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# ISSUES...

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Director of Public Services  
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Seward, Nebr. 68434

About Our Authors

**Martin L. Maehr**, Ph. D. ("First Communion and Confirmation in the Church"), is associate professor of educational psychology and research at the University of Illinois.

**Walter M. Wangerin**, Ph. D. ("The Confirmation Class"), is editor of the Lutheran Catechism Project of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

**Arnold H. Heumann** ("Finding an Appropriate Age for Confirmation") is pastor of Ascension Church, Hyattsville, Md.

**Erwin J. Kolb**, Th. D. ("Alternatives to Confirmation"), is associate professor of theology at Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebr.

**Victor A. Constien**, M. S. T. ("Should We Still 'Confirm' Adults?"), is Secretary of Adult Education for The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

One of the key questions in ecclesiastical matters is the question of change. What kind of changes are permissible within the framework of the historic faith? What kind are not? To say that it's a matter of distinguishing between form and substance is a palpably inadequate answer. On the other hand, it must be admitted that, of the two, form is much more likely to be amenable to change, even to require change. This is true, I suppose, because form tends to be associated with means, but substance with ends.

Theological ends may be inviolable, but each age must channel and communicate them with means that suit the times. Confirmation, as a ceremony or as a rite of passage, is clearly more means than end. Thus its format requires periodic validation. New conditions may require a new structure. Is change needed now? If so, what shall the new shape be? These are the questions that this issue of ISSUES poses. I think you will find the articles relevant, penetrating, realistic, creative, and devout. Perhaps you will also find them convincing. W. TH. JANZOW

EDITORIALS

WHO, NOT WHAT

What is the requirement for confirmation in your congregation? Just what does it take before someone is accepted as a candidate for confirmation? For the past several years this question has been asked of juniors here at Concordia, young people who would seem to be in a unique position to answer it. Confirmation is still a fresh experience in their minds, and these young men and women are sufficiently dedicated to the cause of Christ to enroll in a course of study preparing them for a lifetime of service to His church.

The answer given without argument by the vast majority is that the requirement for confirmation in their congregation is determined by what you know. If you are able to answer a sufficient number of questions on "Examination Sunday," you've made it. You're in. If you know how to use the right words at the right time, whether or not you know what those words mean, you're in. If you know all the right answers, whether or not they have any real significance in and for your life, you're in. Very simply, it is a matter of what you know.

Lest someone imagine that this is a harsh judgment, I would ask him to review in his mind the questions asked at a typical "Examination Sunday." Are there any that proceed farther than simple content questions — questions that any Jewish rabbi with a faint acquaintance with Christian theology could not answer?

It is readily granted that the examination of a person's life does take place "backstage," on the intimate, personal level that is characteristic of the Christian community in action. But since the young people do not often see this in operation, the impression conveyed is that all the church is concerned about for a confirmand is what he knows. What he does does not seem to be a major concern. Hence these people frequently come away from their confirmation experience feeling that Christianity is all a matter of the intellect.

With this in mind it is vital to recognize that there is a more crucial concern for the Lutheran churches in America in the current study of confirmation than merely the age at which a person's confirmation instruction and preparation terminates, than the question of whether or not confirmation is to be related to first Communion, or than whether confirmation is a process extending over the course of many years or is an event during which the youth pledges himself to the cause of Christ and His church. The concern very simply is the importance of communicat-

ing to our young people that the church is far, far more concerned with whom they know rather than what they know. The priest and the Levite certainly knew far more theology than the Good Samaritan. Yet we know which one Jesus would have confirmed. The Pharisees knew more about the Old Testament than a tax collector or fisherman. But both Peter and Matthew knew Jesus.

We must make sure we communicate to the young that Christianity is not what you know but whom you know. And if a person knows God as his Father because he knows Jesus Christ as his Brother as a result of what the Spirit accomplishes working through the Gospel and the sacraments, then he will be terribly interested in what he knows and what he does with this knowledge. As Lutherans we need to see the training for confirmation in its relation to the use of the means of grace, for it is only the Holy Spirit who can lead us to grow in the only knowledge that matters, the intimate experience of God as gracious. Thus confirmation training must be the time when Law and Gospel do the work God would have them do. Whom the confirmand knows, and how well he knows Him, must take first place in the thinking of all who are concerned with the confirmation experience of the young. What he knows will then follow in its proper perspective.

ARNOLD F. KRUGLER

PROMISES - - - Promises

The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has been failing to make confirmation an effective rite for many people for as long as most can remember. Anybody doubting the truth of this allegation should check the figures on the percentage of those who drop out of the church shortly after confirmation, as well as the number on the church rolls who are either dead wood or shaky pillars at best.

What is the matter? Apparently nobody knows for sure. The church, it is true, will never have a perfect record. But it can improve.

Let us assume that the problem is that the church fails to communicate to some members of its confirmation classes what the confirmation vow entails. Lending support to this position are former confirmands whose conduct already before confirmation made some members in the congregation question whether they had heard anything in confirmation — but the church confirmed them anyway. The varied performance of others would indicate that a greater or lesser degree of effective communication took place.

What is the church trying to communicate? It is trying to write indelibly on the life of the prospective confirmand that confirmation is the action of God which enables him to make and keep the promises from that day until his death.

The confirmand promises in the presence of God and the Christian congregation to —

- renounce the devil;
- believe in the triune God;
- uphold the Bible and the church's doctrine for life, even if death results from such upholding;
- conform all his life to the rule of the divine Word; and
- use the means of grace diligently.

The questions and answers in the Rite of Confirmation were designed to communicate that confirmation is a commitment.

Part of the problem the church has to contend with is the interference of private interpretations. Some confirmands are listening to another channel, for the other messages come through so loudly that they cannot hear what the church is saying. One such message is that confirmation is just a lot of memorization, hard study, and self-discipline and that confirmation day ends it all. Another private interpretation sees confirmation as a church tradition that is observed as a "coming out" time for the next group that is old enough to participate in the Lord's Supper. Still others see confirmation as a family tradition with its celebration and payment of respects to whoever's turn it is that year.

How then can we convey the message of the confirmation rite — that confirmation involves an intention to live the confirmation vow *daily*. Some failure in meeting the intentions of the vow are expected, but with the blessing of God and the forgiveness of the Savior, one strives to live a more Christ-like life every day.

If our assumption is correct, it should be possible to increase the percentage in each class who get the message by improving the conditions of instruction and practice. This can be done by confirming only those who have apparently assimilated the message concerning the meaning of confirmation.

Reception of the message might be improved by spending much confirmation time in a counseling situation. The teacher explores with the prospective confirmand the ways in which he has succeeded or failed to live the Christian faith. Ways to amend his life and ways to be grateful for successes that have been his through the strength that God gives would be the



subject matter of these counseling sessions. The teacher and the student would work out ways to cope with current problems. The student would try living accordingly. Then the teacher and the student in a later session would evaluate the outcome of the student's living in the light of God's Word.

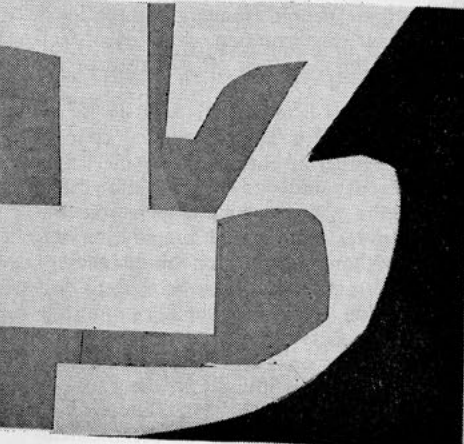
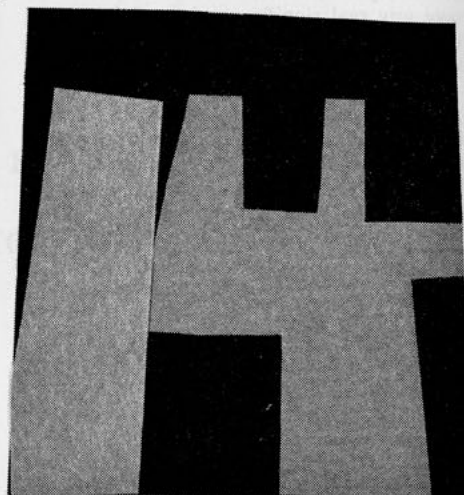
The church should take a lesson from everyday life. Before one drives a car or flies an airplane, he is required to practice to the extent that society's officers believe he is ready to assume the privileges and the responsibilities for such activity. Although requiring instruction and proved ability to follow instruction before the license is issued is no guarantee of safe driving or flying, one can feel more certain that the experienced individual will react in the right way in emergencies than if he had never studied or been tested on what to do in such situations in a lifelike setting. It should not seem so unusual then for the church to confirm only persons whose lives show that they have some competency in applying the Word to overcome evil and to live the Christian life through the power God gives to those

who would use the Word and would live in this way. The church might also increase the percentage of those who get the message if we raise the confirmation age.

Impossible to introduce the procedures described? Yes, it is impossible until the church shows that it takes confirmation seriously. It is impossible until the church believes in putting the Word to work in the life of the individual on a vigorous basis before and after confirmation. It is impossible until the church has the courage to get across to all prospective members that the Savior really meant it when He said: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

Let the church begin to insist that the preconfirmand practice doing his promises to Jesus before confirmation. Then confirmation will become what it should be—a mark of progress on the road of a pilgrim who has miles to travel and promises to God to keep before the sleep of eternity begins.

GLENN C. EINSPAHR



*Education, secular as well as religious, is beyond the point where curricula, materials, teaching methods, and educational objectives can be developed by adults in virtual isolation from the child and then imposed on him. In order to know how to nurture the religious life of the child, his religious life must be systematically studied.*

## FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH:

### SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS\*

by MARTIN L. MAEHR

RECENTLY A JOINT COMMISSION OF THE THREE major Lutheran church bodies recommended a serious reconsideration of the timing of first Communion. Therewith it also suggested that the meaning, place, and importance of confirmation not only be reviewed but also restructured. Perhaps the issues raised by these proposals are in the first instance theological. However, they are also psychological and educational. Issues related to the intellectual, emotional, and social functioning of human beings in educational settings are also most certainly involved. It is to such issues that this critique of the joint commission's *A Report for Study* (1968, in Klos, 1968, pp. 183—213) is directed. More specifically, three inter-related questions prompted by the report will be considered:

1. When is the child intellectually capable of meeting "accepted standards" for participation in the Holy Communion?
2. What is the "fitting moment" for initiating first communion?
3. What are some of the educational implications of an earlier first Communion?

\* Revised from a paper presented at a colloquium held at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa., March 14, 1969. It will also be published in *Lutheran Quarterly*.

#### *When Is the Child Intellectually Prepared for First Communion?*

The joint commission has recommended that first Communion be administered in the latter part of the fifth grade, when the child is 10 to 11 years old (*A Report for Study*, in Klos, 1968, p. 203). A major consideration in this regard is: Does the 10-year-old child typically meet the desired intellectual standards for participation in the Lord's Supper? There is doubtless some disagreement regarding what these standards are or should be. Generally, however, two kinds of competencies are expected of the participant: (1) he must be able to examine himself and be aware of his need of grace and forgiveness, and (2) he must recognize the significance of Holy Communion as the church understands it (cf. Repp, 1964, pp. 169 ff.). Given these criteria, is the child of 10 (or 11) typically ready, from an intellectual point of view, for participation in Holy Communion?

The work on moral and character development would seem to indicate rather clearly that the child of 10 is indeed capable of self-reflection, self-examination, self-reproval and -approval. In short, he has a *conscience*. Less clear, however, is how he conceives of his relationship to a transcendent being in all this. Extrapolating from Piaget (1948; Flavell, 1963), Kohlberg (1963, 1964), and



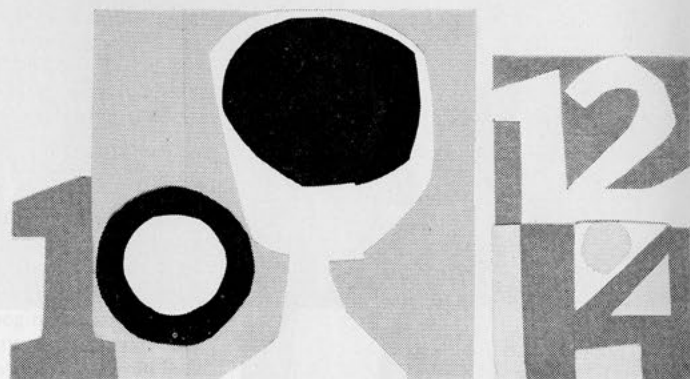
particularly Goldman (1964), one might wonder loudly whether most 10-year-olds use the repentance-forgiveness routine as little more than a magical operation for warding off trouble not only in the hereafter but also and maybe most particularly right now. But if the minimum only is required in this regard, the 10-year-old clearly has that.

More bothersome is the question of whether the child of 10 can recognize the significance of Holy Communion as the church wishes him to. It is at this point that the joint commission grossly oversimplifies human psychology in general and child psychology in particular. It was too easily concluded that the child of 10 can reach a sufficient understanding of Holy Communion to permit him to participate. Probably such a conclusion could be easily reached, because little or no attempt was made to explicate what is meant by a sufficient understanding. Certainly, if by understanding we have in mind only that the child can give appropriate verbal response to a limited range of stimuli, the 10-year-old can qualify. In all probability, however, something more than this is meant. At the very least, more than mere "habitual" responses are demanded. The child is expected to make certain kinds of deductions. Possibly he is expected to reflect on the whole matter in what can only be called an abstract fashion. The child sees bread and wine. Yet he is told that, in this case at least, it is *not* just bread and wine. Of course, he is not expected to understand how wine and bread can have the Lord's body and blood in, with, and under it. But he is expected to understand that he *cannot* understand it! Understanding that we cannot understand *may* actually involve the most abstract kind of thinking: an ability to see that there may be different kinds of truth, different logical systems — each of which may have its place and no one of which necessarily rules out the other.

If at some latent level or implicitly this type of abstract thought is expected of the communicant, then the 10-year-old is not ready! The work of Piaget and his colleagues with nonreligious concepts (cf. Flavell for a review of this work) and Goldman's (1964) work on religious concepts suggests that the child is not likely to be capable of such abstract modes of thought much before the age of 13. But of course, the crux of the matter lies in the definition of "understanding." Clearly the joint commission could have spoken more specifically on this point. Until someone does, it will be difficult if not impossible to decide on a psychologically appropriate time for first Communion.

This is not to say that the child can or cannot meet the necessary intellectual prerequisites for partaking of Holy Communion. Nor is it here suggested that knowledge, in the narrow sense, or intellectual capacity should be the *primary* consideration. The point is that the concept of *understanding* is handled rather carelessly by the joint commission. As a result it is unclear what they have in mind when they indicate that the child has sufficient understanding for participation in the Lord's Supper. Granted that it may be difficult if not ultimately impossible to define fully and precisely the kind of understanding

that is to be a prerequisite to receiving the sacrament. Some improvement over the joint commission's report is necessary. Furthermore, until the prerequisite understanding and/or understandings have been satisfactorily defined, it is impossible to determine intellectual readiness in this regard.



#### *When Is the "Fitting Moment" for First Communion?*

But assuming for the moment that there was clear, unequivocal evidence that the 10-year-old has the intellectual competence necessary for participation in the sacrament, is it necessarily desirable to begin Holy Communion at this point? In recent years there has been a distinct tendency among educators to teach something at the earliest possible moment. Similarly, our society has often foisted the experiences of the adult onto the child — whether he wants them or not. Perhaps this tendency should be resisted. The earliest teachable moment may not be the best moment for teaching, nor can the earliest moment in which an experience can be had be the best moment for the experience.

Certainly the joint commission's report shows every evidence of sharing this conviction. At least implicitly, the report suggests that criteria other than minimal understanding must be considered in suggesting that first Communion be offered at or about age 10. But as they must certainly recognize, the evidence available to them in this area is very limited so far as determination of a fitting moment for first Communion is concerned. For example, the joint commission suggests (Klos, p.203) that the age of 10 is an age of quiescence after the turmoil of childhood and before the storm and stress of adolescence. Insofar as it is justified to generalize about the age at all, I would prefer to suggest on the basis of Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder's (1961) interpretation of normative studies conducted at the Gesell Institute (Ilg and Ames, 1955) that this is really a stage in which the child operates in a more subservient mode, wanting and feeling comfortable primarily when his world is rather clearly outlined for him by others. He is an authoritarian — believing in authority and expecting and wanting a source outside himself to control. His "quiescence" is an interpretation imposed by adults to the effect that now he is accepting their domination and is minimally rebellious against externally imposed authority.

But regardless of which interpretation you choose

to accept, the unanswered and very nagging question is: Is there any evidence that first Communion under conditions of quiescence or subservience is better than under conditions of storm and stress? One might at least speculate that there may be just as good a reason to bring significant religious events to bear in the moments of stress, turmoil, and even rebellion as there is in moments of presumed quiescence and subservience. It may well be just at these times when an individual needs the special kind of interest and concern which the Christian community inevitably expresses when it formally grants a special privilege. It is to be hoped that the Christian community feels it has a certain latitude not only to be supportive of those who are fighting out personal and interpersonal battles but in some cases actually to reinforce the kind of search for independence that may be implied. After all, Christianity started with a rebellion, and Lutherans have their identity as the result not of peace but of a sword. Should the decision on the fitting moment for an event be made on the basis of the manageability of the recipient? Perhaps it is better to ask: When is the most fitting moment in terms of facilitating the recipient's concept of self as a child of God and member of a Christian community?

The central issue, however, is not whether or not the joint commission is wrong in proposing the age of 10 as the fitting moment for first Communion. Rather the point is that they have had to deal with very limited evidence in making this decision. At best they have suggested some reasonable hypotheses. But reasonable though they may be, there are other, opposing but equally reasonable hypotheses. Furthermore, none of these hypotheses have been sufficiently tested, and there is as yet no clear psychological basis on which one can justifiably argue for sweeping change in ecclesiastical practice.

#### *Educational Considerations*

Assuming that from both a theological and a psychological point of view a change would be indicated, there are certain other considerations to contend with. Principal among these are what might be called "educational considerations." The basic question is: How will the proposed change affect religious education programs?

The joint commission is clearly aware that there is no evidence that the proposed change will facilitate Christian education in any foreseeable way. They suggest that the change might emphasize the notion that Christian education is *continuous* growth. That is a reasonable hypothesis but nevertheless, as they point out, one for which there is little or no available supporting evidence at the present time. Another reasonable hypothesis might be that the mere experimentation in this area might give birth to interest and excitement in religious education — at least for awhile.

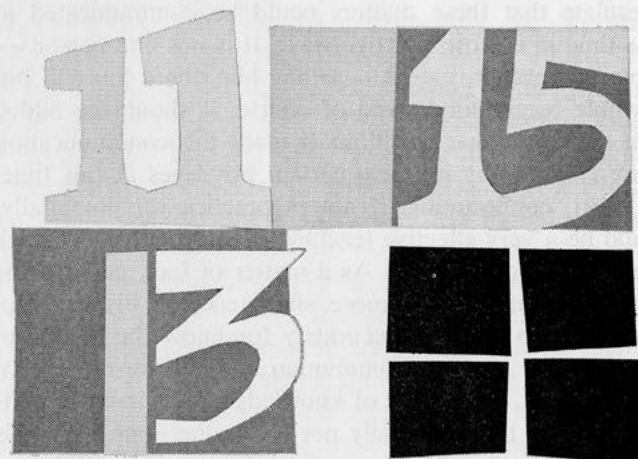
On the other hand, as the committee apparently has wondered at one time or another, the lowered age for first Communion may eventuate in some undesirable outcomes. To select one such possibility, the lowered Com-

munion age may eventuate in the virtual dissolution of confirmation. From an educational and psychological point of view this could be a very serious loss. Although it may have dubious doctrinal significance, the rite of confirmation may well provide a very good means for achieving certain stated goals of religious education programs. For example, one of the objectives of religious education is to lead the individual into a particular view of himself and his identity. As I interpret my own work (Maehr, et al., 1962; Haas and Maehr, 1965; Ludwig and Maehr, 1967) on change and development of self-esteem, the rite of confirmation ideally has many if not most of the elements which are desirable. If in the rite of confirmation the confirmed receives feedback about himself from "significant others" at a personally critical moment, then confirmation could be a significant event in informing the child about who he is, what he can do, what he should hope for, etc. Furthermore, one might speculate that these matters could be communicated at this time in a most effective way. It is not one person — a pastor, teacher, parent — telling him about himself, but a whole community! And of course, it should be added that the church has traditionally made this communication quite concrete by granting certain privileges at this time. In short, confirmation, if not in practice yet potentially, could be a very effective teaching event, the loss of which would be a loss indeed. As a matter of fact, perhaps the church ought to have more such teaching events! But obviously no one can accurately foreknow the results of lowering the age for Communion and raising the age of confirmation. Such lack of knowledge is common in matters such as this and really not too bothersome. What is disturbing is that there are few good guesses that can be made on the basis of comparable situations and experiences.

Aside from such uncertainties which the committee was aware of and clearly articulated in the report, there are other matters that ought to be considered. To mention one, such proposed innovation would have to eventuate in changed educational styles. In the past the church has relied heavily on pastors to give the necessary pre-Communion instruction and to make the final determination that the child is indeed ready for this event. Is it really reasonable to expect pastors (of whom too much is expected already) to be efficient at modulating from the adult world — with which they typically converse — to that of the child? It may, of course, have been too much to expect pastors to be effective with 14- or 15-year-olds, as is common now. However, it should be pointed out that the available evidence on developmental trends in concept formation indicates that whereas the 14- or 15-year-old may at least be somewhat predisposed to converse in the abstract realm of values, goals, ethics, and dogma with which pastors are most conversant, the 10-year-old clearly is not. Of course, at this age he may sit there very patiently and respond politely to an authority figure, but whether he is truly on the same communication channel may be quite another matter. In



short, it may be seriously questioned whether most pastors would be able to prepare and examine younger children for Communion. They are not really trained for it, they have had little experience with it, and one might suspect that they don't have a great deal of interest in it either. What this may mean is that if the Communion age is lowered, pre-Communion instruction and actual determination of readiness will have to be placed in the hands of someone else, perhaps the parent. That is not necessarily an undesirable outcome. But if this occurs, new types of instructional materials will have to be developed and the adult education program considerably expanded. In any case, multivaried adjustments in curriculum, in teaching, and in teachers will probably have to be made if the proposal is accepted. That would not necessarily be bad, but such adjustments would require work and would be expensive if the job is to be done as it should and must be done.



### Conclusion

Without doubt the joint commission has made a strong case for the conclusion that the Lutheran Church does not have "the best of all possible worlds" so far as first Communion and confirmation are concerned. Perhaps incidentally but certainly not unimportantly, they have made it clear that many aspects of religious education must be reexamined. Furthermore, if their recommendations were adopted, congregations would probably be forced to engage in a variety of innovations in the area of religious education whether they wanted to or not. Who cannot but applaud that?

However, the commission must be seriously faulted on at least one point. Throughout this paper a series of disagreements, alternative interpretations, and opposing conclusions have been put forth. By itself each of these represents only a minor objection to the joint commission's position. However, these criticisms summate and therewith eventuate in one major point of disagreement. That point relates to how the commission's conclusions should be implemented. The joint commission seems to feel that change should be unanimous: if we are to change, we should all change at the same time to the same thing (cf. Klos, p. 201). If the line of discussion followed in this paper has any validity at all, it would seem more

logical to make an alternative proposal. Rather than propose total and pervasive change at this point, it would be better to propose the opposite. Previous to any major commitment on these issues a selected few ought to try out the commission's suggestions under circumstances that allow for systematic study and evaluation in order to determine whether what should happen does in fact happen.

The joint commission has presented evidence that changes should be considered. It has also suggested some specific changes that might facilitate Christian education. However, it is clear that no one of these changes will necessarily or with a degree of probability have the desired effects. The joint commission's suggestions are, in short, reasonable hypotheses, but hypotheses that lack confirmation. The only way out of such a dilemma is to engage in *systematic* experimentation, a program of research. Next to nothing is known about what religious concepts can be taught at which age levels. Little evidence is available regarding how various experiences may or may not affect the religious development of the child. Thus, before drastic changes are made, is not a program of research indicated?

Simply changing the practice of first Communion and confirmation may prove to have its value. There is, however, little basis for that prediction. From all that can be observed in secular education, considerable experimentation before change is not only desirable but necessary. Education, secular as well as religious, is beyond the point where curricula, materials, teaching methods, and educational objectives can be developed by adults in virtual isolation from the child and then imposed on him. In order to know how to nurture the religious life of the child, his religious life must be systematically studied. Thus it is disturbing that although a systematic survey of the feelings of pastors and (primarily if not exclusively adult) laymen is reported by the commission, there is no report of any kind of research with the children who are presumably the most deeply involved in this issue.

At this point someone is bound to object. It is too upsetting, confusing, etc., if any change is not to be universal. However, the change will probably not be universal and immediate in any case. Furthermore, would not experimental programs not only inform us but also serve as the most convenient means for implementing change? Thus if congregations could see what does or does not occur when certain programs are conducted, might they not be a bit more willing to try the new? If they saw a bit more evidence of the validity of the alternative to what they have and know, might they not be more interested?

In summary, the point of this discussion is that now is the time to explore and innovate but also to systematically and analytically evaluate. Now is the time for experimentation and research, for the answers necessary to effective decision-making in these matters are not yet available.

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### ORDER PROPER

H. L. Mencken, acid-tongued critic, editor, and satirist of many aspects of modern society, once stated that if civilization had a motto it must be: "Not Thy will, O Lord, but ours be done!" Though one may not fully agree with the propriety of this burlesque or with the thrust of Mencken's other writings, the statement has an element of truth.

Despite the "melting pot" idea often applied to the United States (some writers, to mix a metaphor, suggest that Americans are more like hash), we are in many ways one of the most xenophobic of peoples. We fail to understand other peoples and other cultures in their proper perspective, either because of a lack of interest or because of a superiority complex.

It has, after all, been only in the last few centuries and because of the cumulative technological innovations known — perhaps erroneously — as the "industrial revolution" that Western civilization has gained an ascendancy over much of the world. That preeminence in turn led to a cultural arrogance fed by the pseudo-scientific racism of the 19th century. And only in the relatively recent past has the United States, aided by several destructive wars that brought ruin to earlier leaders of Western society, emerged in its position of preeminence in the West and the world. Many in the United States today unfortunately display this same cultural arrogance.

Though there is a place for patriotism and national pride in this era of *Pax Ballistica*, there is also a need, particularly among educators, for a broader understanding of the world and world problems in perspective. There should also be less insistence on the part of some that every political or economic system conform to ours or be measured against ours as a standard of truth or excellence — as if we had a monopoly on such truth or excellence — and more emphasis on the appreciation and understanding of the diversity that is in our world. Then perhaps we could put Luke 22:42 back in its proper order.

ROBERT D. FIALA



God's challenge to His followers is to know how to change or reject anything that does not proclaim and teach the changeless Christ and His Gospel. Lutheran confirmation traditions and practices are not divinely inspired.

## THE CONFIRMATION CLASS

by WALTER M. WANGERIN

"The Christian congregation, or church, the dispenser of God's mysteries, having assured itself that the catechumens possess such knowledge of Christian doctrine as may give warrant of their worthy eating of the body and drinking of the blood of Christ, invites them to receive the Holy Supper. . . .

"These catechumens have here presented themselves for Confirmation. We shall now examine them in the chief parts of Christian doctrine, for the purpose of setting forth that they understand the faith they are about to profess."

In the past half century more than a million Missouri Synod teen-age boys and girls with palpitating hearts and knocking knees heard these words as they stood before God and a church full of people on their confirmation day. In this ceremony they "renewed their baptismal vow, publicly confessed their faith, and were received into communicant membership by their congregation." They also graduated from confirmation class.

After the service they went home to a big dinner with relatives they had not seen for a long time, where they received a watch (wristwatch) and a Lutheran hymnal with their name imprinted in gold.

Here endeth an era of Lutheran congregational life.

If the reader is somewhat near the writer's vintage, he can relive the experiences described above. He also shares the uneasiness that change produces. He may join in the fervent prayer that we do not throw out the Gospel along with some of its obsolescent forms, rites, or media.

### I. SOME THINGS HAVE TO GO

God's challenge to His followers is to know how to change or reject anything that does not proclaim and teach the changeless Christ and His Gospel. Lutheran confirmation traditions and practices are not divinely inspired. What changes seem necessary?

### *The Subordination of the Sacraments*

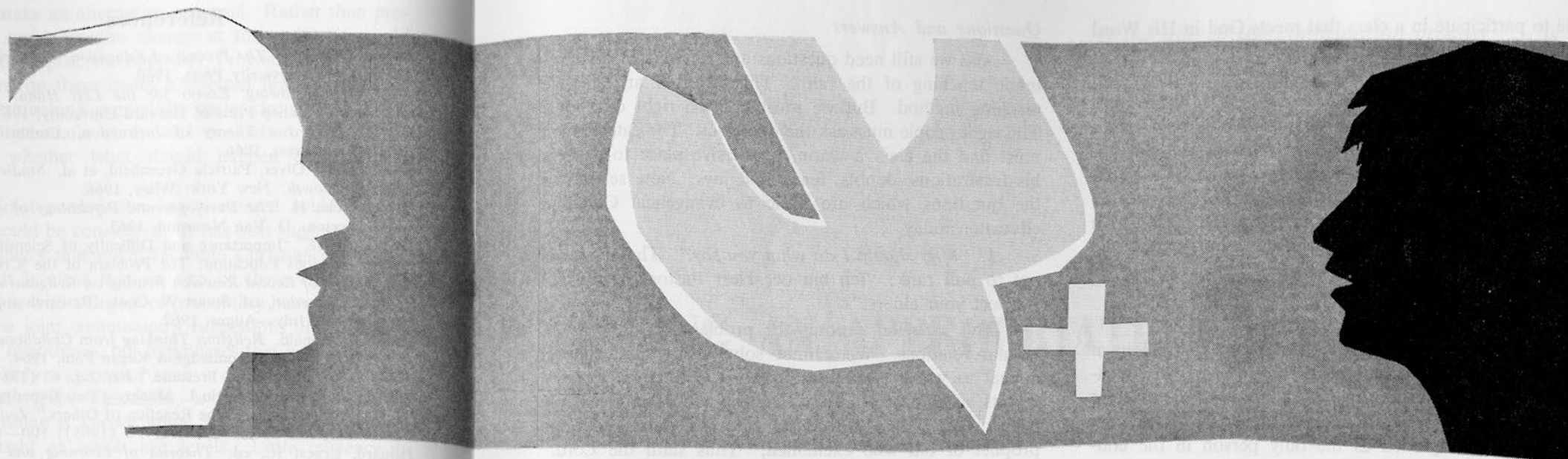
A monumental obstacle to Gospel-centered preparation for confirmation is the explicit or implicit subordination of the holy sacraments. For those of us who faithfully attempted to instruct on the basis of the synodical catechism, the trap of ignoring the Gospel in the sacraments was almost impossible to avoid. Instruction began with the First Chief Part (where else?), which proved to be the easiest part to teach. (I almost wrote preach, for much of this class time was like Sunday morning without a pulpit.) After a heroic effort to trace the action of God in the Apostles' Creed, Palm Sunday was only a few weeks away, so we had to hurry through the questions and answers on Baptism and the Holy Supper. (About 18% of the 331 questions and answers in this book deal with the sacraments.)

Since we did not begin the course with the part on Baptism, we could not help the catechumens practice the daily significance of God's acts here. We may not have had time to explain how confession belongs as much to Baptism as it does to Holy Communion. Besides, by explaining confirmation as a "renewal of the baptismal vow" we could have given the catechumen the impression that Baptism was not valid until confirmation took place.

After the thrilling confirmation service, the first Communion the following Thursday evening was almost anticlimactic. The flowers were wilted, the robes wrinkled, and the church was only half as full as it was Palm Sunday. The class had passed the test; they could now examine themselves. So what else is new?

### *The Inordinate Emphasis on Intellectual Goals*

Confirmation preparation seemed to emphasize intellectual activity. Memorization ("I want you to give the exact words of this Bible passage: it's the Word of God!") and parroting the answers to the questions in the book seemed to be the essence of the class activity. The catechumen who studied diligently was assured of passing and becoming a communicant member.



Consider the overwhelming challenge to teach the faith kerygmatically when the study materials are organized around doctrinal formulations only. How does the catechist bring the Word of God to this instruction? By adducing phrases and passages of Scripture to prove that these formulations were true?

"Then shall the catechumens be briefly examined." This is the rubric which follows the words quoted at the head of this essay. Besides adolescent awkwardness, boys with cracked voices, and girls who giggle, there was the problem of whether the catechumens were answering with understanding or merely reciting words. At worst, sometimes these examinations were dishonest. (Dishonest!? How does one describe the situation where each member of the class was assigned a question with the answer written on a piece of paper in his hymnal or bulletin, when the impression was given that the class can answer at random?) But the emphasis was clear: "We admit to the Lord's Table those who have received *sufficient instruction* and have given an account of their faith." (Answer to Question 328; emphasis *not* mine)

### *Confirmation Class Is Different*

Another thing that has to go is the idea that the confirmation class has to be different from any other agency in the parish. Coupled with this is the idea that the pastor of the congregation is the only one who can teach this class. (This latter is often defended vigorously by laymen.) All too often the pastor is not the most effective teacher. In his extensive theological studies catechetics may have surrendered to the many other disciplines.

This approach may give needless competition to other agencies seeking to serve people of all ages in the congregation.

### *What Is a Catechism?*

What about the narrow definition of the terms "catechism" and "catechetical method"? "2. What is a cate-

chism? A catechism is a book of instruction in the form of questions and answers." (Question and Answer 2)

Perhaps this misconception has helped to chain confirmation instruction to the deadening purpose of merely learning dogma. The catechist zealous for the truth (aren't we all?) may feel that the ultimate test of his orthodoxy is his ability to have the class repeat the correct words of the formulas. We teach the catechumen to ask correct questions whether these are pressing issues to him or not. It's difficult to avoid the inference that one can assemble all the relevant questions of life with their correct answers and teach this for the climactic engagement the catechumen has with an agency of Christian education. (What percentage of the adult members of your congregation are active learners in the parish education program?)

These are some of the changes that Lutherans must face in confirmation preparation.

### II. SOME THINGS WE HAVE TO KEEP

But we must not throw out the valuable with the obsolete.

#### *Lifelong Catechumenate*

Catechumen, catechist, catechetical instruction, and catechism are good words. They don't have to go if they point to the church's continual renewal of the function of nurture. These words can point to ways of intensifying and modernizing Christian education.

Perhaps we should take the sense of urgency which the confirmation class marked and spread it out over the entire spectrum of parish education. Maybe the confirmation class of 2 hours a week is still the most effective agency for some congregations, but most congregations can meet these concerns in a studied approach to the total educational program. We need to understand and establish objectives that guide all agencies and to mark the unique purposes of each one as it relates to the others. People of all ages (not just the kids) should be



able to participate in a class that meets God in His Word of Law and Gospel in today's world.

A catechism is any teaching-learning material that enables a class to see the work of God as He judges and forgives. A catechumen is a person who is engaged in the study of the holy faith. A catechist is the one responsible for the teaching-learning experiences of that class, who brings his own vital faith and the presence of God into the encounter. Each congregation must strive to establish such a lifelong catechumenate among the members.

#### *What About the Pastor?*

If the confirmation class as many of us have known it may go, what will be the pastor's role in parish education? He is still responsible. The apostolic description of the work of the elder includes teaching. While he should not be regarded as the only person in the congregation to do this teaching, he must still be an educational leader. Ideally the pastor of the congregation ought to have the blessing and privilege of learning to know each new member (adult or child) in some part of that person's Christian instruction. A joyful, evangelical teaching-learning experience is a glorious beginning to a God-pleasing pastor-member relationship.

He can direct a public examination without over-emphasizing the intellectual aspects. Members of a confirmation class should have the opportunity to stand before their fellow worshipers in a regular Sunday service to make a testimony of their faith. What soul-strengthening experience this will be for all who see the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of young catechumens!

#### *Luther's Small Catechism*

We must keep Luther's Small Catechism in our program of Christian nurture. This portion of the Book of Concord offers a priceless source of the Gospel and an appropriate norm for decisions relative to content in Christian educational curricula. No, I do not believe that retaining the Small Catechism means that we use it in the order of the chief parts themselves. Kerygmatic teaching of the faith is proclaiming the acts of God, past, present, and future. With some classes the events of salvation history may be the unifying principle of the evangelical content of the Small Catechism.

Luther emphasizes God in action, not man's idea of religion. He looks for the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel for change of heart, attitude, and way of life. (Note the tense of the verbs in his explanations to the articles of the Apostles' Creed.) Dynamic Christian education takes place when the catechist relentlessly presses toward the goal of proclaiming, teaching, and depicting WHAT GOD DOES.

Luther intended his Small Catechism to serve as the basis for worship. His writings here are a glorious way to praise God for His grace.

#### *Questions and Answers*

And we still need questions and answers in a kerygmatic teaching of the faith. This is often an effective teaching method. But we must ask the right questions. The right people must ask the questions. The catechumen must find the class a warm, permissive place to express his frustrations, doubts, fears, and joys. Note several of the questions which are basic to evangelical Christian education today.

1. "Why should I do what you say?" The answer is not to pull rank: "Ich bin der Herr Pastor! I said so! Respect your elders!"

This question exposes the problem of authority in human relations. We cannot solve it by authoritarian appeal to words, traditions, customs, and law. Today's revolts accentuate painfully that this approach has never been correct. The evangelical catechist stands with the prophet of old who exclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord." God's Spirit gave the prophet his conviction and the truth he proclaimed. God's Spirit provided His Word in the written witness to all God's acts culminating in Jesus Christ, the living Word made flesh. God's Spirit builds conviction, faith, and truth in today's prophets before a class or in a pulpit. The faithful catechist thus joins his catechumens in listening to God rather than attempting to fill the role of pontificator.

2. "So what?" This question does not grow out of disdain for things precious to the faith. It expresses a healthy skepticism of the way the Gospel is proclaimed in class. It seeks the relevancy of God's acts now. The effective catechist is sensitive always to the life involvements of his catchumens. Until the Word speaks to their tensions and accomplishments, it does not speak at all. Bless the stubborn, freckle-faced kid who keeps asking "So what?" to the teacher's pronouncements.

3. "Who do you think you are?" Perhaps this is the counter question we want to fire at that little guy; but this is an important question in its own right. The hippie acts out his answer to this question. So does the member in good standing of a Lutheran congregation who sheds his loving, forgiving spirit after the benediction, making life miserable for his family and manipulating people at his work during the week.

The most glorious part of the Gospel message is that it tells us who we are. We are rebels against God daily creating crises of living because of our pride. But we are people for whom Jesus died and rose again. We are God's sons and daughters, who can enjoy God's creation by bringing His renewal to it and to His people everywhere. Our purpose in life is to proclaim God's love to the disenchanting, disenfranchised, and disillusioned people about us as we love them.

This is what Christian education, even the confirmation class, is all about. The church is the dispenser of God's mysteries as a fellowship of people who say and live these things about God to each other and to the world.

*If the aim of the confirmation process . . . is "to help baptized children identify with the life and mission of the adult Christian community," then an age grouping in middle adolescence (10th-grade youth) seems well suited to the educational task.*

## FINDING AN APPROPRIATE AGE FOR CONFIRMATION

by ARNOLD H. HEUMANN

That the *Report for Study* from the Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation would stimulate much public discussion and debate was to be expected and even hoped for. It was for this very reason that the *Report*, with its recommendation for the separation of confirmation from first Communion, was bound together with Frank W. Klos's *Confirmation and First Communion: A Study Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968). It was hoped that discussion would thereby be stimulated on the grass-roots level of the church, as well as on the theological level of the professionals.

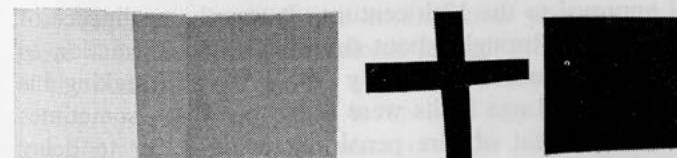
It was also to be expected that discussion would bring varied responses from all levels. Responses have been made through private correspondence, through public discussion and debate, and through the report forms included in the *Leader's Guide* of Klos's *Study Book*. Not all responses are in full agreement with the commission's recommendations, but it is only through the process of study and discussion that the three major Lutheran bodies in America can reach agreement on a common approach to confirmation and first Communion.

It is a part of this process of study and discussion that this brief study is submitted. The premise is that finding an age for confirmation is an area for decision in the church since confirmation is not Scripturally ordained or identified with either Baptism or Holy Communion, although theologically related to both. An approach is attempted that will set aside presuppositions and accepted practices and view confirmation within its theological and historical framework. And within that framework educational guidelines will be used to guide us to an acceptable age for confirmation.

### I. THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Where one locates confirmation in a theological framework depends on whether the emphasis is put on the ritual aspect or on the educational aspect of confirmation. Those churches which stress the ritual act of "laying on of hands" are hard put to find Gospel example or dominical command for it. Where Jesus laid His hands on the sick to heal them (Mark 6:5; 8:23; Luke 4:40; 13:13) or on little children to bless them (Mark 10:16), this was a sign of imparting divine power or blessing and is not that "laying on of hands" which we find in the Acts as an adjunct to Baptism (Acts 8:17; 10:46; 19:6), accompanied by special manifestation of the gift of the Holy Ghost. But even in Acts the laying on of hands is not always mentioned in connection with Baptism (Acts 2:41; 8:38; 16:15, 33), and the outpouring of the Spirit on one occasion anticipated the act of Baptism (Acts 10:44). While this is partly an argument from silence, the references to Baptism and to the laying on of hands in Acts seem to indicate a flexibility of practice rather than a rigid ritual. Furthermore, while our Lord promised His apostles the gift of the Spirit, the occasion of the giving of the Spirit (Pentecost) was not accompanied by the laying on of hands. And while Lutheran practice still today keeps the practice of laying on of hands as an adjunct to Baptism, this ritual act is not called confirmation.

Lutheran practice, on the other hand, is to put the emphasis on the educational aspect of confirmation. It does not consider confirmation a sacrament, either apart from or as a completion of Baptism. However, the baptismal imperative of nourishing the spiritual life begun in Baptism must be recognized. For the Lord's command to baptize was coupled with His command to teach "all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). It is the Christ-given Word through which the Incarnate Word comes to sustain us in discipleship (John 8:31) and which, through many forms of expression, enriches the



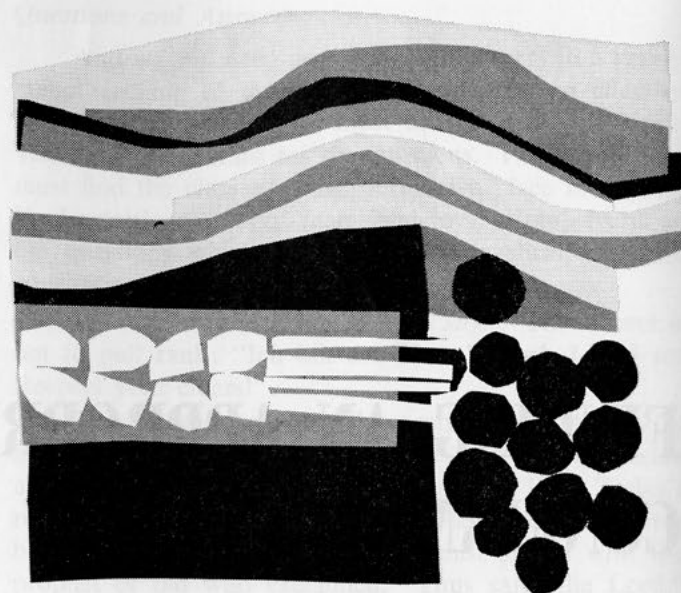


Christian life (Col. 3:16-17). And the goal of such involvement in the Word is not a ritual act such as Baptism was for the catechumen in the early church (continuing, however, for some weeks after Baptism) but the goal of maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 1:28), a never-ending process.

The *Report for Study*, page 192, rightly cites the Gospel ministry of the church as the validation of its activities and describes the creating and sustaining Word as the Spirit's strengthening, which "takes place daily in the Christian life and must cover the whole life span." Yet it is recognized that in the growth process "it is possible that there is a stage at which it will be particularly advantageous for the Christian community to provide for a special memorializing of a person's Baptism, some sort of confirming through the Word that accords with his maturer consciousness."

Holy Communion also nourishes, builds, and carries forward that life begun in us by the Spirit in Holy Baptism. As a means of grace it offers and bestows the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:26-28) and keeps us in fellowship with Christ and his church (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:17). There is no Scriptural command that it precede or follow a formal program of confirmation instruction. It may be a part of that spiritual nourishing that is marked by a rite of confirmation, or it may be that nourishment that is added to the child's spiritual growth process after the rite of confirmation. What Scripture requires (1 Cor. 11:28) is that sufficient preparation be made so that a meaningful and blessed participation is assured (the context suggests that the apostle has in mind the impediment of lovelessness in Corinth rather than doctrinal insufficiency — doctrine was the long suit of the Corinthians). But while attitudes are important, Lutheran practice has always underscored a basic understanding of the sacrament, and the *Report for Study*, page 194, takes pains to spell out five "desirable prerequisites" for participation in Holy Communion.

Since it is within the context of the church that spiritual life is initiated in Baptism and nourished in Holy Communion and in the Word by means of the agencies of Christian training in the congregation, the doctrine of the church is an important part of any theological framework for confirmation. In the church the growing Christian experiences fellowship in Christ, draws from it, contributes to it. As he grows, the church grows (Eph. 4:15-16). And the church's mission is his mission at every stage of his growth. The church in turn coaches and trains the individual to participate in the mission to the full extent that his developing body, mind, and faith will allow. The church provides the individual Christian with the resources of worship, education, fellowship, witness, the work of ministry, and a shared hope. The individual not only receives the aid of these resources but is himself caught up in participation in the church's mission so that he becomes a giver of these resources to his fellow Christian, to the community, and to the world of men.



## II. THE HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

If, then, the theological framework provides relationships but no specific directive for deciding on an age for confirmation, can we find such directive in the history of the church, particularly the early church?

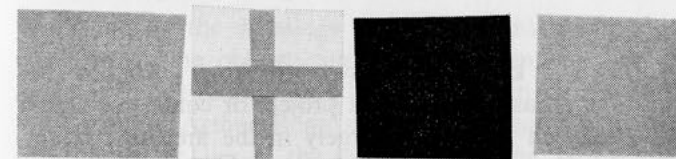
It is doubtful that a direct parallel can be made between confirmation instruction of children in the Lutheran Church of 20th-century America and the catechumenate of the ancient church. According to an early third-century account of liturgical and pastoral practices in Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, the instruction given was to prepare adults for Holy Baptism and thereby for full participation in the life of the church. For in addition to baptizing, the rite of initiation included two anointings with oil, sealing on the forehead, the laying on of the bishop's hand, and participation in the Eucharist. The initiation rite came only after a probationary period of up to 3 years, called the catechumenate, and after a more intensified period of instruction in the weeks before Easter, when one became an "elect," an announced candidate for Baptism. The children of the candidates were brought with them and participated in Baptism in the early Easter dawn ("at the hour when the cock crows").

Nor was the religious training of children done in preparation for receiving Holy Communion, at least to the 12th century. For the study of J. D. C. Fisher reveals that, to the 12th century, infants received Holy Communion at the time of their Baptism. And the practice did not cease altogether in the West until the 16th century.

And even though Pope Innocent I in 416 reserved for bishops the right to sign the brow with oil, thus separating the initiation rite into two ritual acts and preparing the way for further separation by time, the practice of confirming infants still commanded a fair measure of approval to the 13th century. It was the negligence of parents that brought about deferment of confirmation to a later age, not the difficulty of a bishop in making his rounds. And age limits were set in the West, sometimes with the threat of dire penalties, not in order to delay

confirmation but to put pressure on parents to have it done at all. As added motivation, scholastic theologians held that confirmation conferred a grace that Baptism did not offer. But as the interval between Baptism and confirmation grew longer, it was felt that there must be some reason why infants should not be confirmed. And in 1536 the Council of Cologne forbade confirming children under age seven on the grounds that a younger child understood little or nothing of what was done. The *Catechism of Trent* supported this reasoning.

The Lutheran Reformation turned its back on sacramental confirmation and emphasized, in the catechetical type of the 16th century, instruction in preparation for Communion. The traditional type of Lutheran confirmation, however, was not associated with first Communion but with Baptism. In view of the varying Lutheran traditions developing in these types and others of the 16th century and later, one is forced to conclude with Arthur Repp's statement in his *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*: "The mixed concepts concerning confirmation in the Lutheran Church . . . make it clear that history is of little help in determining what constitutes a Lutheran confirmation." But perhaps it does help, if only to caution us against assuming that Lutheran confirmation is necessarily a preparation for first Communion.



## III. EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

Assuming from the above that the historical development of confirmation in the early church, the medieval church, and the Lutheran Church of the 16th century does not present a fixed and unalterable practice of confirmation, then we may conclude that a concept of confirmation that relates validly with Baptism, Holy Communion, the doctrine of the Word, and the doctrine of the church is a viable concept, provided it also is based on sound educational principles.

Baptism, as we have seen, calls for the continuing nurture of the Christian by the Word as a lifelong process. Holy Communion requires sufficient preparation for self-examination for a beneficial participation in the sacrament. Then may we not structure confirmation as a stage in the lifelong process of nurture called for by Baptism and as a stage following that stage which prepared the child for Holy Communion? If this is allowed, then the definition of confirmation presented in the *Report for Study*, page 185, as a "pastoral and educational ministry" is valid and of great significance for educators in the church.

The age at which the confirmation process takes place is an important educational factor. And if the aim of the confirmation process as presented in the definition (*Report for Study*, p. 185) is "to help baptized children identify with the life and mission of the adult Christian

community," then an age grouping in middle adolescence (10th-grade youth) seems well suited to the educational task.

The profile of the 10th-grade youth (pp. 204—205) agrees well with Gesell's maturity profiles and traits of the 15-year-old and 16-year-old. And as Gesell says, "The 16-year-old youth if he rises to tiptoe can almost see the horizon of adulthood." And what better time to help him "to identify with the life and mission of the adult Christian community" than this time of apprentice adulthood in middle adolescence?

The stated aim of the confirmation task also agrees well with Robert J. Havighurst's ten developmental tasks for the adolescent, which have to do largely with physical and social maturity, emotional and economic independence, and planning for marriage and a career.

Readiness, a complex of maturational factors and extrinsic influences (such as experiences, cultural milieu, etc.), is an important educational consideration. Ronald Goldman's studies describe the age of 13/14 onwards as the age in which the child is developing formal (or abstract) operational thought (J. Piaget's "propositional thinking"). And as Goldman maintains, "A great deal of religious thinking is propositional (abstract) and therefore can only be dealt with at a formal operational level of thought, to be intellectually satisfying," the middle adolescent has reached a level of thinking that opens up new opportunities for achieving the more mature educational aim of confirmation. God is essentially thought of as a spirit, prayers conceptually take on a different texture and attain a greater degree of altruism, the church is now apprehended as a fellowship of believers, and church-going is seen as a natural expression of belief and a means of making one a better person.

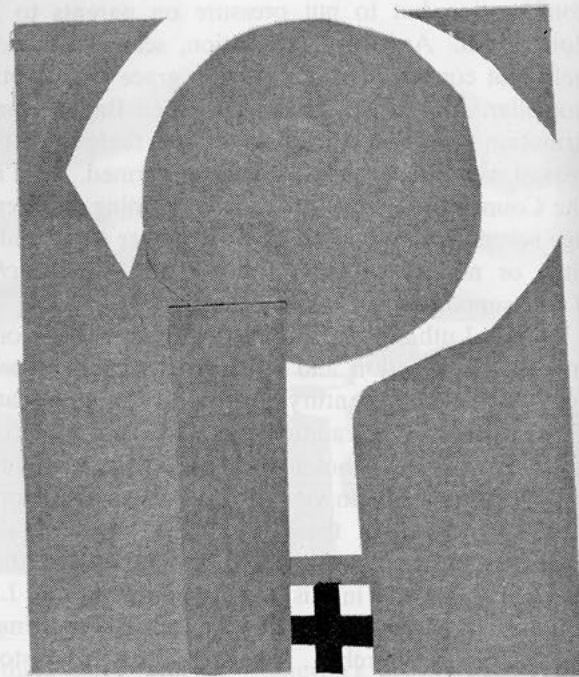
The 10th-grade youth, then, is seen as a highly suitable age grouping for attaining the confirmation aim. And it behooves the church, particularly the educators of the church, to diligently seek out and define the educational implications that are to be found in the basic needs, the maturity traits, and the developmental tasks of the middle adolescent as laid open to us by the researcher's tools.

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*What are the alternatives? It seems to me that there are three: eliminate the rite, substitute a different ceremony for the rite, or add some different practices.*



## ALTERNATIVES TO CONFIRMATION

by ERWIN J. KOLB

A professor on the faculty of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, serving in his first assignment as a Lutheran day school teacher, was shocked by the following experience. A few days after his eighth-grade pupils had been confirmed, they asked for a longer noon recess. They said they had something special to do. "May I go with you?" he asked, curious about this mysterious "something special." When there was no objection, he followed them. It was soon apparent that their destination was the river. Having arrived, they ceremoniously heaved their catechisms into the river. It was an established tradition in that school.

Our present confirmation practices have led many to so intellectualize their Christian faith that they think of "graduation" after mastering some "essential facts." The result has not only been "throwing the catechism into the river," actually but also symbolically. The evidence is an absence of ongoing study of the Scriptures, a misconception of the place of the sacraments, a failure to understand Christian growth and maturity, a lack of Christian service and life, and the oft-discussed "dropout problem." One pastor in California said in a pastors' workshop discussing the recommendations of the commission, "I know when I confirm my class this Palm Sunday I will never see half of them again."

This article raises the question as to whether it is possible to salvage confirmation from the tangled growth of tradition and practice that has mushroomed into our present practice. Does lowering the age for first Communion and postponing the age of confirmation solve the problems or only redistribute them?

No one knows the answer to these questions, because there has been no pilot project or controlled study. The predicted results are largely in the area of speculation. In this article I would like to speculate about some possible alternatives. These speculations, however, are more than wild dreaming, because they grow out of the experience of struggling with confirmation as a pastor for 14 years in several parishes, out of leading discussions in five workshops for pastors on the commission's report, and out of discussions in a congregational lay committee going through the proposed study procedures. These alternatives are not presented as tested and completed plans but as possibilities that seem practical and workable.

### Guidelines

Before we search for alternatives, we need some guidelines or criteria for alternatives. I would suggest five:

#### 1. Stress the Mission of the Church

The church is not an organization that exists for itself, adding members by teaching the catechism and extracting a confirmation vow. The church is people who are chosen and called by God through the Gospel. They have become members of the church by the creation of new life which is nourished and fed by the Gospel. Confirmation instruction is only one phase of that feeding.

The church has the mission of feeding its members with the Gospel and also to take the Gospel into the world and gather other people into its fellowship. The church is God's instrument of service and witness.

Any alternatives to confirmation must grow out of

this understanding of the church and its purpose and help to equip young people to become a part of it.

#### 2. Emphasize the Sacraments

Perhaps the biggest problem with our present system is that it has warped too many people's concept of the place of the sacraments in their lives. The baptized child is a second-rate member. Only when he "confirms" the covenant which his sponsors made for him at his baptism does he really become a full-fledged member of the church. What results is a failure to appreciate the place of Baptism in his growing Christian life and a misconception of the function of the Lord's Supper. As one teen-ager said, "After that build-up for three years during confirmation instruction, my first Communion was a real let-down." I don't see how it is possible to hold Communion as a carrot on the end of a stick in order to pressure children and parents into confirmation instruction and then expect the child to suddenly begin to use the Lord's Supper as the means of nurturing his faith. Whatever alternatives are suggested, they must recognize the baptized infant as a full member of the body of Christ; they must prepare that child to use the Lord's Supper to sustain his faith and grow in his Christian life.

#### 3. Encourage Thorough Instruction in the Word

One of the blessings of our present confirmation practices is the opportunity for instruction, and any alternative must retain this as the essence. In his studies on confirmation Arthur Repp says: "The heart of confirmation, however, lies in the instruction in the Word which precedes the rite. Here the real confirmation takes place, the confirmation of the faith by the Word. Here God continues to confirm the faith begun in Baptism and nurtured by the home and the church." He then quotes Claus Harms, who says, "He who is not confirmed before he is confirmed, will hardly be confirmed when he is confirmed."

#### 4. Prepare for Christian Life and Growth

Our confirmation instruction connected with the later years of the elementary school, emphasizing memorizing the catechism and being publicly examined, have tended to make the concept of faith an exercise of the mind. Emotional and ethical factors have been confused and often lost. Alternatives to confirmation must aim at emotional as well as cognitive response so that there is a growing personal piety in the life of the child. The alternatives must seek to equip the child with the necessary skills and disciplines that promote growth and must seek to motivate him to a life of service and witness.

#### 5. Retain the Values of our Confirmation Customs

Martin L. Maehr, professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois, has studied the psychological and educational considerations of the commission's recommendations. He suggests that our present practice serves the educational function of leading the individual "into

a particular view of himself and his identity." (Cf. his article elsewhere in this issue.) The confirmand receives feedback about himself not only from his pastor, teacher, and parent but from the whole community — telling him about himself, who he is and what he can do. Maehr concludes, "I would argue that confirmation as it is now practiced might well be a very effective teaching event, the loss of which we should not wish to experience."

Any alternative must seek to retain this educational value as well as the personal value to the individual of expressing his faith in public as he does in the confirmation rite.

### Alternatives

With these five criteria as guidelines, what are the alternatives? It seems to me that there are three: eliminate the rite, substitute a different ceremony for the rite, or add some different practices. It is assumed that in any of these alternatives the regular educational agencies will continue the instruction of the child.

#### 1. Eliminate the Confirmation Rite

An intelligent layman (one who read the study book twice and led Bible class discussions on it) said in the congregation committee meeting, "The biggest thing I learned was that Luther did not practice confirmation." He meant not only that Luther called the confirmation rite "monkey business" and did not use it but that confirmation was a development in Roman Catholic sacramental theology as a completion of Baptism and that other followers of Luther who practiced it were transplanting a Roman Catholic sacrament into a Lutheran system of church life. Perhaps it is true that the problems are inherent in the system and that we need to have the courage of Luther to throw confirmation out completely. Perhaps we need to develop the approach he used and emphasize the use of the sacraments rather than the practice of the confirmation rite as we learn to live under the forgiveness of sins. The aim of Luther's catechism instruction was to prepare for private confession and the proper reception of the Lord's Supper.

#### 2. Substitute a Different Ceremony

Any alternate that retains the word "confirmation" will continue to cause problems. The term means different things to different people and is connected to our understanding of the sacraments. While the commission has a fine new definition, it would take more than a generation for it to be accepted. As one layman said, "You don't change people's attitudes through a few hours of discussion."

One alternative then is to change the word and start over. The term "Affirmation of Faith" might be considered. A ceremony might be developed to go with it. Communion could be given at an earlier age with a special rite at the first Communion. The opportunity to make a public confession of his faith could be provided at a later time. It might be the time when he becomes eligible to hold office in the church. In any case it should be



a time when the adult community recognizes the person as ready to assume responsibility with the rest of the adult members for conducting the mission of the parish.

This need not be a one-time experience. It could be repeated at special occasions of the church or in ceremonies like anniversaries of Baptism. This has been tried by the members of Peace Lutheran Church, Salem, Oreg. In their "Year of Sacraments" they emphasized the place of the sacraments in their lives. They also developed a "Rite of Remembrance" of Baptism. The emphasis was so successful that Pastor Wagner says, "We now wonder whether it would serve the people better to require an annual confirmation (through some rite of Baptism remembrance) rather than the present once-in-a-lifetime confirmation ceremony as the door to the Communion privilege."

### 3. Add New Forms of Service

In order to overcome the tendency to intellectualize faith, perhaps the church should develop new ways of connecting opportunities for service to the study of the Word. One possibility might be to develop special-interest groups and allow the teen-ager to choose the special group to which he would like to belong: an evangelism group, a welfare group, a group concerned with the use of religious drama, banners, sculpture, etc., a group concerned with physical service, a coffee-house type of ministry, etc. The number and types of groups would be determined by the parish and its community, but each group would involve study of the Word, devotional disciplines, service, and witness.

As the church moves toward the 21st century, many signs indicate that it will continue to become an ever smaller minority, struggling to be relevant, seeking new ways to communicate its unchanging message of life and freedom in Christ. Under these conditions it can ill afford to be bound by traditions that do not contribute to its mission of bringing the love of God to people. It must be free to discard honored rites like confirmation, if necessary, and develop new forms and ceremonies for its day.

We cannot wait for guarantees of success. We must look to the Spirit of God to lead. As Gene Davenport has said, "The Church gambles when it decides to be responsive to the present guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as faithful to what the Spirit has revealed in the past." But when the church gambles like this, it has an "ace in the hole." It cannot lose. Our Lord said: "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18) and we say: "To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:21)

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## CHRIST AMONG THE DOCTORS

by Jack Tracy Ledbetter

... and the wind in the poplars sounded like harps —  
 "What of prevenient grace?"  
 "What? You smile? Your face —"  
 ... the music fell like dew drops from the dancing leaves —  
 "Count the angels, begin."  
 "Give us a word for sin."  
 ... then I raced up the hill with my friend's hands in mine —  
 "Your lessons first!"  
 "... or your soul shall thirst."  
 ... and the tall grass swept the sky as we raced in the wind —  
 "Tell us of phenomena."  
 "And adiaphora."  
 ... my heart seemed to burst, so full was my joy —  
 "Come now, this look."  
 "Under PLEASURE, this book —"  
 ... and I talked to my Father as I ran through the flowers —  
 "Page six, God: How to Know Him."  
 "First prepare yourself; now this hymn —"  
 ... then the sea sprang before me like the back of my God;  
 and His breath filled my lungs, manly and free;  
 as I fell to the sand and plunged my arms in the water,  
 we laughed in the sunlight: my friends, God, and me.  
 "But, Jesus, Your position —"  
 "Shh! Listen!"

The emerging consensus seems to be that adults are not to be "confirmed," that is, received into the church through a rite of confirmation. Instead they are to be baptized or received through a profession of faith.

## SHOULD WE STILL "CONFIRM" ADULTS?

by VICTOR A. CONSTIEN

Should we still "confirm" adults? What an absurd question, people say. Of course we should! We're not confirming *enough* adults now. Last year the rate of growth among all Lutheran groups in the United States was the lowest in recent years. We ought to be confirming *more* adults.

If we understand "confirm" to mean "add to the church," then the argument is correct. We have been conducting adult "confirmation" or "instruction" classes to prepare men and women for *membership* in the local congregation. When the 10 to 12 sessions of a "pastor's class" are completed, those members of the class who consent are "confirmed" in a public rite. They become communicant members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and of the parish in which the instruction has been given.

Some Christian leaders have in recent years become uneasy about this practice. They rejoice with all Christians that God adds new members to the body of Christ, enlisting new witnesses for Him. They celebrate the return to an active Christian ministry of some who appeared to have been lost to Christ and His church after being baptized as infants.

However, they question whether adults should be re-

ceived into the church through the rite of adult confirmation. If the adult has not been baptized, should he not be prepared for Baptism through study, prayer, and the formation of growing relationships with other Christians and then publicly confess his faith and be baptized? Isn't Baptism his entry into God's family and the local parish? Or, if he was baptized as an infant or during his youth, isn't he publicly received into membership in a congregation by reaffirming the faith God initiated in Baptism, reclaiming the blessing of that divine action for himself?

The Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation, appointed by the presidents of The American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has published a preliminary report to the churches that validates these pastoral concerns. In its preamble the commission states: "Both historic practice and present need indicate that confirmation can best serve the church today as a practice designed for baptized children. Adults should not be confirmed but following adequate instruction should be received into membership in the congregation by Baptism or, where they have already been baptized, by profession of faith."

Well, if we are not supposed to "confirm" adults,





what should we do with them? The joint commission suggests: (1) Teach them. (2) Baptize the unbaptized. (3) If the adult has already been baptized, help him make a public profession of his faith. That profession also marks the recognition by the local congregation of his membership with them.

Every congregation of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod knows well how to baptize adults or receive them into membership by profession of faith. We are generally good at organizing public worship services. But many congregations falter when it comes to *teaching* adults, especially in preparation for church membership.

In March 1963 a Board of Parish Education subcommittee surveyed "the nature, scope, and quality of adult membership instruction in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod." Seven hundred seventeen of the one thousand congregations contacted responded. In his report on this survey Robert Hoyer reached the conclusion that there is considerable diversity of practice among pastors conducting membership classes. "This seems to indicate a rather wide and scattered opinion concerning what constitutes a good course, or a widespread discontent with all available courses," Hoyer wrote.

As one consequence of this survey the Subcommittee on Adult Premembership Instruction asked Prof. Robert Conrad, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to frame a statement of "Principles for the Development of Adult Premembership Instruction." Conrad made this theme the subject of a master's thesis and published a resumé of his findings in the February 1968 issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*.

Our space is limited here, but let's at least become acquainted with the instructional sequence that Conrad proposes for a course utilizing the theological organizing principle of the Law-Gospel life of the children of God.

He describes the sequence as follows, offering a brief summary of each section:

#### *First Use of the Law*

Men make demands on men as they live together in society. Men fail to meet the demands made on them.

#### *Second Use of the Law*

The demands are God's demands, and God judges those who fail. The Second Table of the Decalog and then the First Table.

#### *The Nature of Man*

Man fails in his relationship to God and men because of his nature.

#### *The Gospel*

God's action in Jesus Christ changed the situation of a man from judgment to acceptance. The Second Article. Faith in God's act is necessary.

#### *Living in the Tension of Law and Gospel*

The Gospel moves men to do the will of God in every relationship of life. Failures are judged by God,

but God forgives and restores through the Gospel. The Christian lives in hope even in the tension of Law and Gospel.

#### *Scripture and Confessions*

Scripture is the primary witness to the Gospel, the Confessions secondary. The Christian is a proclaimer of the Gospel. The Spirit works faith through the Gospel. Third Article.

#### *Creation*

The Gospel causes a man to call God "Father" and thus acknowledge Him also as "Creator." First Article.

#### *Baptism*

God causes new life with Him through Baptism. He also causes a new relationship and responsibility to other baptized persons in the church.

#### *Confession and Absolution*

The significance of Baptism continues. We live in Law and Gospel. An approach to the Lord's Supper.

#### *The Lord's Supper*

This sacrament sustains the new life in God in the Christian community.

#### *The Church*

God calls the church into being and sustains it through the Gospel and the sacraments.

#### *Ministry*

Ministry is the function of Word and sacraments, carried out among and by the members of the church.

#### *Functions of the Church*

Nurture and worship are functions done within the Christian community which enable Christians to serve and witness in the world.

In the fall of 1968 and the spring of 1969 selected circuit pastoral conferences in Synod discussed this learning sequence and reacted to it through a questionnaire which was to be returned to the Subcommittee on Adult Premembership Instruction. Tabulations are not complete. Yet enough analysis has been done to show that, though some pastors disagree with the sequence of Conrad's outline, they nevertheless agree that his thesis merits further study.

A typical response went like this: "The pastors of the circuit felt a real need for new adult instruction materials. Various printed courses are being used, but none of them completely satisfies the men who are using them."

One circuit in Oregon passed the following resolution: "Resolved, that the instructional sequence as expounded in the discussion guide for adult premembership instruction be expanded into an adult course that brings unity into the instruction of adults by our churches."

The subcommittee faces at least two alternatives. One is to commission the kind of course the above reso-

lution requests. Another is to provide additional guidelines to assist pastors in planning their own courses. Future meetings will determine what course to follow. Of course, the committee will try to be responsive to any who voice their feelings on the matter.

In the meantime the Boards of Parish Education of the three major Lutheran groups in America have asked an ad hoc committee on confirmation to prepare a course for the instruction of adults for church membership. This committee has submitted a proposal to the Coordinating Committee for Cooperative Parish Education Projects.

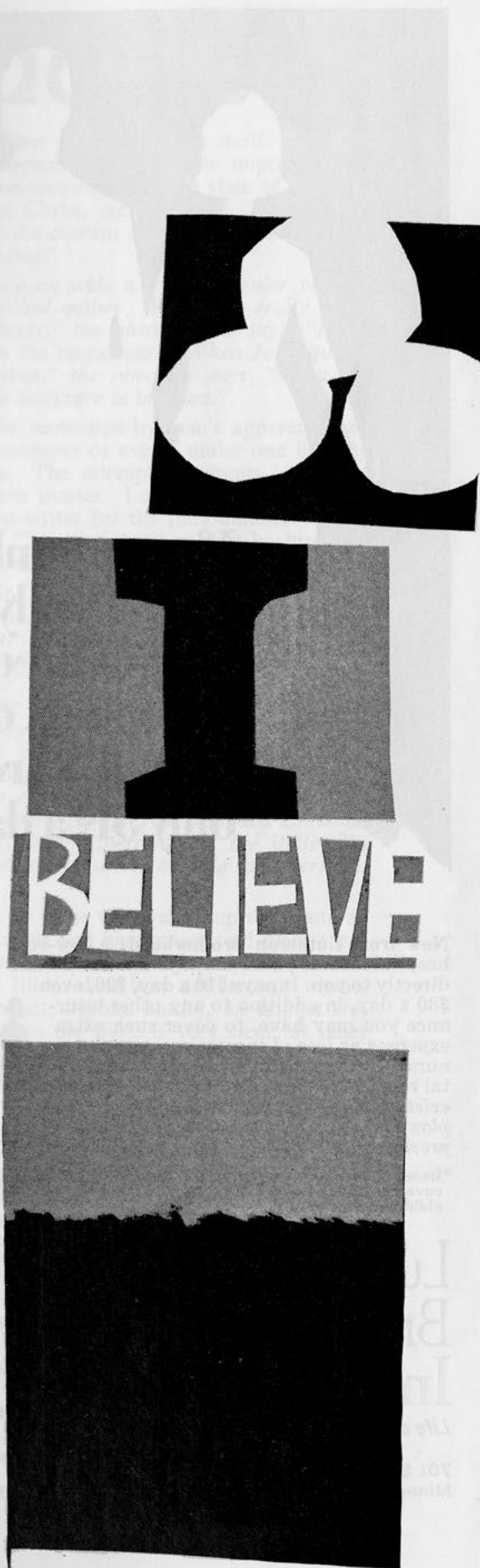
Four purposes are listed for the proposed course:

1. Develop the ability to interpret common experiences in life in the Christian community as having the God dimension and involving the world.
2. Recognize, experience, and identify with the Christian community.
3. Develop skills for participation in community activities such as worship, education, and service.
4. Seek ways of expressing their faith relationships in terms that are meaningful.

It is suggested that materials in a leader's guide and handbook for students for the proposed 12 to 16 sessions of the course be organized around the common daily experiences of life such as "love and hate, sin and forgiveness, success and failure, frustration, loneliness, relevant relationships, the need to establish realistic goals, and death."

Designers of the course plan to lead class members to examine the experiences of men and women that are recorded in Holy Scripture and are parallel to those of contemporary man. Comparisons should advance the ability of class members to deal creatively with the issues they face in the complex relationships of an increasingly technical life.

To summarize, the emerging consensus seems to be that adults are not to be "confirmed," that is, received into the church through a rite of confirmation. Instead they are to be baptized or received through a profession of faith. The instruction they receive prior to their baptism or profession of faith should be based on sound theological and psychological goals and should employ the best in adult educational methodology.







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# footnote<sup>5</sup>

Theologians are great phrasemakers. That statement is in itself a phrase, so I will hasten to unmake it: "Some theologians emphasize the importance of particular verbal expressions." Here are some famous ones: the state of humiliation, human and divine nature, centrality of Christ, real presence, inerrancy of Scripture. Such phrases often become part of the content and heritage of Christian education in schools and in confirmation classes.

*A danger that accompanies the insistence on wide use of particular phrases is that the user seems to be saying to the Biblical author, "What you really mean is —." So when Jesus says, "This is My body," the phrasemaker says, "Lord, what You really mean is the real presence in the sacrament." When John quotes Jesus' words, "The Scripture cannot be broken," the reworder says, "What the author is actually trying to convey is that the Scripture is inerrant."*

The formulation of phrases may often be motivated by man's apparent need to gather a number of separate reports of statements or events under one heading so that man's mind can master the diversity. The attempt represents a kind of wish to arrange things so that man can be their master. Let's confess that human effrontery, if not arrogance, is often the ghost-writer for the phrasemaker. Every once in a while I wish we could simply say, "The Scriptures cannot be broken," and then proceed to harvest the blessings of that unbreakable Book.

*Because of our presumptiveness we desire to be, above everything else, clear. We may forget that it is possible to be very clear and thereby very untrue. This desire to establish clear phrases is exposed in one writer's tongue-in-cheek review of a new translation of the Bible. Said the reviewer: "In some passages the new translation is clearer than the original text." Recently, after we had just seen a "religious" play, an observer objected to the lack of clarity in the play. "From beginning to end," said he, "a religious play must always be perfectly clear." This man had not recently read the Book of Job, Canticles, Ezekiel, or the Revelation of St. John. Occasionally one would like to hear about not only the inerrancy but also about the mysteriousness of Scripture, about the magnificent uncertainties of that often inscrutable Book. Being (I hope) an orthodox Christian (another phrase), I do not hesitate to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, but I must add that I consistently experience a colossal failure to be able to understand some of Scripture's splendid inerrancies.*

The quest for rational clarity engaged in by those who gather up the scattered jewels (like Abraham's stars) of Biblical concepts and happenings and place them in their own neat verbal jewelry boxes is necessary and commendable, for cut-diamond clarity is one of the virtues of the Bible. But it is not its only virtue. There is also the emotional and spiritual impact, beyond clarity, an impact frequently beautifully incomprehensible. Sometimes the Bible is very clear; at other times it is moving. Often, but not always, it is both.

*What effect does the propagation of phrases have on the emergence of extremism? I am not aware of data. I would surmise (guess) that abstract phrases nudge their users toward extremes because they emphasize one aspect at the expense of others. Extremism breeds extremism, often of the opposite pole. Then the bandying of phrases begins to resemble the screeching of fishwives. In an old children's play two fishwives scream epithets while they tug at opposite ends of a fish until the necessary man slices the fish in two with a cleaver.*

After all, we Christians are here to catch fish, not dissect them. Would today's revised symbol of some Christian groups resemble two persons tugging at opposite ends of the Christian fish?

*Afterthought: It's harder to write and sing hymns shaped out of theological than out of Scriptural phrases. Why do the coined phrases so often grate on the ear? Perhaps because they usually seem to come out in four-syllable Latinate diction. When will some phrasemaker tell us what Joseph Mohr really meant with his words set to Franz Gruber's carol? Probably when he can find a four-syllable word to rephrase "silent" and "night."*

WALTER E. MUELLER



**SILENT NIGHT! HOLY NIGHT!** By Paul Rosel. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969.

Christmas 1968 generated more than the usual amount of interest in the words and music of one of its most famous carols — "Silent Night." For 1968 marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of this miniature masterpiece, undoubtedly the best known of all the Christmas hymns and carols.

An authentic historical account of the source, origin, and path to fame of this Christmas gem is revealed in lucid fashion in this concise but fact-packed booklet. Dr. Rosel traveled extensively through the Austrian provinces of Tyrol, Salzburg, and upper Austria in order to gather essential material that would distinguish the "Silent Night" legends from historical facts. Some of these oft-heard legends, along with their own sources of origin, are reiterated here, but the actual straightforward account of the wedding of the text and music, its first presentation, and how its simple melody and text spread throughout the world dispels the many romanticized myths connected with this carol.

To add still a further degree of completeness to the work, the author has provided capsule biographies of the composer of the music — Franz Gruber, and the author of the text — Joseph Mohr, showing how, during the course of their lives, their paths crossed and the famous carol was born.

Of equal interest and value is the appearance of a statement of the melody in its original form compared with the more commonly known altered form. The original is a very delightful version — perhaps even more musical than the altered — which almost makes one wish that it, rather than the other, could have been retained. Maybe our familiarity with the common form, however, could make any other version seem strange.

Also, the original text of six stanzas appears in the German along with an English translation. It would have been interesting to learn why only three instead of all six of the stanzas were translated and retained.

Finally, the inclusion of a number of photographs (many of them taken by the author) that accompany the account help to make the entire work more vivid and complete.

This little book is probably the most accurate and complete recounting of the "Silent Night" study that you will find. If music appreciation, in your estimation, constitutes the spinning of dramatic and romantically superficial stories about composers and their works, you may be dis-

appointed in this book. If, however, you are satisfied with the truth; indeed, if you thrill to the fact that a masterpiece can be created by a human being working simply and honestly to praise his Lord, then you will enjoy this book. At any rate, we finally have an authentic account.

THEODORE BECK

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION — IN TRANSIT!** John Choitz, ed. Yearbook of Lutheran Education Association, River Forest, Ill.

In January 1969 the Lutheran Education Association convened a summit conference on Christian education. Over 50 key educators and policymakers were invited to this conference to hear, discuss, and formulate responses to the presentations of several qualified essayists in the areas of history, sociology, political science, economics, linguistics, psychoanthropology, and theology.

The essayists, from the vantage of their particular discipline, were to address the following types of questions: What is the function and purpose of Christian education in the last decades of the 20th century? How is the function to be implemented? How is the purpose of Christian education to be articulated? Further, what theological framework and what theological language can encompass and confront the questions and answers posed by other disciplines? In short, is it possible for the purpose of Christian education to be not only theologically viable but informed, credible, and convincing from an interdisciplinary point of view as well?

The essays delivered at this conference constitute the bulk of the LEA 1969 yearbook. In addition, questions and responses of conference participants have been appended to the essays. The latter are particularly useful for charting unresolved areas of discussion and pinpointing problems yet to be researched or confronted.

Dr. Allan Jahsmann, recently returned from studies in England, examined the educational process from the standpoint of communications. What is this Word of God we attempt to communicate? What is the reality we attempt to have people confront and experience? How do we meaningfully communicate the reality of the Word in the life of the Christian community? What is happening in the areas of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication that is of import to the Christian educator? There is a possi-

bility that one might misunderstand Dr. Jahsmann's response to these questions. In an attempt to free us from a magical and doctrinaire use of language, it may superficially appear that the import of verbalization is slighted. However, a more careful reading suggests that Jahsmann is essentially concerned not with types of communication but with the total context of communication, with the relationship between the communicator and the one to whom he communicates, and with those nonverbal cues that signal our real meaning and render it credible and convicting. Language is alive only when it is used. It is used effectively only when the context and the experienced meaning are subjectively validated.

Dr. Norman Graebner wrestled with the historical development and justification of the educational enterprise, particularly in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Graebner cites three motives for the formation of our particular system of Christian education: "the need for the establishment of conscience, spirituality, and conviction," the perceived necessity in a frontier society of perpetuating an established tradition of learning that would sustain ethnic solidarity, and the necessity for German immigrants to attain the social standing and mobility resulting only from sound education.

Graebner further suggests that the strength of the Missouri Synod — its precision of doctrine, its well-established clergy, its unity of family and congregational life — is attributable to the educational system created in the 19th century. Asked by several participants if he thought these purposes and motives still viable, Graebner responded that this was a question for present Lutheran educators, not historians. This question became the central focus of further discussions and the responses appended to the essay.

A political scientist (Dr. Victor Hoffmann), an economist (Dr. Paul Heyne), a sociologist (Father Andrew Greely), and, for want of a better term, an urban metaphysician (Dr. Richard Luecke) wrestled with the purpose of Christian education in the larger social matrix of politics, economics, urbanization, and secularization. Without attempting to summarize the substance of the panel discussion, some questions indicative of the nature and scope of the presentations can be stated: From an economic point of view (e.g., scarce resources, increasing demands, different priorities), is the parochial school economically feasible or justifiable in the next 20 years? Is there an area of research suggested by Luecke's statement that although schools are tradi-

tionally concerned with truth and politics with power, schools have actually been playing a power game within the confines of the institution (e.g., WASP propensity to sustain an all-white, middle-class establishment)? In an age of ideology and conflict, these questions are preparatory to a more stringent reexamination of the social and political bases of the educational enterprise.

Dr. Walter Wangerin had the unenviable task of speaking a theological word in the midst of these questions. Stating that Christian education is "celebrating God's creation," "proclaiming Christ's Gospel," and "expecting the Holy Spirit's work," Wangerin posits that the very tensions discussed prior are part and parcel of God's creation and subject to Christ's freeing and redemptive power through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is in the midst of economic, social, and political crises that God is active, calling the Christian community not to disenchantment and isolation but to involvement and wonder. The product of Christian education is mature in Christ, open to the Holy Spirit, and geared to active involvement in the Father's world. Wangerin's essay also drew a heavy response, particularly since new sets of questions had arisen among conference participants, questions to which theology must be responsive if it is to remain potent and transforming.

Dr. Merton Strommen, basing his presentation on a recently completed survey of all important research in religious development, states that we face "three perceptible trends and developments, each of which has its strangling effects or creates unique problems for the Christian educator. The three developments relate to alienation, inability to delay gratification, and a disenchantment with the institutional church." Strommen suggests steps to be taken to modify our educational approach in light of these developments.

The first trend is alienation, the basic component of which is distrust — of oneself, of others, of the meaningfulness of the world, of the promise of the future. To reestablish trust, Strommen isolates two factors which research indicates would have an ameliorative effect on alienation: teacher qualities and social climate.

Citing the inconclusive evidence of

what is gained through Christian education (particularly in the areas of belief and humanitarianism), Strommen suggests that the effects of good teachers (ones who create trust) are often obliterated by the negative effects of other teachers (ones who cannot create trust). Of prime importance is the quality of the teacher not only as a locus of information and guidance but as one who can empathetically engage the student in dialog. Dialog is especially important in the Christian setting. Affirming that where two or three are gathered the Shepherd of all is present, it is the recognition of His presence that is most conducive to empathy, warmth, love, and trust.

A second ameliorative factor is a concern with social climate. Research indicates that parental congeniality and religious values are basic and necessary to the elimination or amelioration of individual alienation. More attention must be given to the idea that we are the family of God and that within this total family Christian education is most effective.

The second trend is the "delay of gratification," the shift from a future-oriented to a now-oriented search for gratification and a concomitant unwillingness to delay the fulfillment of one's desires. Moving from a culture based on renunciation to a culture based on release, from an image of man based on denial to an image of man based on pleasure, we are entering the era of "psychological man." Phillip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, has drawn a personality profile of psychological man that bears a striking resemblance to the portrait sketched by Strommen.

Psychological man seeks immediate gratification. He views reality not as an oppressive opponent but as an arena for self-expression and pleasure. Seemingly at odds with the Christian view of man, past educational canons of religious development, and past social mores, the beliefs and motives of psychological man force reexamination in the Christian community of some of its more highly touted "truths."

Strommen views this development not as wholly undesirable but as a possible opportunity for raising key questions about religious development. "Which of

the many potentialities will you choose to actualize and which will you deny in seeking the idea of the stature of the fullness of Christ?" What past denials remain intrinsic to the life of the mature man in Christ, and what denials are extrinsic and quasi-theological rather than Gospel-oriented?

The final trend is disenchantment, a trend among our young for a concern with people and issues, along with a distrust of an impacted institutional church which is viewed as self-serving. To capitalize on this new mood among the new breed, education must, according to Strommen, complete itself in mission. "We tend to follow the shelter model of feeding and keeping — not equipping and sending. Youth's concern for action and their eagerness for change suggest that we have a new model that may be with us for some time." Can education discover new means for developing this new model?

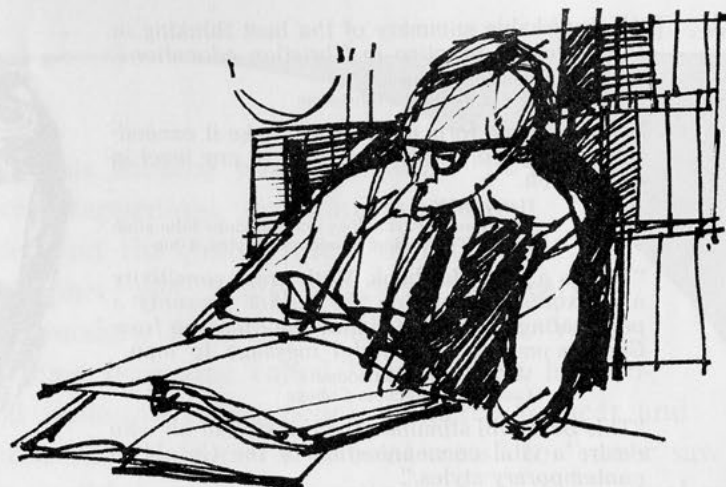
Jahsmann's thesis for Christian communication suggests new ways for communicating to this new man. Luecke's concern with issues and Hoffmann's concern for minorities relate to youth's quest for significance and involvement. Wangerin's theological propositions suggest that this new breed is a covert disciple of the One who creates, calls, equips, and sends in mission in the world.

In short, the 1969 LEA yearbook is all of one piece. Educators must address it with concern, eagerness, and intelligence if the function and purpose of Christian education are not to atrophy or become inarticulate. LEA is to be commended for bringing these concerns to the attention of the church. The only question remaining is whether or not the church can creatively and courageously address these concerns now.

CHARLES SAUER

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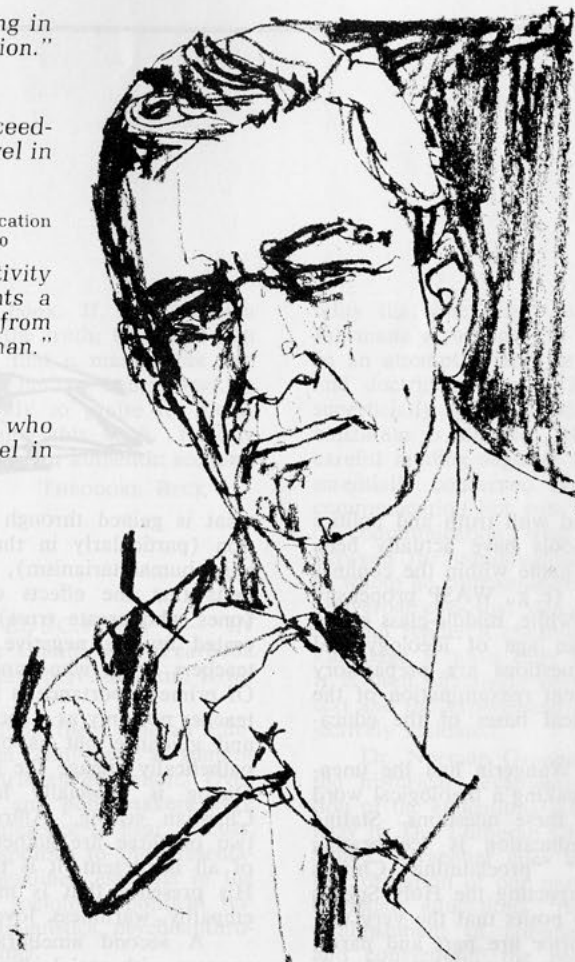
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# POWER BEYOND WORDS

Communication Systems of  
the Spirit and Ways of  
Teaching Religion

by Allan Hart Jahsmann



"How can we best communicate the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit?" is the question. For the answer Allan Hart Jahsmann, experienced pastor, educator, and writer, turns first to the Scriptures, then to the newest insights of theology, education, psychology, and communication theory.

He has sharp criticism for dull, spirit-less and fruitless teaching. "God's Word is *more than words*. It is truth and meaning and spirit and life. These can be destroyed by plain, dull, belabored talk that leaves little to the Spirit of God in the Word and in the learner."

After laying a solid theoretical base, Dr. Jahsmann makes bold, exciting suggestions for improving the teaching of the Word so that communication of the Spirit takes place—and "without the experience of God's Spirit no Christian learning occurs."

ALLAN HART JAHSMANN served as a Lutheran day school teacher and parish pastor. He has a Ph. D. degree in education and psychology and spent a year in study at the Menninger Clinic, Topeka, Kans. He is now executive editor of the Board of Parish Education for the LCMS.

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HORIZONS IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

*Bethel* is a famous Biblical name. It was the locale of famous happenings, including the warm story of Jacob's ladder and the chilling event of little children mocking God's prophet and being attacked by bears.

Recently the name gained modern fame when Bethel, New York, became the scene of what *Time* magazine called "the greatest happening in history." Four hundred thousand young people gathered to hear and sing "rock" music. Adult reactions ranged from "a colossal mess" to "never saw a nicer group of youngsters." The youthful participants called it "a truly spiritual experience." Question: Where does the modern and the ancient come together? Is it at the ladder or the bears? Or, perchance, "the bares"? After all, the *New York Times* called it "a phenomenon of innocence."

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*Edutainment*, an educator says, is what schools will be providing in the future. He defines it as the marriage of proven entertainment techniques with the manufacture of educational film products. Does this mean "Lassie" will teach calculus? Will "Gunsmoke" offer a course in the Gallic Wars? Is "Laugh-In" scheduled for Principles of Biblical Interpretation? Put like that, it sounds pretty ludicrous. But given a little serious thought, it sounds like it might have possibilities. After all, everyone admits (1) entertainment attracts and (2) films and TV teach. Put the two together? It might work.

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*Press On!* This is our school year theme. All great ventures have a rally cry like this. Columbus sang: Sail on. In recent years the cry was: To the moon. Here at C.T.C. we are completing a year of 75th anniversary jubilation. What now? Rest on laurels? To the contrary, the Christian educational forces and resources are pointed toward the future. We head toward the horizon. We press on. Where? Toward some hazy horizon? Fortunately not!

Like Paul, it's straight toward the goal. We press on toward answering and performing the call of God in Jesus Christ. A clear mark and a worthy prize indeed!

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W. Th. Janzow

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