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COMMUNICANTS' CLASS MATERIALS  
AS AN AID TO A MORE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FOR THE ADOLESCENT  
IN UNITING WITH THE CHURCH

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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

A. Problem Stated and Justified

This study proposes to consider ways and means of making uniting with the church a more significant experience to the adolescent.

Much is being said and written today, both by those within and by those without the church, concerning the ineffectiveness of the church's ministry and the indifference of church members. A recent issue of a popular magazine carried the following statement in an article entitled "The Crisis of the Spirit", by Franz Werfel:

"I do not speak of religion in the form of creeds. There are still many millions of faithful church-goers. But whoever looks into their hearts will discover that only a small number truly experience religion, that the majority merely repeat from loyalty what they have inherited from their ancestors. The great 'astonishment before life', which Aristotle considered the Source of all human spiritual activity, has faded for them as for avowed materialists to an insipid and indolent cynicism."<sup>1</sup>

Professor Ray H. Abrams, of the University of Pennsylvania, who has written the chapter in The Prospect for Youth dealing with youth and the church, has discovered that there is an increase in membership and gifts, and at the same time a greater secularization of the church and a slackening of attendance and interest. He believes that only lip service and emotional attachment to "the old" in our civilization remain.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Werfel, Franz: "The Crisis of the Spirit", Harper's Bazaar, December, 1942, p. 47
2. Cf. Long, Jacob Avery: Young People and the Church, p. 4

In a book containing the findings of a recent study of the attitudes of a group of representative youth toward the church, the following statement is made:

"For the past three or four decades critics have frequently said that the church has been losing its power as a medium of social control and that people have been losing faith in the church."<sup>1</sup>

Another writer who is concerned with this problem has commented on the increased interest in religion as evidenced from the great number of religious publications in popular magazines, but he goes on to say:

"One cannot fail, then, to ponder seriously whether this widespread interest in religion in our time means anything if it lacks the vital contacts of a functioning religion. The church essentially affords the technique of religion. It is through its functions that the resources of the Eternal are brought to bear upon individual lives and social conditions. What, then, remains of the interest in religion if we are not interested in the church as the technique for bringing the resources of the Eternal to bear upon our personal lives and our social problems?"<sup>2</sup>

Opinions such as the above are partially justified by the frequency with which they are expressed from varying sources. They are further justified when one sees their compatibility with statistics which show that the church is falling far behind its possibilities in making Christianity a reality in the life of the individual. Sunday School enrollment and average attendance, and the number added to church membership by profession of faith from the Sunday School all reveal a serious decline.<sup>3</sup> There is a dearth of capable Christian leaders.

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1. Long: op. cit., p. 2
2. Venable, Charles L.: The Threshold of the Temple, p. xii
3. Long: op. cit., p. 11: "A comparison of Sunday School enrollment, average attendance, and the number added to church membership by profession of faith from the Sunday Schools of the Presbyterian Churches in the U.S.A....for the years 1926 to 1936, reveals a startling loss." A Guide for Bible Study, Unit 1, Evangelical Teacher Training Association, The Scripture Press, Chicago, states that each year the church is losing 65% to 75% of its Sunday School members of Senior and Intermediate ages.

Roger Babson, eminent statistician, has observed:

"Local causes often are factors, but these six - the loss of certain favoring influences, competing attractions, the people's waiting mood, the church's indifference, the age's independent spirit, the Church's failure to concentrate on its fundamental mission, and the unchristian character of so many church members - have operated practically everywhere in producing the decline."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Babson declares that on an average perhaps twenty-five per cent of registered members are supporting the churches with personal attendance (that is, two Sundays out of four).<sup>2</sup>

A problem as complex as this one will naturally trace its difficulties to many contributing sources; but is it not reasonable to assume the possibility that one of the primary sources of this condition may be found at the point where young people are received into church membership? Yesterday's young people are today's responsible church members. Today young people are uniting with the church at each communion service. Just how meaningful has been the experience of uniting with the church? Could it have been made more meaningful? Would today's church be more alive to its opportunities and responsibilities had this matter of receiving young people into church membership been made as significant as its importance warrants?

Let us take a look at actual experiences of young people in uniting with the church.

Professor Douglas Macintosh has warned that often we "inoculate young people with a very mild type of religion which renders them practically immune to Christianity in its original and dynamic form."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Babson, Roger W.: How to Increase Church Attendance, p. 29
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 150 (1936 statistics)
3. Porter, Eliot: Being a Church Member, p. 13

For example, a girl with favorable home influence was received into church membership several years ago after an apparently thorough communicants' class instruction. She became a very nominal church member and the leader of a "hard" group of high school young people. A new teacher in the high school tried to improve conditions through a girls' club. When this girl learned the teacher had not joined the church, she was horrified. The girl felt her own church membership made her a Christian no matter how she lived. It was simply a dip-and-be-done-with-it matter, and lack of membership branded the teacher as a heathen.<sup>1</sup>

In a class in psychology of religion, twenty-seven upper classmen recently wrote their religious biographies. Each one mentioned uniting with the church between eleven and fifteen years of age. With only two exceptions, each so mentioned the fact as to make it evident that he had joined in a spirit of tepid acquiescence.<sup>2</sup> For example:

" 'At about this time, when I was thirteen, the minister urged me to join the Church. My Sunday School teacher encouraged me. Several of my friends were joining, so I went with them.' "<sup>3</sup>

Some said it meant little. Most of the others did not even enter into a discussion of its importance. One girl had wept because of her disappointment in the experience. One young fellow was still bitter because his church, he felt, had dragged him in to increase its statistical record, neglected him as soon as his name was on the roll, and thus 'burned over the ground', so to speak, so that for years he had assumed religion as empty of meaning as he had found church membership. The rest of the twenty-seven were not bitter nor critical. It seemed they

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1. Porter: op. cit., p. 13
2. Ibid., p. 12
3. Ibid.

had joined the Church much as they had put on long trousers, or taken out membership in the "Y".<sup>1</sup>

One minister remarked that he was more afraid of receiving people into the church who were not ready for the step than he was of not receiving any at all.<sup>2</sup> There is a real possibility of young people flocking into the church by mere suggestion, or merely by the example of their friends. It is possible for a young adolescent boy or girl to be bothered into church membership by the minister, a teacher, or parents as the easiest way out of an embarrassing situation. This does not imply, of course, that influence by elders and by companions has no rightful place; but it does point to the desirability of the candidate's knowing so surely that he has made up his own mind that he will never doubt that fact.<sup>3</sup>

#### B. Problem Delimited

There are many aspects of the church's program and home training which contribute to the adolescent's preparation for uniting with the church. Home instruction from Christian parents, attitudes taken by parents and other members of the household, the Sunday School, young people's societies, ministers, and Christian teachers - all may have borne large influence upon the child who has become a candidate for church membership. The communicant's class, however, is the one place where presumably detailed and thorough instruction is given with one specific end in view, uniting with the church; and since this group

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1. Cf. Porter: op. cit., pp. 12-13
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 13
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 16

usually presents a number of young people of heterogeneous church and home background and training, it is desirable that the instruction given in this class be of a comprehensive nature without too much reliance on previous training and instruction. This study, then, will be limited to this one agency which has as its sole aim the preparation of young people for church membership; and since the ages of twelve to fourteen are those at which youth are usually considered mature enough to take the step of uniting with the church, the word "adolescent", as used in this study, will refer to that period which is more accurately termed "early adolescence", or the "intermediate" age.

It is not possible for this study to include consideration of ways in which church membership may be made more meaningful to the adolescent after the step of uniting with the church has been taken. The writer is fully aware of the fact that many fine Christians have traced their vital Christian experience to a time which followed their being received into church membership.

"One remembers the elderly minister, who, having examined young Albert Schweitzer before reception into church membership, remarked to Albert's aunt, 'Albert is one of the indifferent ones.' One remembers young Dwight Moody, acquiescing so easily to the suggestion that he become a Christian, his real struggle still seven years in the future. One remembers young John Mott, who joined at fourteen and kept his membership a secret through nearly two years. How easy it would have been to judge each of these cases a mistake!"<sup>1</sup>

Mudge gives us an illustration in "Case 54":

"When I was twelve years old I was confirmed. Three nights a week after school hours we received instruction from our

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1. Porter: op. cit., pp. 13, 14

minister. These teachings did not affect me greatly at the time. I learned my catechism perfectly but did not feel greatly moved by it. I can still remember what he said and believe I have been affected later but was not conscious of it during the period of preparation."<sup>1</sup>

No one can say definitely of those to whom uniting with the church was only a superficial or disappointing step that it would have been better had they been permitted to grow older as outsiders; this thesis, however, is limited to the idea that uniting with the church should be a significant experience.

The limits of this study will not permit consideration of the materials of all leading denominations. For the purposes of this thesis it will be adequate to study communicants' materials of four leading Protestant denominations - the Presbyterian, the Reformed, the Episcopalian, and the Methodist (the first three representing those denominations which consider the covenant relationship established at the time of infant baptism, and the fourth representing those denominations which look upon infant baptism as an act of dedication by the parents). As a means of comparison and contrast, and for possible helpful suggestions, some communicants' materials of the Roman Catholic Church have been included.

It is recognized that the communicants' materials per se cannot effect a meaningful experience for the young person uniting with the church. The absence of Christian character and personality in the teacher, an unchristian or indifferent home environment, or lack of receptivity in the pupil can negate the values of any materials printed in a book. Granted that the instructor is a sincere Christian and a

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1. Mudge, E. Leigh: Varieties of Adolescent Experience, p. 133

capable teacher, the parents Christian and cooperative, and the pupil teachable, the materials used may easily present the variable in making the experience a significant one.

### C. Sources for Study

Because of the somewhat large number of available materials in each denomination, communicants' booklets were chosen on the basis of their current popularity and value as asserted by sales clerks in each denominational book store. These booklets constitute the primary sources of study for this thesis. Secondary sources include books which deal with the psychology of religion in adolescence, and those which are concerned generally with youth in their relationship to the church. These have been supplemented by recent articles in magazines.

### D. Method of Procedure

The order of procedure will be first to look into the nature of adolescent religious experience from the psychological angle and then to go on to discover the dominant emphases of the communicants' class materials under consideration. Next we shall consider methods of instruction in communicants' classes as suggested by the materials selected. With this study as a basis, we shall give thought to establishing principles whereby uniting with the church may become a more meaningful experience to the adolescent.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

#### FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

##### A. Introduction

Preliminary to the possibility of understanding how uniting with the church may become a more meaningful experience to the adolescent, there must be an understanding of the adolescent himself. It is stated frequently by those who are close to young people that youth is essentially religious.<sup>1</sup> What is the nature of this "religious-ness"? What is its source? How is it expressed? How is it fostered? How suppressed?

While much emphasis is being placed today on the importance of imparting religious teaching to the child from his tenderest years on up through his youth, this in no way minimizes the importance of carefully guiding the adolescent's religious development. The Indiana survey of religious education showed that more pupils are enrolled in the church school at twelve years of age than at any other age. It also revealed that beginning at the twelfth year the greatest loss of pupils to the Sunday School takes place.<sup>2</sup>

"All adolescent years are critical from the standpoint of religious development. Many leaders feel, however, that the early adolescent years, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, are the most fateful in their influence for good or evil upon ultimate development."<sup>3</sup>

And again:

"If a full, rich, abiding religious conviction...is to come,

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1. Cf. Averill, Lawrence A.: Adolescence, p. 409
2. Cf. McKibben, Frank M.: Intermediate Method in the Church School, p. 30
3. Ibid., p. 29

it must be realized through the challenges and readjustments of youth and early maturity."<sup>1</sup>

The religious experience of young people will naturally vary greatly with the individual. Some progress through a more or less steady development, while others have a cataclysmic experience. However varied the experience may appear, it will be helpful to this study to investigate the common characteristics of the adolescent boy or girl as these characteristics condition their religious experience. First, then, we shall study adolescent religious experience from the psychological standpoint.

#### B. Aspects of Adolescent Development Which Have Religious Significance

There are many sides to adolescent development which are of interest to the psychologist: there is development in the physical, mental, social, and spiritual realms. There are certain outstanding phases of adolescent growth, however, which are fraught with significance to the one who gives communicant instruction to the intermediate boy or girl, and it is with these phases that the following paragraphs will be concerned.

##### 1. Transition from Childhood

Adolescence is a period of transition. If we see the "from" and "to" of the transition we shall more fully understand the direction of the transition itself. To the pre-adolescent child, religion is largely an external affair. With the adult, worthwhile religion is

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1. Rudisill, Earl S.: Intimate Problems of Youth, p. 178

largely internal.

"Up to this time the child's conduct has been determined largely by the influence of external authority...Habits of moral behavior have been set up in accordance with the will of those whose superiority is recognized...The religious life of the pre-adolescent is primarily objective in contrast with the more subjective nature of the religion of youth."<sup>1</sup>

Essentially the same idea is presented by Mudge:

"Religion to a child is an inner experience, to be sure, but it is expressed in ideas which are quite definitely objective and attitudes toward beings that are external to himself...Adolescents, of course, inherit this sort of theological concepts, but tend to modify them until God becomes an inner experience as well as an external being. It is the normal tendency of adolescence more and more to emphasize the internal elements of religion, the warm, vital inner experiences, until these become dominant elements even in the conception of God. To the developed adult God should be recognized in the attitudes and aspirations and inner impulsions of the heart."<sup>2</sup>

The transition is not always easy. Early childhood ideas of God and religion must be transformed into personal beliefs.

"The adolescent realizes that childish religious ideas will no longer suffice....the concrete concepts of religious realities must give way to something which will better fit into the context of experience and reasoned beliefs...Much childhood material has to be worked over and worked into the new context...a more adequate concept replaces an insufficient one."<sup>3</sup>

The adolescent, then, must make the adjustments and re-adjustments required to attain the status of an adult.

In making these adjustments the adolescent comes to a new consciousness of "self". With the necessity of facing his own problems and making his own decisions, his distinctive personality emerges. Many every-day experiences are transformed into personal problems with

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1. McKibben: op. cit., p. 64
2. Mudge: op. cit., p. 111
3. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 175

moral significance.

"The knowledge one has acquired, the attitudes one has developed, and the motives which have characterized the individual during childhood, will need to be personalized and brought into harmonious adjustment with the new freedom and responsibility of life. The ideas one has held regarding religion, the Bible, God, the church should be made over into a personal working faith, otherwise, they will have no practical meaning to the new self."<sup>1</sup>

With the transfer of the seat of authority from forces without to those mostly within, the importance of sources for internal control emerges. The dynamic of a personal religion presents the most fruitful source for such control.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Early Influences

The importance of the home and early religious training cannot be overemphasized. Inescapably there is a positive or negative "set" toward religion by virtue of the attitudes of parents and teachers of the young child. Failure of the parent to teach religion does not have a neutral influence on the child. It positively trains him to religious indifference.<sup>3</sup> The individual responds all through childhood, and it is at this early period that the "set" of religious attitudes and feelings very largely is determined. "Personal influences have made a deep and probably lasting appeal long before adolescence begins."<sup>4</sup>

In giving the results of tests conducted along this line, Dimock states that any adolescent growth in moral and religious thinking is conditioned, not by physiological development, but by personal factors and social factors, such as home background, mental ability, and church

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1. McKibben: op. cit., p. 66

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 68-69

3. Cf. Stagg, S. W.: How to Promote Home Religion, p. 4

4. Mudge: op. cit., p. 108

affiliation.<sup>1</sup> Cole states that the relation between acceptance of religious dogmas and religious observances in the home or attendance of the entire family at church is relatively high.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we come to see that the adolescent's attitude toward religion is a product of numerous influences in his childhood and his reaction to them.

### 3. Doubt and Questioning

One of the outstanding characteristics of the adolescent is his questioning spirit. Averill states that few persons come up through the teen-age without at some time or other falling prey to doubts and uncertainties. Some adjust readily, some slowly, some never. Those who have had a simple faith in childhood often go through an experience of exposure to unbelief and doubts and disillusionment.<sup>3</sup> Rudisill expresses it in this manner:

"Most religious assumptions are silently or openly challenged ...John Fiske has written that the 'younger generation...sees everything in heaven and earth called upon to show its credentials.' "<sup>4</sup>

Mudge agrees with this statement, as seen in the following quotation:

"Adolescence, however, develops a new attitude toward theological conceptions, as indeed toward all our categorical statements, and early in adolescence we can usually observe a critical attitude, an insistence upon the test of the judgment of the boys and girls themselves, that is widely different from the credulity of childhood."<sup>5</sup>

Several reasons have been cited for the religious doubts of adolescents. One is "inadequate foundations". Adequate notions of God

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1. Cf. Dimock, Hedley S.: Rediscovering the Adolescent, p. 169
2. Cf. Cole, Luella: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 376
3. Cf. op. cit., p. 404
4. Op. cit., p. 176
5. Op. cit., p. 109

and a background of interpretation which will do no violence to the intellect when it begins to stir actively have been suggested as means by which the bitter readjustment in adolescence may be avoided. It has been pointed out also that the fact that secular education aims at teaching young people to think independently and intelligently has modified young people's attitude toward the traditional content and materials of religious education. Encouragement to think independently has resulted in irritation at authority and interference of adolescent freedom. The adolescent dislikes prohibitions and restrictions. His demand in religion is for something positive and practical, as well as rational.

Adolescents demand sincerity in religion. They see religion as something to be lived as well as professed. As an illustration, we use the remark of Sam, who doubted the integrity of everything and everybody. He asks, "If a person is morally upright, isn't he more to be admired than the boy who cheats in school, but who sings in the choir and never misses a prayer?"<sup>1</sup> The adolescent is quick to see and express his hearty contempt for sham in any relationship of life.

Another reason given for religious doubts in adolescence is the disturbing influences of the study of science.<sup>2</sup> In this connection, one is reminded of the church schools which are inadequately prepared to meet the challenge which science presents.

Insight into the root of doubt and questioning is given by Rudisill. He recognizes that youth would like to prove everything, but:

"Beneath all else there is a yearning for the great inexplicable which alone is the explanation of everything else, and without

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1. Averill: op. cit., p. 385
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 394-395

which everything else is incomplete. Though it may seem that youth is iconoclastic, that iconoclasm is no more than an effort to find the 'ground' of everything. It is pre-eminently a search for God, even though the searcher may not realize it. He wants something solid on which to stand."<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Feeling and Emotion

A general statement from Mudge describes effectively this aspect of the adolescent's nature and experience:

"The term 'fervid' cannot normally be applied to the religion of childhood; but in adolescence there is a glow of feeling, as religion becomes a matter of inner experience, that relates it closely with the entire emotional development of youth."<sup>2</sup>

The adolescent may experience heights of joy and depths of despair in quick succession. Within him are extremes and contradictions, for life is new and full, and still unorganized.<sup>3</sup> He is full of aspiration. He seeks those things which thrill. Much of the adolescent's quickened emotional sense is traceable to his physical development. Growth is rapid and uneven, and thus vitality is not constant. As the sense organs come to nearer maturity the world seems to take on a new significance. The young person becomes "delicately responsive", "alive" to his environment.<sup>4</sup>

This new experiencing of emotion makes the adolescent very much aware of himself, and self-consciousness is frequently the result. More attention is focused on the "self" as the adolescent seeks to become accepted in the group, secure approbation, and follow other social urges. Sometimes there occurs an intense struggle between individualistic and social desires, and it is in the midst of this development that

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1. Op. cit., p. 179

2. Op. cit., p. 117

3. Cf. McKibben: Intermediate Method in the Church School, p. 50

4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 51-52

there is presented the greatest opportunity to realize social ideals.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. Hero Worship

It is very natural for boys and girls to fasten their emotional lives to a personality whose strength, and sweetness, and achievement they admire greatly. They need a center of personalization which they cannot outgrow. Loyalty is a strong emotion during these years, and it is important that this loyalty be fixed to an object which never will fail.

The implications of this adolescent characteristic for his religious development are tremendous:

"The young person's desire for intimate contact with God and for a concrete realization of his personal ideal should lead him to discover and worship Christ as the expression of God in the flesh and as the ideal human character. The religious training the young person receives, above all things else, should result in the discovery of Christ as the supreme ideal of the life...His religious training should bring about increasing integration of his personality, his interests, and his loyalties about the person of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Since the years between the ages of twelve and twenty-one are the period for readjustment and the establishment of a firm loyalty, most decisions for a spiritual life come within that time.

### C. Summary

The main consideration of this chapter has been a study of characteristics in the nature of the adolescent which are significant to his religious experience. While the experience of individuals varies greatly, still there are certain general characteristics which, if

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1. Cf. McKibben: pp. 50-51, p. 59

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 71

recognized and understood, are very applicable to the solution of the problem of this study. It was pointed out first that the adolescent is in a period of transition, as he passes from childhood to adulthood. At this period, through adjustments and readjustments, the adolescent turns from a religion which is external to one which is a "warm, vital inner experience". Through this process the need for inner control appears. Early influences in the life of the child, particularly from the home, have a large bearing on the "set" of the adolescent's attitudes toward things spiritual. Growth in the religious thinking of the adolescent is dependent upon home background and church affiliation. Yet, however simple a faith he may have had as a child, the adolescent is likely to go through a period of doubt and questioning, which may be traced to such sources as inadequate foundations in his childhood, the disturbing influence of the study of science, and his longing for a key to the understanding of life. The adolescent feels deeply, and experiences the heights and depths of emotion. Through this experience he becomes acutely aware of himself. His emotional life often attaches itself with firm loyalty to a personality whom he admires greatly, for the adolescent is by nature a hero-worshipper.

CHAPTER III  
ELEMENTS COMPRISING THE ADOLESCENT'S PREPARATION  
FOR UNITING WITH THE CHURCH

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ELEMENTS COMPRISING THE ADOLESCENT'S PREPARATION  
FOR UNITING WITH THE CHURCH

A. Introduction

In studying ways in which the adolescent may come into a fuller appreciation of the meaning of church membership, it is helpful to consider the materials used in the communicants' class. An investigation of the Tables of Contents in the selected communicants' materials evidences the fact that in a general way the elements considered essential in the preparation of an adolescent for church membership are very similar. Since the general pattern is fairly uniform, it will be our purpose in this chapter to discover the degrees of emphasis which are placed on individual elements, any variation in which the order of these elements occurs, and any significant omission of a component part. It should be kept in mind that certain emphases and certain omissions in the Catholic material may be due to the fact that the primary source of material available is designed for children rather than for adolescents. This is in conformity with the current practice of this church to confirm young children, teaching them according to their age capacity.

The general pattern of component elements lines up as follows: What should the adolescent believe? What should the adolescent experience? How should the adolescent's belief and experience find expression in his life? What should the adolescent know concerning his church? And why should a Christian become a church member?<sup>1</sup>

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1. The purpose of this chapter is not to make an exhaustive study of

## B. What Should the Adolescent Believe?

The importance of a creed to the adolescent lies in the fact that it gives to him an explanation of the mystery of life. Its importance is further recognized as he sees that an individual's beliefs greatly affect his actions and his character. Certain basic beliefs of Christianity are set forth over and over again in these materials.

### 1. About God

Two great concepts of God stand out above all others in these materials. One is God the Creator; the other is God the Father. Evidencing recognition of the problem the adolescent faces as he attempts to reconcile science and religion, God the Creator is treated several times with at least brief reference to the field of science.

"Science and scientists, with very few exceptions, are saying that we can trace out the character and actions of the things which we can see and touch - that is, material things - but that we come in our investigation to a place where we can go back no farther in our search for the first great cause of all things. Many such are openly declaring that the first great

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the communicants' class materials of the stated denominations and of the Catholic Church. There is even the possibility that the representative materials recommended do not present an entirely fair basis for judgment of a single denomination's provision for communicant instruction. This, however, is beside the point. Far from being an attempt to put denominations up against each other in the content of their materials, this chapter is an attempt to get a cross-section of the various things which comprise a communicant's instruction in preparation for full church membership, to note the points on which there is large agreement, and to point out unique emphases. Since there is considerable agreement among the denominations on various points of emphasis (and where there is not identical agreement the thoughts are often supplementary), it has been thought advisable to footnote only the material which shows some unique characteristic. It should be kept in mind that differences in approach and in points of emphasis sometimes exist among writers within a denomination.

cause of all things must be that personality to whom our religion has from the beginning given the name, God."<sup>1</sup>

God as Father usually is presented with accompanying ideas of His imminence, such as His love, His mercy, and His desire and ability to make Himself known.

"If your friend is in a room in school just ahead of you, you can learn through your friend what kind of a teacher awaits you when you are promoted. Jesus knew and loved God perfectly, and he it is who has told us that God is our Father who knows our needs and loves us."<sup>2</sup>

Another concept which is prominent is the greatness of God. This is seen in His nature, His abilities, His character - in brief, in His perfections. He is Sustainer and Ruler. Emphasized less frequently are the thoughts of the Trinity and the fact that God is the One to whom men are responsible.

## 2. About Man and Sin

The main points stressed in the consideration of this subject are that in its nature sin is a coming short of what God has asked of man, or disobedience to God; in its extent, it is a universal characteristic of man; its source is not only in man's will but in his very nature. It results in unhappiness, separation from God, and more sin; the only solution of the problem of sin lies in repentance (or, as is stressed in the Catholic material, in confession) and forgiveness. The conscience is a God-given faculty which helps one discern his sin. "The sense of right and wrong is a gift of God even more important than the gift of sight or hearing."<sup>3</sup> The inability of man to save himself is emphasized in several instances,<sup>4</sup> while the Devil, as an active, personal

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1. Brown, Willard Dayton: My Confession of Faith, p. 13
2. Membership Manual of the Methodist Church, Revised Edition, p. 14
3. Ibid., p. 16
4. Presbyterian and Reformed materials

agent in tempting man to sin, is specifically stated by only one denomination.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. About Jesus Christ and Salvation

As several great concepts of God took precedence over all others, so it is with the concepts of Christ. However differently these terms may be interpreted, Jesus Christ is set forth as Saviour and as Lord.

As Saviour, the fact that He is both human and divine is stressed.

"We believe that Jesus was a real Man. He grew up in his home in Nazareth as naturally as any boy does. He learned the trade of a carpenter and worked as hard as any who toil. He knew what it was to be hungry and tired. He fell asleep on the pillow in the boat just as we do at the end of a busy day. But Jesus had power which no mere man has ever possessed. He could do many things that we cannot do. He controlled and used forces of which we know nothing. We make mistakes and often do wrong, but Jesus lived a perfect life...No one could find any fault in him...Now the only way we can explain it is to say that his wonderful life was both human and divine. He is both the Son of man and the Son of God."<sup>2</sup>

His Saviourhood is discussed almost consistently in relation to man's sin, forgiveness, Christ's suffering, and Christ's love, the climax being reached in the Cross.

"Jesus did not die because He could not help Himself; He gave up His life voluntarily. He died to save men from those very sins that caused men to nail Him to the cross...By His death on the cross, in which He represented both sinful humanity and the limitless love of God, Jesus makes possible our reconciliation with God. Because Jesus gave His life for us, we know that God is our friend, that He is searching for us, and wants us to come to Him with repentance for our sins, and faith in His saving love."<sup>3</sup>

Eternal life, while emphasized in some of the booklets, is not frequently stressed in this connection.

The Lordship of Christ is discussed with reference to His triumph

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1. Episcopalian materials
2. Bugbee, Lucius H.: Preparatory Lessons for Church Membership, pp. 24-25
3. Brinckerhoff, Theodore: The Christian Faith and Life, pp. 32-33

over death and His indwelling presence. He is Adviser, Helper, Friend. His will is to be sought in all of life. He is the living Christ. What the Lordship of Christ means is given summarily in one booklet as follows:

"It means that in all matters of right or wrong, of choice and determination, of motive and action, we shall seek to learn what His will is for us...Acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Master means also accepting His way of life...making His purpose in life our purpose in life."<sup>1</sup>

Considerable attention is given to factual knowledge concerning the course of His life, His death, and His resurrection. One book states that to know Christ one must know about Him.<sup>2</sup> Here His ministry and teachings come to view, and the example and inspiration of His life are emphasized.

Christ as the Supreme Revelation of God is given quite a prominent place.

"His (God's) greatest revelation of himself is in Jesus Christ. Because God is a Person, his fullest self-disclosure must come through a person, and that Person was and is Jesus Christ. When Philip asked Jesus, 'Show us the Father,' Jesus answered, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' We believe this. Jesus Christ is God's answer to the agelong search for God... Our religion is called the Christian religion because we believe that in Christ we have a complete understanding of the character and purpose of the true God."<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to notice, in passing, the relative lack of material on this subject in the Episcopalian books. This may be traceable to the fact that at confirmation the baptized person in this church is considered a Christian already (inasmuch as regeneration is believed to take place at baptism), and hence there is not

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1. Brown: op. cit., p. 37
2. Cf. Knight, Walter David: Preparing Young People for Church Membership, Pupil's Book, p. 14
3. Ibid.

the same compulsion to clarify the redemptive work of Christ as there is in denominations which do not hold so definitely to this view.

#### 4. About the Bible

Two ideas which receive marked emphasis are that the Bible is of divine origin and that it reveals God to the reader. The subsidiary ideas that the Bible also reveals God's will and is the final authority for faith and life stand out rather prominently also. "It is the great textbook of the Christian religion. In it is to be found everything that is necessary for the salvation of the immortal soul."<sup>1</sup> A brief reference to the history of the Bible is made in several denominational materials.<sup>2</sup> In the Episcopal material the church is set forth as the accepted interpreter of Scripture, while in the Catholic material the Bible shares its place of authority with Tradition, and the need of a Living Teacher to interpret it is declared. It is interesting to notice that one of the Catholic books consulted discusses the authority of the Bible in conjunction with the subject of evolution.<sup>3</sup> Another point of interest is that some materials place the consideration of the authority of the Bible first, implying that the attitude of the adolescent toward the authority of the Bible conditions his attitudes toward the other teachings included in the communicants' instruction.

#### 5. About the Holy Spirit

Several manuals omit entirely the mention of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Brown: op. cit., p. 10
2. Presbyterian and Methodist materials
3. Cf. Cooper, John M.: Religion Outlines for Colleges, Course II, Second Edition, Revised, pp. 37 ff.
4. Cf. Porter, Eliot: Being a Church Member; Bowen, C. A.: This Is Your Church; and Hayward, Percy R.: Your Life and the Church

Those which do include this Person of the Trinity emphasize His work of sanctification and His being the source of the Christian faith and life. Considerable mention is made of Him as the One who dwells in the heart of the Christian. He is spoken of in several instances as the Lord and Giver of life. Some attention is given to His work of speaking through the prophets and His enabling men to understand the Bible. In the Confirmation Service of the Episcopal Church the Holy Ghost is the One who comes upon the person being confirmed to help him keep the promises which he makes.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic material speaks of Him as the Agent who empowers the priest to take away sins.

### C. What Should the Adolescent Experience

That which the adolescent should experience as the culmination of his instruction in the communicants' class is expressed in many different ways. It is recognized that the adolescent ideally has been "experiencing" something in each successive class session. The preceding section, dealing with belief, infers definite response. There comes a time, however, (ideally again), when these single experiences add up to a total and emerge in an experience. It is the experience toward which all the instruction has been given; it is the emotional and intellectual and moral response of the young person to the challenges which have been put before him. The importance of experience as a component element in the young person's preparation for church membership is expressed in the following quotation:

"No truth is really our own until we have experienced it. A teacher may write the answer to a problem upon the blackboard, and the student may recognize the truth he has tried to find through many hours of study, but it does not become

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1. Cf. The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 296-298

his truth merely because the teacher has put it within easy reach. It will not be his own truth until he has solved the problem and found the answer for himself. Nothing means much to us until we have made it our own, hard-earned, personal possession; until we have experienced it for ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

The various terms used to describe the experience are not at all mutually exclusive. They may refer essentially to the same thing. They may be supplementary.

There is no one description of the experience upon which all the churches included in this study agree. The greatest degree of conformity is in the fact that the young person should experience a feeling of love for Christ and complete trust in Him, receiving Him as Supreme Leader, Saviour, and Lord. There should be a feeling of belief on Him and a desire to follow Him. This is to be preceded by a feeling of unworthiness, a sense of one's need of forgiveness, and genuine repentance. Establishing a personal relation with God is mentioned in one group of materials:

"Christianity is not just a system of ideas about God and man and the world. It involves more than just the intellect. It includes a very personal relationship between ourselves and God. Just as a feeling of mutual trust between people is necessary for human friendship, for a successful business, or for harmony in the family, so trust is the foundation of our normal relationship with God."<sup>2</sup>

Another idea which is quite prominent is that of enlisting for Christ, deciding for Christ, the giving of one's self over to Christ. This entails a dedication or surrender of the life to Christ and a strong feeling of loyalty to Him. "The essential thing is a loyal self-committal to Christ. This rightly and normally issues...in a growing Christian loyalty and experience."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Bugbee: op. cit., p. 33
2. Brinckerhoff: op. cit., p. 36
3. Porter: op. cit., p. 11

A response to the Example of Christ - a desire to be like Him, to live life on the Christian level - is set forth less frequently but holds a fairly prominent place. The experience of finding Christ through social service is recommended in one instance.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Presbyterian and Episcopal materials set forth the concept of the young person's assuming responsibility for his Christian life. This is significant as it relates to the Presbyterian doctrine of the covenant relationship being established at baptism, and also as it relates to the Episcopalian tenet that regeneration occurs at baptism. It should be noted, however, that whereas the Presbyterian emphasis is rather on establishing a personal response to Christ, the Episcopalian emphasis is decidedly on assuming responsibility as a churchman. The thought of dedicating one's life to the service of the church is prominently expressed in the Episcopal materials. Believing certain Articles of the Faith is also incorporated in the desired experience.

Worthy of mention also are the renouncing of sin and the devil, found in the Catholic and Episcopalian materials, and the experiencing of love for the two Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist (implying, of course, that their significance has been comprehended) found in the expressions of the Catholic writers.

D. How Should the Adolescent's Beliefs and Experience Find Expression in His Life?

Here the thought is that one who is a Christian will necessarily differ in some essential respects from the non-Christian. It is pointed

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1. Cf. Bugbee: op. cit., p. 34

out to the adolescent that one of the criticisms of the church today is the fact that church members do not essentially differ from those who are not church members. How does a Christian's life show his belief and experience?

### 1. In Character

By far the greatest emphasis in this aspect of communicant preparation is on the matter of one's relationships with others. Both positive and negative approaches are used in describing the qualities which the Christian should manifest toward his fellows. Love is the motive which is urged upon the adolescent.

"Render such Christian service to fellow men as is possible, remembering always that the keynote of Christianity is LOVE, - and thinking always of the Master's challenge: 'Ye are light . . . let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.'"<sup>1</sup>

The example of Christ and the principles of conduct He set up are the guideposts of the young Christian. The thought of living as Christ would have one live is set forth several times. One suggested means of accomplishing this is the principle of honoring Christ, putting the things of the spirit first. Another more specific means suggested is by developing a life program which will manifest these principles.

Obedience to parents and conscience receive emphasis by several of the denominations,<sup>2</sup> whereas the thought of the importance of right habits is considered in only one instance.<sup>3</sup> Personal purity is implied but not directly nor lengthily considered in these materials. The

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1. Brink, Eben. Cobb: The Christian and Church Membership, p. 7
2. Episcopal and Methodist
3. Cf. Membership Manual of the Methodist Church, p. 27

Catholic booklet guiding the teachers of children brings out suggestions concerning character in the section dealing with the subject of the examination of conscience. In the combined materials of this church, however, the emphasis seems to be put more on the life in the next world than on the life here and now.

## 2. In Personal Spiritual Exercise and Growth

An outstanding emphasis here is in the thought that the new Christian is a disciple in the process of growth. As he expresses his Christian faith he will develop as a Christian.

### a. Through Prayer

Close and continuous fellowship with God is seen to be at the very heart of the Christian life. The idea of cultivating regular habits of prayer is given great emphasis, but not to the exclusion of praying at other times also. One booklet suggests including devotional experience in a definite life program of one's own.<sup>1</sup> "We will be faithful in prayer. We will learn from Jesus the secret of his prayer life and ask him to teach us to pray."<sup>2</sup> The thought of prayer as definite conversation with God is set forth several times. The objects of prayer are not specifically mentioned in most cases, but prayer for guidance, strength, and for the companionship and power of Christ are suggested.

As the Catholic conception of prayer is related very definitely to unique features in the dogma of the church, we shall go no farther than to mention the fact that one point of agreement with the Protestant teaching is in the thought of regularity of prayer.

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1. Cf. Hayward: op. cit., p. 65

2. A Manual of Faith and Life, p. 73

b. Through Bible Study and Other Reading

A number of materials place great emphasis on regular and systematic Bible reading and study; the Episcopalians, of course, furnish in the Prayer Book suggested Bible readings for the whole Christian year. One of the Methodist booklets suggests two-hundred Bible readings, selected on the basis of their human interest and their value for the devotional life.<sup>1</sup> Much use is made generally of the word "study" in connection with the use of the Bible. Having a definite time for Bible study is suggested. Other religious reading and study is enjoined. One group of materials seeks to acquaint the communicant class member with the mechanics of the Bible and its general content and impresses the value of the Bible in one's life today.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic materials omit the consideration of this subject.

c. Through Christian Friendships

This aid to Christian growth is lacking as a point of emphasis in the Catholic and Episcopal materials, but finds quite prominent mention in the remaining materials. Christian life and growth are both attributed to fellowship with God's people. There is little else to refer to on this point other than the fact that this fellowship should be a constant association - not a sporadic one.

d. Through the Sacraments

The benefits of partaking of the Lord's Supper are given the most consideration here. The Sacrament of Baptism is uniformly included and

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1. Cf. Membership Manual of the Methodist Church, pp. 58-64

2. Episcopal materials

is always carefully explained as to its meaning and benefits; however, it is looked upon more as a sacrament which must necessarily precede the partaking of the Lord's Supper, and thus the emphasis is again placed on the Lord's Supper. Perhaps also because baptism is administered only once, whereas the Lord's Supper is observed over and over again, do we sense the stress placed on the latter in its relation to the communicant's spiritual growth. The significance of baptism for one who has not been baptized in infancy lies in its denoting the cleansing of the heart, assurance of Christ's accepting the person baptized into His kingdom, a sign of membership in the church, and a pledge of faithfulness to Christ.

The Lord's Supper aids growth as it is seen in its various implications. It is a memorial of Christ's death on the cross for men. It gives fellowship with God and with fellow-believers. It is an act of consecration. It is an act of thanksgiving. It brings a strengthening of the spiritual life through the sustenance offered in Christ Himself as spiritual food.

A difference in view is found toward the Sacraments in general. While the Catholic materials indicate that Sacraments must be received with the right disposition of heart in the individual, yet the Sacraments themselves are more specifically and mechanically "carriers of grace" than they are in the view of the Protestants. The Protestant view of the Sacraments is aptly expressed thus:

"...the reverent and prayerful use of these sacraments, accompanied by a sincere dedication of ourselves to God in faith and a surrender of our wills to Him, will help us to a stronger and more vigorous Christian life."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Brinckerhoff: The Christian Faith and Life, p. 59

e. Through Group Worship

While private prayer is recognized as a possible form of worship, worship is thought of generally as an experience which takes place in fellowship with other Christians.

"In some way or other, true worship must always include some other person. We cannot enjoy friendship with God all by ourselves - we must share that friendship with others. We cannot enjoy God's forgiveness by ourselves - we must also forgive others...For this reason worship is at its best when it is done in the company of other people, such as in a church service."<sup>1</sup>

The media of worship are most frequently considered to be song, prayer, meditation and Bible reading, but a wider concept of the experience of worship is set forth in one of the booklets, which states that "any experience may be an act of worship if, in it, we feel ourselves in real contact with the living God."<sup>2</sup> Interpreting God's will by thinking about a sermon, meditating on God's handiwork in nature, realizing through a study of science or history how God is at work in His world, doing an act of kindness in the name of Christ, forgiving an injury done to us because God has forgiven us - all these are possible worship experiences. Summarily, it is expressed by one writer, the essence of worship is "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>3</sup>

The benefits of worship are seen to accrue both to the one who worships and to others. Worship brings the consciousness of God's helpful presence, a contact with something outside one's self and infinitely better than one's self;<sup>4</sup> but it also brings actual help in strength and guidance for Christian living. It brings a unity and

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1. Brinckerhoff: op. cit., p. 57
2. Ibid.
3. Porter: Being a Church Member, p. 41
4. Cf. Brown: My Confession of Faith, p. 49

definiteness of spiritual purpose to those in the group. It gives refreshment and creates reserves for the hard times of life. It nurtures the spiritual life and permits expression of the best within a person.

A reverent, expectant, earnest attitude is essential for true worship. The adolescent learns to worship through worshipping. The Episcopal Church materials particularly discuss worship with reference to specific church furnishings and the order of service.

#### f. Through Service

The idea of stewardship is prominent in this portion of the study. The idea that all the young person possesses - his time, his talents, his possessions, his life itself - is from God, is the underlying and motivating factor in his service for Christ. While the organization of the church must be maintained, the young Christian is giving through the church rather than to the church; that is, the church is conceived of as a channel through which the young person may serve.

A Christian view of stewardship may be evidenced by the giving of one's talents to some specific work of the church. There is a place for teachers and assistants in the church school. There are needs for leaders with executive ability, with ability in finance, with special mechanical skills; artistic ability may find expression in the work of the church, whether it be in drawing, music, or drama. Choirs need members, committee members are essential for the making of plans; ushers, visitors, cooks, flower arrangers, secretaries - all may find opportunities for serving in the church.

As one writer states it, however, developed talents are not the sole concern of the church as she seeks for workers.

"Through his Church, Christ is calling you, not only to use the talents you have already developed, but to the awakening of powers and possibilities yet untouched."<sup>1</sup>

Here, participating in leadership education classes is looked upon as a very definite form of service.

Another manifestation of Christian stewardship is the giving of money to the support of the church. The suggestion of giving a tithe frequently is offered as a satisfactory answer to the question, "How much shall I give?" However, the general rules laid down in the matter of giving are: (1) that giving should be regular, (2) that it should be in proportion to income, (3) that it should be an act of worship, (4) that it should be done cheerfully, and (5) that one should begin giving as soon as he unites with the church.

Bringing others to Christ and to the church is a point of emphasis, although it is omitted from some of the manuals altogether, except for general statement which might imply this phase of Christian service. This includes inviting those unreached by the church to come to the services of the church as well as speaking to another about his relationship to Christ. A statement of E. Stanley Jones' is quoted:

" 'I count not myself to have apprehended...but I find enough in Christ to make me eager to have others know him, too. No one can be getting along all right without him.' "<sup>2</sup>

Another point sufficiently stressed to include in this section is that of promoting fellowship within the church. This includes aiding new members to feel at home and manifesting real love toward all fellow members.

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1. Bowen: This Is Your Church, p. 20
2. Porter: op. cit., pp. 50-51

### E. What Should the Adolescent Know Concerning His Church?

Information concerning the origin and functioning of the church is almost uniformly considered desirable by the writers of the communicants' materials studied. This portion of the adolescent's preparation usually assumes two phases: (1) a study of the universal church, and (2) a study of the local church and a particular denomination.

#### 1. The Church Universal

The nature of the church universal is variously expressed, but at the center is the thought of the Church Invisible, the body of Christian believers. Several representative definitions might be helpful at this point:

"The Christian Church is a company of the followers of Jesus, striving to live in his spirit, everywhere organized for Christian worship, Christian education, Christian living, and Christian service."<sup>1</sup>

"It (the Church) is made up of Christian persons who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and who have pledged themselves to follow him."<sup>2</sup>

"The Church of Christ today is made up of Christian people who are banded together for the purpose of carrying on Christ's work...The Church is Christ's society to promote Christianity."<sup>3</sup>

##### a. History

The broad outlines of church history are considered sufficient for communicant instruction. The inception of the church is given more frequent consideration than the outline of the complete history of the church through the centuries. The Apostolic Church, the Roman Church,

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1. Knight: Preparing Young People for Church Membership, Pupil's Book, p. 22
2. A Manual of Faith and Life, p. 87
3. Membership Manual of the Methodist Church, p. 34

and the Protestant Reformation receive the most specific attention, while the Episcopal materials add the British Church to make more clear the close connection between the Anglican Church and the American Protestant Episcopal Church. The Catholic materials do not consider the history of the church at all and exclude reference to any church other than the Catholic Church.

One booklet urges familiarity with great characters in the history of the church.<sup>1</sup> Some general attention is given to outstanding differences in belief in the great church divisions in the world. Very brief mention is sometimes made of the church's part in originating and, at times, retarding, the great advances of civilization in such realms as education, charity, social welfare, democracy, and home life.<sup>2</sup>

#### b. Organization

Since that which holds together the church universal is considered to be more inherent than mechanical, little is said of organization. Some mention is made, however, of interdenominational cooperative organizations, such as the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and the International Council of Religious Education. Three main types of organization are found to exist in the Protestant churches: (1) the congregational, (2) the presbyterian, and (3) the episcopal. The Catholic Church bases her organization on the authority of her Pope and her bishops. Some space is given to the increasing cooperation and greater unity which exists among the Protestant denominations today.

#### c. Ministry

The world-wide ministry of the church universal is concerned with

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1. Cf. Knight: op. cit., Pupil's Book, pp. 26-27
2. Cf. Brinckerhoff: op. cit., p. 64

both individuals and society, personal evangelism and the mitigating of social evils. It is at work in the community, in the nation, and in the world, doing God's will as revealed in Christ.

"The Church is the organization that attends to Christ's work on earth, 'does his business', embodies his ideals, pursues his objectives, speaks for him."<sup>1</sup>

It has a special mission to any who are in need and seeks to promote a spirit of brotherhood among men.

## 2. His Own Denomination

From the relative amount of space given to the church universal and that given to information concerning the specific denomination, it is clear that the latter holds at least equal importance with the former. Effort is made to acquaint the communicant class member not only with his denomination in general but also with his own local church.

### a. History

In this phase of the communicant class members' preparation, the founding of the denomination and names connected with it are emphasized, as well as the progression of its history. A definite effort is made to link the American branch of the church with its European progenitor. The Episcopal material includes a list of important dates in the Protestant Episcopal Church in America,<sup>2</sup> while the Methodist material gives a realistic account of a recent conference which united the three major branches of Methodism in America.<sup>3</sup>

### b. Organization

The organizational structure is made clear, beginning with the

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1. Knight: op. cit., Pupil's Book, p. 22
2. Cf. Lambert, Robert S. and Fender, Floral S.: Confirmation Made Interesting, p. 71
3. Cf. Bowen: op. cit., pp. 10-11

local church and proceeding to the national set-up. The names by which the church is divided geographically, the presiding officers of these districts, the officials in the local church are all named and classified according to their duties and authority. The adolescent is urged to become acquainted with the various organizations in the church and the work they perform. One book suggests that the young person inform himself as to the finances of the church and how they are procured.<sup>1</sup> Statistics concerning the local and national church are submitted as a possible subject of interest.

c. Ministry

The ministry of the church is discussed primarily in connection with the study of the organization and government of the church. Most of the booklets are careful to give the specific duties of the various officials and boards in the church, and, taken together, they present to the adolescent a general picture of the entire work of his denomination. A rather unique presentation of some of the work of the church is given in a booklet which shows how the church helps a young person who has decided to become a missionary.<sup>2</sup>

d. Distinguishing Features

The Presbyterian Church lists her form of government, distinctive doctrines, and the church standards as unique features; the Methodist Church points to the origin of her name; most space of all given to this aspect of the denomination is given by the Episcopal Church, which takes up at some length an explanation of symbols, the Christian Year, Christian Seasons, church furnishings and vestments, ritual, and form of government.

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1. Cf. McMaster, Vernon C.: I Prepare for Confirmation, p. 32
2. Cf. Brown: My Confession of Faith, pp. 42-44

The Reformed booklets chosen do not happen to include the distinguishing features of that denomination. The unique feature about the Catholic discussion of the church is with regard to the authority and infallibility ascribed to it. The definition of the church which is given to school children to learn shows how the Catholic concept of the church is limited to the Catholic Church:

"The Church is the congregation of all those who profess the faith of Christ, partake of the same Sacraments, and are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible Head."<sup>1</sup>

#### F. Why Should a Christian Join the Church?

Having made clear that which makes a young person a Christian, and having presented information concerning the church, the obvious question arises as to what necessity there is for a Christian to become a church member. Most of the manuals treat this subject rather fully, although it is evident that while the Episcopalian materials point out the opportunities and aids which derive from church membership, this specific problem of why one should unite with the church is not treated as such, for much emphasis is placed on the fact that membership already exists by virtue of baptism in infancy.

The reasons given for a Christian's uniting with the church fall into two classes: (1) those the benefits of which conceivably could accrue to church attendants as well, and (2) those which more definitely pertain to church members alone. In the first group are included such reasons as the help one gains for his own Christian living through the fellowship and work of the church; the inspiration and discipline which come from

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1. A Catechism of Christian Doctrine, p. 22

the group; and the possibility of accomplishing phases of Christ's work which can be done better through an organization than by individuals working alone. The idea is frequently stated: You need the church, and the church needs you.

Those reasons which are more convincing because they cannot be applied as readily to those who attend church and participate in its work but who have not become members, may be stated in general as follows:

1. A Christian should join the church because of the value to himself and to others of making a self-committal to Christ publicly.
2. A Christian should join the church because Christ demands outright allegiance to Himself.<sup>1</sup>

"They could not obey him without letting people know that they believed in him and had taken him as their Guide and Friend. He never gave any of his disciples leave to keep their discipleship quiet for a while, but expected them all to make it known at once."<sup>2</sup>

3. A Christian should join the church because the laws of his own nature demand that he tie himself up with some group of people, and one will live the richest life who ties himself up with people who have Christian purposes. It is logical that one should identify himself with a group which has the same purposes and ideals he has.<sup>3</sup>
4. A Christian should join the church because of the influence of this act on others and because it puts him in a better position to bring others to Christ and add to the power of the church.
5. A Christian should join the church because by so doing he duly honors Christ, who is the Head of the church.

#### G. Summary

This chapter fell naturally into a general pattern as the contents

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1. Porter: Being a Church Member, p. 26
2. Miller, J. R.: Manual for Communicants' Classes, Revised Edition, p. 31. This writer goes on to quote Matthew 10:32,33 and Romans 10:9,10 as the Scriptural basis for his assertion.
3. Cf. Hayward: Your Life and the Church, p. 36

of the communicants' materials were surveyed. The first portion was concerned with what the adolescent should believe. Concerning God, two great ideas were prominent: God as Creator, and God as Father. The nature of sin, its extent, source, results, and solution were set forth, as was the role of conscience with regard to sin. Some attention was given to the inability of man to save himself. Christ was presented preeminently as Saviour and Lord, with all that those two words imply to the adolescent. He was seen to be the supreme revelation of God. Some reference was made to the historical events of His life on earth. The Bible was discussed with reference to its authority by virtue of its divine origin and the fact that through it God makes Himself known. Authority for the interpretation of the Bible was found to vary according to the particular church discussed. Some materials discussed the Bible before proceeding to beliefs derived from the teachings of the Bible. The Holy Spirit, while not treated in some manuals, was seen to be the One who dwells in the heart of the Christian to originate the Christian faith and life, to sanctify, to enlighten the understanding of the Bible, and to empower.

The next section dealt with the desired culminating experience of the adolescent, where the importance of personalizing truth was stressed. The adolescent's response may be expressed variously, but it finds most frequent statement in such terms as loving and trusting Christ as Leader, Saviour, and Lord; enlisting for Christ; desiring to be like Christ; or assuming responsibility for churchmanship.

It was seen that the beliefs and experience of the adolescent found expression in his life. In his relationship with others, certain qualities of character should emerge, with Christ and His teachings as guideposts, and love as the underlying motive. His life will be marked by manifesta-

tions of spiritual growth and practice, such as regular and meaningful times of prayer, systematic Bible study, the cultivation of Christian friendships, and intelligent participation in the Sacraments. He will want to share in group worship and find the possibilities of worship in every-day experiences. He will want to experience the benefits of worship and learn how to gain the most from worship. His activity will show a high concept of Christian stewardship as he gives his talents to consecrated service, develops latent talent, helps support the church financially, seeks to bring others to Christ, and helps promote fellowship in the church.

To be a worthy church member the adolescent should have a general knowledge of the nature, history, organization, and ministry of the church universal. More specific knowledge is required of him concerning his own denomination and local church. He should be acquainted with the history, organization, ministry, and distinguishing features.

Reasons why a Christian should become a church member were discussed with reference to the benefits which are derived by the individual who makes a public profession of his faith and who affiliates with the work and worship of the church, the benefits which come to others by the example set, and with reference to the honor it gives to Christ.

CHAPTER IV

CURRENT METHODS OF INSTRUCTION IN COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES

## CHAPTER IV

### CURRENT METHODS OF INSTRUCTION IN COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES

#### A. Introduction

The methods of instruction employed in the communicants' class have a large part in determining the degree of meaningfulness the materials will hold for the pupil. It is obvious that the methods of instruction will depend largely on the teacher, his personality, and his training. It is recommended usually that the pastor be the teacher, or, if he is not available, someone who is well-grounded in the Christian faith. His manner is to be informal, his approach creative; he should be observant of each pupil's personal grasp,<sup>1</sup> and it is recommended that he keep notes on the reactions of various members of the class and record any changes of attitude.<sup>2</sup> In one manual it is recommended that the teacher be a supervisor or resource person, a comrade or guide standing in the background ready to help.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter, however, necessarily will be limited to methods suggested directly or indirectly by the communicants' materials themselves. It is interesting to notice that some manuals give detailed instruction as to method, while others are more inclined to leave the matter in the hands of the individual instructor.

#### B. Procedure in Conducting the Class

There is no uniformity as to the amount of time considered adequate

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1. Cf. Miller, J. R.: Manual for Communicants' Classes, Revised Edition, p. 8
2. Cf. Lambert, Robert S. and Fender, Floral S.: Confirmation Made Interesting, p. 9
3. Cf. McMaster, Vernon C.: I Prepare for Confirmation, Leader's Guide, p. 1

and feasible for the total communicants' course. Some believe that a period longer than six weeks is not profitable, while another believes that less than ten weeks is not sufficient.<sup>1</sup> One manual is prepared for a quarter's work in the church school curriculum; the Episcopalian work-books are planned to cover a year's time. It would appear that there is a growing consciousness of the need for more time to prepare adequately the members of the communicants' class. There is large agreement that the length of each individual session should not exceed one hour.

Since most of the manuals do not pretend to offer a complete communicants' course in themselves, only a few suggested orders of procedure are available. One suggested procedure is as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Brief devotional service  
Topic presented informally by the teacher  
Simple questions asked by the leader  
Questions asked by members of the group  
Topic for next session assigned  
Closing prayer

Another manual suggests the following procedure:<sup>3</sup>

Opening "Prayer for Our Course" by different members of the class each week  
Use of silent or unison prayer  
Reports by persons or committees (bulk of the hour spent here)  
Advance assignments  
Closing prayer by leader, or unison printed prayer

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1. Cf. Knight, Walter David: Preparing Young People for Church Membership, Teacher's Book, p. 6
2. Cf. Erdman, Charles R.: Coming to the Communion, p. 11
3. Cf. Hayward, Percy R.: Your Life and the Church, p. 74

It is to be understood that the foregoing are not inflexible regulations but possible orders of procedure given by way of helpful suggestion.

### 1. The Catechism

The catechism still seems to hold an established place in communicant instruction, not as sufficient in itself but as a helpful source book. Included in this study is one official catechism, published separately and with Scriptural proofs for each answer.<sup>1</sup> Another official catechism is printed with word meanings and special prayers and hymns for the adolescent.<sup>2</sup> Several manuals have printed the catechism, or parts of it, in connection with the other material presented,<sup>3</sup> while one manual writer offers a catechism of his own making, supplemented with brief explanatory comments and quotations.<sup>4</sup> Suggestions as to how the catechisms are to be used are lacking. Not once is it recommended that the whole catechism be learned by heart. It is sometimes suggested that certain parts of it related to a particular lesson be memorized.<sup>5</sup>

The following thoughts concerning the catechism are offered in connection with the teaching of children but are equally applicable to the adolescent:

"...it is one thing to recite what the catechism says, it is another thing to understand what the catechism says, and still another thing to do what the catechism says....'The spirit of the catechetical apostolate is not the catechism for its own sake, but the catechism lived and presented as a model of life' ...to get them to do what the catechism says, she (the teacher) tries to get them to understand and love it."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Cf. The Intermediate Catechism (Presbyterian Board of Christian Education)
2. Cf. A Catechism of Christian Doctrine (Prepared and Enjoined by Order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore)
3. Knight: op. cit.; The Membership Manual of the Methodist Church, Revised Edition; Erdman: op. cit.
4. Keigwin, A. Edwin: What You Should Know, Tenth Edition, Revised
5. Cf. Knight, op. cit.
6. Heeg, Aloysius J.: Practical Helps for the Religion Teacher, pp. 16-17

## 2. Discussion and Conversation

The manuals which are intended to be put in the hands of the class members are written in an informal, conversational style. Leaders are encouraged to attempt to keep class discussion informal. Conversation and discussion may be stimulated in a number of ways. The teacher may present some information and allow time for questions. The teacher may propose a problem for discussion. Committees may initiate the discussion by their findings, or the questions asked in the manual may be used as a "starter". Freedom for questions and discussion is urged. One manual writer asks the pupils to record questions which they should like to have discussed by the minister when he comes to visit the class five or six times during the year.<sup>1</sup> Another suggestion for use of discussion is in the form of one hour at the close of the study for evaluation of the course and its value.<sup>2</sup> In the same manual problems are presented frequently under the caption "A Hard Nut to Crack" or "A Very Hard One", and these discussions sometimes take the form of a debate.

The importance of allowing time following the session for personal questioning and individual interviews is stressed in several manuals.<sup>3</sup> This is not only helpful to the adolescent but gives the teacher an opportunity to become better acquainted with the pupils.

## 3. Lecture

While many of these manuals could be adapted to the lecture method, it is not once recommended. An approximation to this method is possible in books addressed to the Intermediate in conversational style, provided

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1. Cf. McMaster; I Prepare for Confirmation, p. 1
2. Cf. McMaster: op. cit., Leader's Guide, p. 5
3. Cf. Knight: op. cit. and Erdman: op. cit.

these books were used simply for private study. This is an unlikely use, however, and besides, books which present the material in this way also include questions and problems and sometimes activity suggestions.

#### 4. Pupil Activity

Considerable emphasis is placed on the importance of engaging the pupil in some form of activity. As one writer states it: "The leader should do as little of the work as possible."<sup>1</sup>

##### a. Quizzes

A difference of opinion seems to exist as to the usefulness of written quizzes in the adolescent's preparation for church membership. To one writer they are omitted on the grounds that they might prove embarrassing and burdensome.<sup>2</sup> Another manual includes a separate quiz sheet for every lesson.<sup>3</sup> It is emphasized, however, that the quizzes are not to be used too strictly, and that their main purpose is to discover the problems of the pupil. The quizzes are suggested also as a possible basis of questions to be asked by the examining committee after the course is finished. Some of the other writers recommend the use of a written review at the end of the course.<sup>4</sup>

##### b. Workbooks and Notebooks

Some of the manuals are in workbook form and some are only partially

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1. Lambert and Fender: op. cit., p. 9
2. Cf. Brink, Eben. Cobb: The Christian and Church Membership, p. 3
3. Cf. Knight: op. cit.
4. Cf. McMaster: I Prepare for Confirmation, and Miller: Manual for Communicants' Classes

patterned after the workbook. Other manuals recommend that the members of the class keep notebooks.

The workbooks of the Episcopalian Church deserve particular mention.<sup>1</sup> They are designed to provide for a maximum amount of activity on the part of the pupil and are intended to stimulate the pupil to research and independent thought. The books include both pictures and charts. Multiple choice questions, opportunity for paraphrasing Bible passages, and suggestions for original work are given. One of the workbooks provides extra suggestions for rapid workers.<sup>2</sup>

Another outstanding example of a workbook is that written by Walter David Knight.<sup>3</sup> Its arrangement is somewhat different, half the vertical length of the page being left for the pupils' notes.

One manual which allows some recordings in writing on the part of the pupil states the purpose of this as follows:

"The spaces left to be filled in will explain themselves. They are intended to give a sense of unity and fellowship to the group while sessions are being held and of a continuing experience after the sessions close."<sup>4</sup>

The use of the Bible in filling in the blanks of the workbook is recommended and provided for frequently. Memorization of certain Scripture passages, hymns, and catechism portions is recommended, but usually with a caution not to make memory work an end in itself or a burden. The Episcopalian Offices of Instruction require that the one who takes the membership vows recite from memory The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments, and The Apostles' Creed.

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1. McMaster: I Prepare for Confirmation; Lambert and Fender, Confirmation Made Interesting
2. Cf. McMaster: Ibid.
3. Cf. "Preparing Young People for Church Membership"
4. Hayward: op. cit., p. 75

c. Projects

Projects are recommended sometimes for committees, sometimes for the whole class. For example, one manual suggests that the whole subject of doctrine be worked out by persons or committees, and presented to the class.<sup>1</sup> One writer, whose manual is planned for a year's course, suggests that the class select some activity for the year, such as preparing a book of prayers for use before and after the Communion service, making a series of tests or posters relating to confirmation, developing a pageant to show the meaning of confirmation, or writing personal prayers for a class book.<sup>2</sup> This writer also suggests that the members of the class choose some concluding activity.<sup>3</sup> A class project frequently suggested is that of visiting the church auditorium and becoming familiar with the symbolism and furnishings there. Another suggestion made quite often is that of attending a baptism or communion service and discussing it in the following class session. All these activities are submitted as a means to making the instruction more experience-centered.

d. Assignments

The matter of giving assignments is not always mentioned. Only once is the opinion expressed that assignments should not be given at all.<sup>4</sup> When assignments are recommended it is coupled with the thought that the pupil should be supplied with a copy of the text being used and references to other sources of information. Assignments may be made to the class as a whole or to committees. One writer points out the importance of enlist-

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1. Cf. Hayward: op. cit., p. 73
2. Cf. McMaster: op. cit., Leader's Guide, p. 4
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 4-5
4. Cf. Brink: op. cit., p. 3

ing the parents' and teachers' cooperation in motivating and helping the pupils to study the assignments, and he suggests also the possibility of the Sunday School teachers' supplementing the work of the teacher of the communicants' class.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Conclusion of the Course

Various means are offered for making the conclusion of the course vital and helpful to the adolescent. Miller suggests an examination or review, and that each member of the class write a four-hundred word essay on some assigned topic or subject of his own choosing. He also states the value of the teacher's having a personal interview with each member of the class after the class instruction has been completed.<sup>2</sup> One booklet includes in its closing pages a form to be signed by the pupil, which expresses a desire to show loyalty to Christ and commitment of life to His way.<sup>3</sup> The Membership Manual of the Methodist Church includes "My Meditation", "My Pledge", and "My Consecration Prayer" as means to personalizing and filling full of meaning the pupil's own decision. Another booklet suggests to the pupil at the end of the course that he make out a life program incorporating the new ideals he has gained.<sup>4</sup> A similar idea is set forth in Lambert and Fender's "Confirmation Made Interesting", where at the close of the workbook there is space for the pupil to write some of the things his life program will now include as he gleans ideas from his workbook.

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1. Cf. Knight: op. cit., Teacher's Book, p. 6
2. Cf. Miller: op. cit.
3. Cf. Bugbee, Lucius H.: Preparatory Lessons for Church Membership, p. 40
4. Cf. Hayward: op. cit., pp. 59 ff.

The most complete treatment of the meeting with the examining committee is given by Knight.<sup>1</sup> The committee members are to be prepared for this occasion by familiarizing them with the material covered in the class sessions. The pupils are encouraged to think of the committee members as adult friends who are interested in their spiritual welfare. The atmosphere of the examination period should be kept informal. It is suggested that a tea to which the committee members and the class members are invited may serve as a means for the adults and adolescents to become acquainted with one another and as a means for setting an informal atmosphere. When the examination is conducted the committee members should avoid sitting in a group on one side of the room like a jury. Several methods of procedure in conducting the examination are offered:

- (1) The question and answer method, which shows only factual knowledge.
- (2) The committee method, wherein a small committee meets individuals or small groups. (The advantage here is that the committee members best suited to conduct the examination may be used.)
- (3) The class-discussion method. The committee members attend the final session of the class and are privileged to ask questions. The class discussion is started by some such supposition as a man from another planet making his appearance in the room and inquiring what is happening.

Following the examination by the committee, the pupils should be sent in writing an announcement of their formal acceptance and instruction as to when to appear to make their public profession of faith.

Mr. Knight also suggests a Pre-Communion Service especially for those who shall take the membership vows. The members of the class

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1. Cf. Knight: op. cit., Teacher's Book, pp. 7-8

should be required to attend this service (a service of a devotional nature), and encouraged to ask any questions they may have concerning the communion service.

#### D. Uniting with the Church

To make the actual service of uniting with the church meaningful, several suggestions are offered. A number of the manuals include a certificate of membership and a copy of the order of service for receiving members into the church. One writer suggests that a letter of welcome from the pastor accompany the gift of the certificate of membership.<sup>1</sup> Means of reminding the adolescent of some of the significant points in his experience are provided in the form of baptismal certificates and order of the baptismal service, and a copy of the Apostles' Creed. To promote a feeling of close fellowship with the instructor, the other members of the class, the minister, and the examining committee, one book provides space for pictures and autographs.<sup>2</sup> An autographed and readable gift book for each new member is suggested as useful.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Knight has submitted the extreme importance of receiving each new member as an individual. Those who are baptized just prior to their taking membership vows are necessarily given more individual recognition; but it is possible to receive the others in the group individually also by the simple gesture of the minister's laying his hand upon each one's head. Each one should be called by name. The

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1. Cf. Knight: Preparing Young People for Church Membership, Teacher's Book, p. 8
2. Cf. Bowen, C. A.: This Is Your Church
3. Cf. Knight: op. cit., Teacher's Book, p. 9

message of the pastor at this service may be designed especially to welcome the new members and to challenge them.

#### E. Summary

While it is recognized that method is conditioned to a great extent by the instructor, this chapter is a study of method as it emerges from consideration of the selected communicants' materials. The teacher should be the pastor or someone well-equipped to teach the class in an informal and creative way, with a keen interest in each pupil.

The time allotted for the communicants' course ranged from six weeks to a year, with an apparent growing demand that more time be devoted to this important work. Uniformity of opinion was found in the fact that the individual class sessions should not exceed one hour. Several orders of procedure during the class session were submitted as possible helpful suggestions.

Several methods of presenting the material were seen to exist. The catechism is much in evidence as a tool for instruction. It seems, however, to occupy a place as helpful source material rather than a place at the center of the teaching. Informal class discussion is a method popularly used, and the importance of individual questioning and interview was brought out. The lecture method is not recommended. Pupil activity takes the form of quizzes, the using of workbooks and notebooks, class and committee projects, and individual preparation for the class session.

The conclusion of the course ideally presents a high point in the course of instruction, and suggested means were proposed for making it more meaningful. Greater emphasis was given to points to be observed

in the meeting of the class members with the examining committee.

To make the actual step of uniting with the church more significant to the adolescent, it was suggested as helpful to provide the pupils with copies of the order of service of baptism and confirmation (or reception of members), to give certificates, letters of welcome, gift books. The most important thing proposed, however, was that the adolescent be made to feel that he is being received as an individual.

**CHAPTER V**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

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A. Restatement of the Problem

The lack of functioning religion among the membership of the churches today, with its subsequent manifestation in lethargy in the churches and the loss of young people of adolescent age, has been attracting increasing attention. A helpful approach to this problem is through a study of means by which uniting with the church may become a more significant experience to the adolescent. With this in mind, certain representative communicants' class materials, their content and method, have been examined in relationship to the religious aspects of adolescent development from the psychological viewpoint.

B. Summary

In studying the nature of adolescent development psychologically, it was discovered that some aspects held particular religious significance. The period of transition through which the adolescent is passing is one in which he turns from a religion which is largely external to one which is an inner experience, and the manifestations of this change are clearly evident in early adolescence. The adolescent, by virtue of his childhood background and training, may have a positive or negative set toward religion. His tendency to doubt and question was noted, with reference to its sources. Finally, the ability of the adolescent to feel deeply was discussed, with the resulting increased self-awareness and hero-worship.

An investigation of the selected communicants' materials revealed a general pattern of content. The discussion dealt first with what the

adolescent should believe concerning God, man and sin, Jesus Christ and salvation, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. The importance of personalizing truth was discussed as the subject of the adolescent's desired experience was treated. The expression of belief and experience in life was found to be revealed in the traits of character which emerge in the adolescent's relationship with others, in his devotional life, his friendships, observation of the Sacraments, his participation in group worship, and in Christian service. A knowledge of the structure and function of the church universal and of a particular denomination were included in the communicants' instruction. In linking the belief and experience of the Christian with the nature and purpose of the church, reasons were considered why a Christian should become a church member.

As the methods used in communicant instruction were observed, it was discovered that the teacher of the class and the period of time allotted for instruction were frequently factors in determining method. In presenting the material, the catechism was seen to be useful as a source book rather than as a method of teaching. Informal class discussion with opportunity for personal interview was a method generally employed. Provision for pupil activity was seen to be made through the use of workbooks, notebooks, quizzes, class and committee projects, and individual preparation of assignments. Suggestions were offered as to ways in which the conclusion of the course and the actual step of uniting with the church may be made more meaningful to the adolescent, with particular reference to the way in which the examination by the committee is conducted and with reference to receiving each one into the church as an individual.

### C. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing study, certain conclusions emerge from a consideration of the relationship of the communicants' class materials, their content and method, to the adolescent nature as seen from the psychological viewpoint and to the current problem of lack of functioning religion in the membership of the church. These conclusions are as follows:

1. By the very nature of his development, the adolescent is peculiarly prepared to respond to the challenge to establish a personal relationship with Christ and to make a committal of life to Him. In his effort to gain the status of an adult he is experiencing a time of confusion in thought and feeling and is groping about for something solid and steadfast. Intellectually he is going through a time of doubt and questioning; emotionally he is experiencing the extremes of feeling. He is mentally alert and capable of wholehearted response. He is seeking for the answer to the meaning of life. He has become more sensitive to the finer things of life. He is by nature a hero worshipper and seeks to attach himself to someone whom he admires greatly.

2. More time is needed for communicant instruction. Is it conceivable that in six or ten hours an adolescent can gain a good foundation of doctrine presented in such a way that he shall respond with the giving of his life to Christ, plus a thorough outline of the issues of the Christian life, plus a fair knowledge of the church universal and his own denomination, plus an understanding of why a Christian should become a church member? Obviously, something will have to be skimmed over with slight attention, and the instructor, attempting to juggle

one ball too many, will doubtless drop them all. There are several possible solutions to this difficulty. In the first place, it would be possible to extend the period of communicant instruction over a considerably longer time, for example, one year, as the Episcopalians do. One New York City church has instituted a four-year period for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> Another possibility for the solution of this problem is to be found in the following paragraph.

3. A more unified church school curriculum would simplify the problem of adequate communicant instruction. Thus the other departments of the church school could supplement the instruction offered in the communicants' class proper, according to an integrated plan. Preceding or following confirmation, as seems best, the Sunday School might offer to this particular group instruction in church history, government and ministry, the meaning of prayer, how to study the Bible, and the subject of Christian living, thus permitting the instructor of the communicants' class in the time allotted to him to emphasize the matter of belief and establishing a personal relationship with Christ. Or, the church school curriculum might be planned so as to include the communicants' instruction through its regular departments, culminating in such a way as to lead the adolescent into a personal relationship with Christ.

4. More concentrated effort is needed to lead the adolescent into a vital and personal relationship to Christ and a meaningful commitment to Him. It should be one of the objectives of communicant instruction to lead the adolescent from a possession of mere factual knowledge to a possession of personalized truth. It is a question in the mind of the writer as to whether the adolescent will readily gain a meaningful experience in establishing a personal relation to Christ when that part

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1. Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity

of his instruction appears as just another assignment to prepare, or just another paragraph or chapter in his textbook. Because of his own self-awareness, partially brought about by his active emotion, the adolescent is prepared in a remarkable way for reaching out to Christ, the One who at once attracts his implicit trust and loyalty and meets the inadequacies which he feels so deeply. The atoning work of Christ takes on clear meaning in the light of this adolescent characteristic. There are several suggestions which come to mind as means to leading the adolescent into a vital spiritual experience. The first is through the study of one of the Gospels. If vitally presented, the Gospel by John, for example, written "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name",<sup>1</sup> could well be the medium through which the adolescent gains a real personal experience of God. This Gospel is particularly adaptable for communicants' instruction also because of its warm, personal approach, its emphasis on personality, and the psychological character of its presentation as opposed to merely factual presentation. In conducting the Bible study, one should keep in mind some of the methods recommended by the communicants' materials, such as allowing for a maximum amount of activity and thinking on the part of the pupil, and creating an atmosphere of informal discussion. One means of personalizing the instruction and making the decision of the adolescent more definite in his own mind is to ask each member of the class to write a statement of personal testimony, to be read by the pastor at the service of reception into the church, stating why he wishes to unite with the church. To provide a fitting climax

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1. John 20:31

to the instruction, there is the possibility of closing the period with a challenging address delivered by a capable speaker, one who has a communicable Christian experience, and one who will bring the responsibility of a decision before the adolescent. A day's retreat at some desirable place might prove a means of stressing the importance of this phase of the communicant's preparation. As the adolescent makes his profession of faith publicly, the more he is made to feel that he is being received as an individual, the more meaningful will be his experience at that occasion. The pastor's laying his hand on the head of each one and calling each by name is recommended, as is also that the message of the service be in the form of a challenge to this group and that each one be presented with a letter of welcome from the pastor, and a copy of the vows they are taking.

5. Careful attention should be directed toward always maintaining in the adolescent's thinking the inseparable relationship which maintains between the expression of the Christian life and its Source. One of the objectives of the communicants' class is to link inner controls with the real divine Source of control. This should come as the adolescent becomes acquainted with God (Creator and Father), with Christ (Saviour and Lord), and with the Holy Spirit (the Sanctifier of life), and as he desires to establish a personal relationship with Christ. The attitude of mind in the adolescent which demands that things be practical provides fertile ground for the presentation of the subject of Christian living. The task of the instructor is to present Christian living in the clear light of Christian stewardship. Deeds of kindness need to have placed behind them love for Christ as well as love for men, and can be related definitely to the devotional practices of the adolescent. His service in the church must be tied to the personal relationship and loyalty he bears

to Christ, and consequently to his church.

6. More effort should be made by the instructor to know the members of his class as individuals. This is particularly true in the light of two characteristics of the adolescent: (1) his mental "set" toward religion as conditioned by his childhood background and training; and (2) his proneness to doubt and question. In the light of these two characteristics in the adolescent, there appears the importance of allowing time for counseling of individuals. Some of the adolescents coming for communicants' instruction may have been conditioned by religious attitudes which are now causing them real problems in addition to those which normally arise at this age of doubt and skepticism. It is important that the leader become well-acquainted with the home background of each member of the class. A talk in private with the leader of the group may do much to guide the thinking of the young person on to the reasonable ground of faith. Insofar as possible, conferences with the individual members of the class at intervals during the instruction period are most desirable.

7. A more definite effort should be made to meet the problems which arise in the minds of adolescents who are concurrently receiving religious instruction and instruction in the sciences. Because many of the religious doubts of the adolescent have their origin in his study of science, a more intelligent attempt should be made to answer any conflicts which may be in the adolescent's mind, especially those which center around the creation, the miraculous, and the inspiration of the Bible. In conducting the class session the leader should be careful not to make wholesale assumptions, but should present the truths of Christianity on a rational basis and with a positive emphasis. It should be kept in mind constantly that the adolescent is really yearning for something solid on which to stand and that it

is all-important to make Christ stand out clearly before him as the incarnate Answer to his search for God.

8. A confidence in the Bible as one means by which God has revealed Himself to men should be aroused in the adolescent. As has been stated in the preceding paragraph, the inspiration of the Bible is likely to present a difficulty to the adolescent. It is not probable that the adolescent who looks upon the Bible as a collection of myths will accept as true what the Bible teaches. It was observed that some of the writers of communicants' materials placed first their discussion of the Bible and then took up the beliefs of the Christian based on the Bible, and this seems to be a logical arrangement of material. A first-hand study of Biblical material, as, for example, the Gospel by John suggested above,<sup>1</sup> would help greatly in the solution of the problem of inspiration.

9. The instruction should be presented in such a way as will call forth the activity and thought of the pupil. This will arouse greater interest on the part of the pupil in the course, and, in the end, will help the adolescent to know more definitely that the decision he makes is his very own. This is closely connected with the point made in the following paragraph.

10. Opportunities to engage in devotional and service experiences should be afforded during the period of instruction. It would seem that somewhere in the communicants' instruction should be included a real attempt to establish meaningful devotional habits. Guides for personal devotions, with an explanation of how their use may be most helpful, might prove an encouragement in establishing the "Quiet Hour" custom. The members of the class might enter into agreement among themselves to

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1. Ante, p. 63

keep tryst with one another and with God at a specified time each day during their instruction. Opportunity for leading in prayer may be given to the members of the class in the regular instruction hour. Times for spontaneous worship may be watched for by the leader. As has been mentioned above,<sup>1</sup> other aspects of the program in the church school might give special attention to some of these subjects during the time allotted to them. A real field for helpful suggestion is in the matter of how to study the Bible. The Bible will take on new life and become a definite means of help to the adolescent who studies it meaningfully and purposefully. In the matter of engaging the adolescent in active church work, this study has been able to go little farther than to deal with motivation for Christian service. It may seem advisable to have some form of active service in the church as one of the projects carried out by the class, in order to give the members an opportunity to begin to express the impressions they have received. The members of the class should be encouraged to share with others the things they learn and feel through their class work, with the view of making it a more natural thing for them to continue to share their Christian experience and bring others to Christ.

11. A feeling of one-ness should be established among the members of the communicants' class, and between the class members and the membership of the church local and universal. If a study of the church is not possible in the period of communicant instruction, most denominations have brief and well-written church histories in pamphlet form which could be placed in the hands of the class members. The church's life presented in terms of great personalities of faith is an appealing approach.

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Christian biography should be made available to the class members throughout the period of instruction. A planned visit to one of the board meetings of the local church officers would help the adolescent to understand better the functionings of his own church organization. Participation in the Sacraments and in public worship will depend partially at least on how meaningful these experiences are to the adolescent. The suggestions to make a tour of the church auditorium, noting the symbolism there, attending a service of baptism or communion and then discussing it in the class, and having a pre-communion service for the class seem especially appropriate. A feeling of belonging, of fellowship with the church members, will encourage the adolescent to participate in the church services. It is recommended that prior to public confession, the examination given by the committee be performed by a well-informed committee and with provision for making the atmosphere informal and friendly. The examination therefore will not be an ordeal but a time of fellowship and sharing between the normally self-conscious adolescents and their elders.

The communicants' class instructor, the pastor, the director of Christian Education or other leader of youth should find among the above conclusions suggestions which will result in a more meaningful experience for the adolescent when he unites with the church.

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