns are shared universally with persons of every age and persuasion. J. Milton Yinger expresses these in a series of perennial questions:

How shall we respond to the fact of death? Does life have some central meaning despite the suffering and the succession of frustrations and tragedies it brings with it? How can we deal with the forces that press in upon us, endangering our livelihood, our health, and the survival and smooth operation of the groups in which we live — forces that our empirical knowledge cannot handle adequately?<sup>10</sup>

The Christian's Weltanschauung, or world view, includes values which have been fused by the total society and imposed upon society's members individually and collectively. There is no way the Christian can avoid completely this paradoxical style of living even though he wishes to live and move and have his being in the One who has created, redeemed and sanctified him. The new person in Jesus Christ must still wrestle with the values of the old Adam, values influencing him far more than he is consciously aware of.

Robin Williams Jr., in defining values as standards of desirability utilized as justifications for proposed actions, suggests that American value orientations include personal achievement, strenuous activity, conflict between humanitarianism and faith in rugged individualism, technological progress, the desirability of material comforts, and a demand for social order and personal freedom.<sup>11</sup> He notes that normative behavior is influenced by an array of values that are linked with purposes of social institutions and are distinctive only to the degree that group members

agree that such norms should be supported, applied and enforced.<sup>12</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that the Christian's determination to progress in life, particularly in Western cultures, is colored by an ethic that has both religious and secular overtones. Max Weber, the great German student of society, in his best known work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, showed how the Calvinistic variety of Puritanism and the emerging capitalistic states reinforced one another.<sup>13</sup>

Weber's study demonstrates the almost inseparable developments between Western religious thought and the resulting changes in economic and political institutions. Eventually even the Calvinists had to reckon with the world surrounding their own reformation emphasis. As more and more joined their ranks, they realized that they must accept the world for what it is and not as something external to itself. They began to internalize the norms of the world "out there" and to identify with the living patterns of those who previously had not been identified with them. Such integration posed new problems in the development of Calvinistic theology and religious practices.<sup>14</sup>

Through the landing of the Puritans America inherited semblances of the Protestant Ethic, at least in its revised forms, mingled with the socio-religious cultures of German Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholics, the Church of England and others. In contrast to most Europeans, Americans found it necessary to approach social and religious questions pluralistically. In this country, at least according to the Constitution, there was room for more than one ethnic group, more than one religion and more than one life-style. From one perspective this approach to the establishment of social relationships and structures has proved to be a blessing in the development of the Christian church in America. But the whole idea of pluralism has sometimes perplexed the individual who wishes to live the life of Christian commitment. He may consider himself a unique individual, a member of the priesthood of believers, possessing infinite value. But he finds himself in an arena of value struggles. In his concern for that which is ultimate he finds himself too often settling for that which is more immediate because of the social, economic and even religious pressures which have been imposed upon him. At times, he may feel more like a tool of society which suggests that he, like everyone else, is a part of that mass in which everybody has his price.

Thus, some of the basic issues of faith and life find themselves in second place when confronted by the immediate values of the human race. This may include Brower's concern for the preservation of the earth and the life inhabiting it. It may include something even more fundamental, the preservation of one's own personal life with God and the body of Christ, the congregation of believers.

### Future Uncertain

To say the least, this era of pessimism in which the modern Christian finds himself is not to be viewed as a bad dream that will soon go away. In spite of the religious resurgence of the present decade some commentators are convinced that we live in a post-religious era or, at least, a post-Christian era. Stark and Glock, on the basis of their research in the development of the linguistically comprehensive set of standards for religious commitment suggest that any attempt to characterize the shifting patterns of American religion is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, they project a growing erosion in religious commitment, particularly at the levels of orthodox beliefs and denominational allegiance.<sup>15</sup>

Stark and Glock believe their findings strongly testify that the institutional church tends to lose its meaning and its power to motivate persons as the traditional concepts "become outmoded," as they phrase it. The so-called "new theology" expresses less of what one believes about God than in what one believes about goodness, justice and compassion. Ethicalism becomes the substitute for orthodoxy.<sup>16</sup>

They write:

In the new ethical perspective the individual is not neglected for the sake of the group, but the whole question of what is ethical is freed from the confines of the individual and seen as integral to the social situation in which persons are embedded. The long Christian quest to save the world through individual salvation has shifted to questions of how to reform society directly.<sup>17</sup>

Whether all elements of orthodoxy should have been retained is not the question here. Besides, some of the ethical questions with which we are wrestling at the present time are long overdue. But when ethicalism becomes a substitute for basic Christian confession, then both the corporate and the local church must begin to ask some serious questions about statement of purpose and commitments made.

Man's kindness to man, purely for the sake of man, or for the sake of kindness, is one of the great delusions of our time. Nor is it supported by the Scriptures or any Biblical tradition. Beginning with the encounters of Cain and Abel, the Scriptures relate one human tragedy after another bent upon hatred and cruelty, both upon the part of the enemy and from within the fold. The sins of man are recognized as being truly original, original in the sense of man's own will and determination to revolt against his Creator, and in the sense of being characteristic of all human existence and not merely an accidental loss of virtue.

Furthermore, man is not justified by becoming righteous, even if that righteousness includes cleaning up the neighborhoods of the world or saving another's life. He is justified by God's righteousness and by none other. So the questions of life's meaning and purpose and resulting needs are, in the final analysis, always resolved through that gracious love of God to man in Jesus Christ who by the power of the Spirit

enables one who believes to serve with commitment and dedication.

The challenges of the Christian facing the twenty-first century may appear to be devastating: a mission seemingly impossible; an unlimited degree of commitment; a world that refuses to be conquered; a future that is bleak and uncertain! But God's ways are not our ways nor are His thoughts our thoughts. God has made a covenant with us in which He proposed to use us, not as tools that so often get lost in the mass of society but as His own personal instruments in the fulfilling of His divine will. God's will includes our concern for the world which God created, concern for its preservation, for its enrichment and beautification, for its order and peace, and above all, for its inhabitants, our fellow-human beings, the crown of God's creation. If the local church is dubious about its mission or its relative success, then it may be too concerned about the things of this present age and not genuinely concerned about human beings.

Though the future of the world may be hanging in the balance, the future of Christ's church is as sure today as it was when the Lord gave that first commission. The essential at this point in time is that the believers who are around today recognize and appreciate the hope that is in them. With the power of God's Spirit they must commit themselves even more fully to the cause with which their Lord has entrusted them.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (New York: Farrer, Strans and Giroux, Inc., 1971), pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. 1:22-23.

<sup>4</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1954), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Richard K. Fenn, "Toward A New Sociology of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (March, 1972), pp. 16-32.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 4:36-37; 13:1-3.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 9:26-27.

<sup>10</sup> J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Robin M. Williams, Jr., *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), pp. 452-98.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Translated by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 35-40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-46.

<sup>15</sup> Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 204-210.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-217.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.



**CHRISTIANITY AND REAL LIFE**, by William E. Diehl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

The author, manager of sales for a large steel corporation and a member of the Executive Council of the Lutheran Church in America, deals with these two gaps: the gap between what is Sunday behavior and behavior throughout the rest of the week, and the gap between what the church says the role of Christian laypersons should be in the world and what the church does to support that role. What is refreshing about this book on the ministry of the laity is that a member of the laity, not a clergyman, is writing it.

After citing several examples of the problem that faces the laity as its members attempt to carry out the Christian mission, Diehl talks about the rhythm of the Christian life. That is the rhythm of "come" and "go." The people of God are called to *come* to Christ so that He can empower them to *go* forth as His disciples into the world where they find themselves. But, as Diehl notes, most of the programs of the mainline Christian denominations relate to the "come" side of the rhythm and very few of their programs provide guidance and direction for Christians who want to go forth and live their Christianity in the work-a-day world. Furthermore, when denominations and congregations stress the "come" side of the rhythm, the result is church and denominational growth. But when the "go" side of the rhythm is stressed, the result is the scattering of individuals and the loss of institutional growth. In other words, there is little incentive for denominations and congregations and pastors and lay leaders to emphasize the "go" side of the rhythm — and that contributes to the frustration which Diehl has experienced in his church world.

In the struggle to relate Christianity to "real life," Diehl suggests that Luther's understanding of the priesthood of all believers should be rediscovered and implemented. That suggestion then leads Diehl to note that Christian people have difficulty in understanding roles and resources properly. The pastor has an understanding of his own role — and that is to *gather people* about Word and Sacrament. The parish pastor is also a resource for the laity as they attempt to be the people of God in society. But the problem is that the clergyman is not a helpful resource to the laity in this respect because he usually does not understand the world in which the laity live. Diehl concludes this portion of his analysis by saying that the laity itself must provide its own resources in the effort to relate Christianity to "real life."

Diehl provides various suggestions for the laity. He suggests that the ministry of the "aid man" is needed. The "aid man" concept is borrowed from Diehl's experience as a medic in World War II: the aid

man was the first man on the scene of an injury and provided the preliminary diagnosis and treatment. What is needed, says Diehl, is lay people who are available and capable of listening, who have sufficient training so that they can determine the nature and extent of a problem, who know how to give direct aid where that is appropriate, and who are supportive in their attitude as they assist the troubled. In the remainder of the book, Diehl discusses the ways in which the laity can minister to one another in the world of "real life."

In chapter 6, "The Ministry of Words," Diehl has some pointed things to say to the church as the doer of theology. Among other things, Diehl declares that the church has neglected badly that one area of our culture which belongs most definitely to the church: the church has neglected the doing of theology! The discussion of this matter may tempt the reader to enter into dialogue with Diehl. Be that as it may, Diehl does have a point that is worth stressing. While others may challenge the right of the church to meddle in various social, economic, or political matters, no one can challenge the church's right to do theology! What Diehl sees is a dearth of theology, the kind of theology that helps the laity understand what it means to be scattered in the world doing the work of the Lord. Perhaps Diehl's comments — and his prodding — will help to rectify the situation.

This is an intriguing little book. It challenges. It irritates. It excites. It is a perspective from outside the clerical circle. The church needs that perspective — as well as the clerical perspective. While the book contains no pat solutions to the problem it is addressing, it does challenge the reader to think and reflect. If you are looking for a use for this little book, may I suggest that it be used as a textbook for some adult Christian education class to stimulate members of the laity to think about their own role as lay ministers in the world? While some parts of the book may not strike a responsive chord for all readers, the book can help both laity and clergy to look again at the relationship between Christianity and the real world and the ministry of the laity in that real world.

James H. Pragman

**CONFUSION AND HOPE: CLERGY, LAITY AND THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION**, Bucher, Glenn Richard, and Hill, Patricia Ruth, editors. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

The Christian church in the United States is in trouble. Church membership along with Sunday attendance, has declined in many denominations. The church's impact on society is atrophying. What is wrong with the church? What *ought* the church to be doing? How can it reinvigorate itself? This small volume seeks to answer these questions. Growing out of a Clergy Academy of Religion program at the College of Wooster (Ohio), the book consists of eight essays, each by different authors. Part I, *Confusion*, deals with the causes of the church's problems. Part II, *Hope*, attempts to provide direction for the church and its leaders. The authors come from a variety of backgrounds — denominational (Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran) and vocational (parish pastor, professor, administrator.) Despite this diversity, the book has an unusual degree of coherence and unity. The editors are to be commended for such careful planning.

Why is the church experiencing a time of trial and challenge? The contributors posit a number of theses. One of them focuses on the clergy, who often suffer from stress and tension in their ministries and from a feeling of ineffectiveness in their work. Organizational forms of the church, such as the parish, often divert attention from proclamation and service to administration and organizational self-perpetuation. Probably the greatest shortcoming of the church and cause of its ineffectiveness is the church's close identification with the secular culture of the nation. According to C. C. Goen, "Our churches are so comfortably domesticated in the American culture that they can operate with little sense of tension or contradiction between what they are doing as Christians and what they stand for as Americans." For many Christian Americans, it appears that the nation has become the "church," and a form of civil religion or "religion of the Republic" has replaced the Christian faith. As a result, the church has little to offer society and becomes a meaningless appendage.

But there is hope. Christians do not have to accept the status quo. But for the church to become an influential force, it must radically transform itself in a number of ways. First, the church must speak a clear word; it must share a common faith based on the grace of God and His sacrificial love for us. Second, the church must be active in society. "Noninvolvement is a nonoption," says John Schramm. In its social activism the church must be fundamentally pitted *against* the surrounding society, existing in tension with it rather than in comfortable accommodation. Third, the church

must narrow the gap between its words and actions. William Cosgrove captures this thought well: "What one really believes, it seems, can only be discovered as one examines his or her life-style. In other words, what I say I believe, is ultimately, less a statement of my beliefs than the way I live." Fourth, in acting in society, the church must be guided by the concept of "redemptive love," modeled after the life and death of Christ. The congregation must be a sharing/serving community, available to others based on their needs. It must take risks and eschew a concern with self-preservation, which Schramm terms "the greatest potential heresy." If these things are done, the Christian church will regain its vigor and integrity.

Throughout the book the writers call for a larger role for the laity than has been characteristic in the past. The role of clergy is described by words such as "enabler," "prompter," "witness." Clergy are warned against paternalism in relationships with parishioners. Perhaps because many of the contributors are clergymen, the book offers clearer guidelines for the clergyman than for the lay person. Specific directions for the laity are few. This is the greatest shortcoming of the book.

How might Lutherans respond to this volume? Many undoubtedly will be attracted to the solid theological basis from which the authors write. All of them are strongly rooted in the Gospel and have a clear understanding of the distinction between Church and world. Others, however, might experience difficulty in reacting to the social activism called for here. Lutherans have not been noted for working toward a radical change in society. With our strong emphasis on individual salvation, with an other-worldly "Heaven is my Home" orientation, with a weak sense of corporate action towards societal issues, many will find much of the book hard to swallow, at least at first. Yet careful, empathetic study will reveal a sound Scriptural and theological foundation for these arguments. What the authors offer is both exciting and frightening: exciting in terms of the possibilities and challenges presented; frightening in terms of the risks involved and the great gap between what we are and what we could and should be.

*Confusion and Hope* is highly recommended. It could be an excellent resource for adult groups in the parish or at retreats and for pastor and teacher study conferences. It deserves to be widely read, discussed, and lived.

Jerrald K. Pfabe

**UNCERTAIN SAINTS: THE LAITY IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD, 1900-1970**, by Alan Graebner. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.

This book is good relevant history not because its judgments or conclusions stand above question, but because it uses history to enlighten rather than to obscure the present situation. Alan Graebner assumes that to tell the story of laymen he must look beyond what pastors said about them and their organizations to view laymen in their own context. To do this he includes much organizational material as well as clerical statements, but these are always used toward the end of clarifying the changes in the status and role of the laity.

*Uncertain Saints* contains no simple narrative about the laity. Instead, it follows certain themes through the 20th century: the process of Americanization, the emergency of lay organizations within the Synod, the place of the laity in the parish, and the attitudes of clergy and laity about the tasks which ought to be undertaken by laymen.

Graebner credits the gradual Americanization of the laity with bringing on the emergence of a lay identity. Laymen who experienced and were successful in the world beyond the clergy-dominated parish or immigrant community lost some of their meekness in church affairs. Not surprisingly, financially successful laymen who saw the fiscal chaos of the Synod were among the first to identify a distinctive role for the 20th-century layman.

Lay organizations reflected the nature of initial lay activism. Economic affairs and projects were generally considered the special province of laymen. Organizations for laymen, some of them transitory and others lastings, grew out of the belief that the role of the layman ought to be defined and restricted. By specifying certain areas of concern, financial or otherwise, as lay activities, the Synod was responding not only to a fear that unsupervised laymen might stray theologically, but also to the possibility of a shift of synodical and parish leadership away from the clergy where it had settled in the 19th century.

On the parish level the active layman found himself trying opportunities that had little precedence in Missouri's past. Sunday schools and lay Bible study groups were distrusted because of their similarity to the institutions of traditional American evangelical Protestantism. Associational activities centered in the parish hall often became more social than religious. Lay evangelism sometimes brought criticism. Yet the emergence of the Synod's laymen into the broader American culture and the awareness of the possibilities that were available led to the widespread development of many things which were virtually unheard of at the turn of the century.

However, Graebner's story of the laity

in the Missouri Synod fails to have a purely progressive trend to it. In many respects, especially in the realm of basic attitudes about the lay role, as much continuity as change marks 20th-century developments. Bold new steps toward lay ministry were often discouraged by clergymen and undertaken only cautiously by laymen. Graebner argues that one of the greatest lay successes, the sponsorship of The Lutheran Hour radio broadcast, must be carefully weighed because its all-consuming nature (and skyrocketing costs) drained organizational fervor and resources away from other possibilities.

Graebner's portrait of the 1960's contains both good and bad news for those who would like to see a greater lay role in the Synod. The emergence of a group of clergymen willing to encourage independence on the part of laymen converged with a broadening of lay interests beyond traditional institutions. These trends together brought a new sense of involvement and activity. But the same decade saw growing strife within the Synod drain energies and enthusiasm away from the movement toward an activist laity, and the conflict failed to provide any remedy for the persistent problem Graebner calls "traditional lay inertia" concerning church matters.

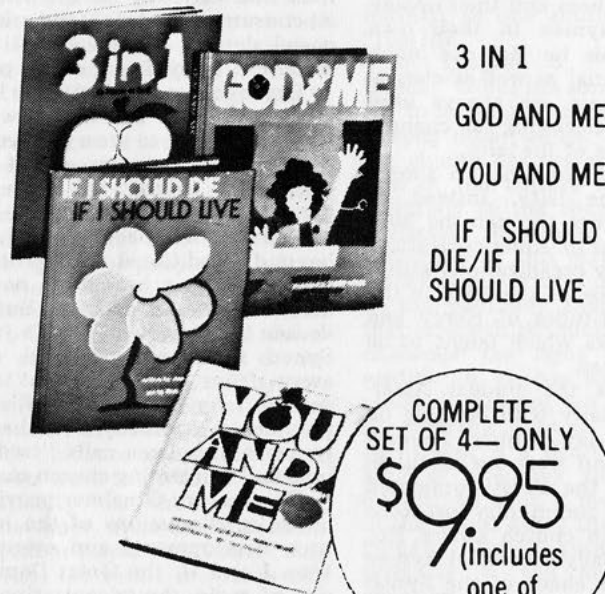
The history Graebner provides is rich, including discussions of the influence of such developments and events as World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, the rise of radio, Americanization, urbanization, and suburbanization. A major strength of the book lies in the author's command of American social and cultural history. While including the actions of Lutheran individuals and organizations, Graebner demonstrates that the 20th century Synod was no longer as isolated from the American surroundings as it once had been.

Even though the book does not use the biographical method of history, some of the individuals who appear briefly are well-presented. The relatively obscure small group of activist laymen-businessmen of the early 20th century become a crucial group in the Synod's history. Theodore Graebner emerges as a very complex person whose observations on the condition of the Synod are not only quotable but often quite perceptive. The author does not underestimate the importance of Walter A. Maier who, if the book is correct, ought to be of considerable interest to historians of religion who frequently have viewed Billy Graham as the master media-preacher.

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# POSTSCRIPT

Communication can be an extremely complex procedure or it can be very simple. For some the zenith of the communication process is achieved with a carefully prepared speech — eloquent, factual and moving, designed to capture the interest and curiosity of the hearer. To others, use of technological and scientific expertise is essential to effectively transmit an idea, a feeling or a fact. But to nearly all of us, a smile, a kiss, an act of kindness and a labor of love is a universal yet powerful form of communication.

Life is an intricate multidimensional communications sequence. Communication undergirds much of our relationship with our spouse, our family, our friends at school, the citizens of the community or our co-workers. Our real values surface in the way we communicate.

Communication can be for good or for evil. The slanderous tongue and the venomous pen are tools of the devil. Although camouflaged with good intentions and noble goals they are sins against the Eighth Commandment and do not reflect Christ. As a Christian we not only have the opportunity but we have the responsibility to use the communication processes in a positive and constructive manner. The Christian's life style affords the unique opportunity to reflect Christ, Christ working in us and Christ working through us.

Good communication is particularly important in time of conflict or during moments of tension. Whether at home or at work, in the classroom or in the church, letting Christ emanate from our every word and action establishes a setting which contributes to a solution of our problems. Today there is a lot of oratory and volumes of printed material designed to assure, enforce, defend, attack, explain and evaluate. Perhaps if people spent more time letting their lives communicate their feelings and their thoughts, a better understanding might result. This will definitely happen when Christ becomes an integral part of our lives. I once heard a person say, "What you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying!" This says something to me. Does it have a meaning for you?

V.H.



## book reviews

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While some sections of the book drag, in general Graebner writes in a stimulating style with many creative analogies and enlightening anecdotes and quotes. Typical of this is the title he gives to his final chapter on the growing synodical conflict in recent years — "Humpty-Dumpty and All the King's Men." Graebner limits his use of statistics and sociological jargon to manageable proportions while maintaining scholarly depth in his study.

*Uncertain Saints* contains a few faults, some of which it may have been impossible to remedy. In spite of Graebner's admirable attempt to avoid an elitist history, the common layman remains an obscure person. Despite Graebner's efforts to move beyond clerical statements about laymen and his use of recent opinion surveys of lay attitudes, we are left with many questions. As the author himself makes clear, the laity changed not

as a single body, but in phases depending on, among other things, geographic region, degree of urbanization and Americanization, and the nature of lay and pastoral leadership. Especially careful studies of the laity at the community, organizational, and parish levels will be needed to more completely examine the variables that were in operation during the century.

At numerous places Graebner mentions that a major factor inhibiting activism was lack of lay initiative. The willingness of laymen to accept the status quo needs to be more fully investigated and compared with the clerical opposition to lay activity as a force in the church. Perhaps we need to look at clerical attitudes more carefully. The pastor who wishes, without results, to have his parish laymen assume more leadership in congregational affairs and greater interest in theology may have been as significant in recent years as the clergyman who feel threatened by an activist laity. However, Graebner admits he is not primarily interested in the attitudes of clergy toward laymen.

Finally, the book could be even more interesting to the non-Lutheran reader than it already should be by making more

explicit the comparative approach which is implicit throughout the study. Some statements, and especially the footnotes, reveal that Graebner is well-aware of similar developments in other ethnic groups and church bodies. To make this more obvious would have had the double advantage not only of making the book more valuable for non-Lutheran readers, but also of giving Lutherans information on the interaction between their history and the American experience in general.

Greenwood Press, a secular publisher of scholarly books, has printed this book. Other major studies of the Missouri Synod have been issued in recent years by presses as diverse as the University of Notre Dame and Harper and Row. This interest of others in the affairs of a group that until recently thought of itself as a world apart may be as good an indication as any of the Americanization of which Graebner writes.

After finishing this interesting and provocative book one will find it difficult to think of a parish as consisting only of a pastor and a building. A new understanding, perhaps appreciation, will be gained for the myriad of organizations that typify lay activity in many congregations.

Charles K. Piehl