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The Role of the Old Testament in High School Level Curricula of the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod 1964-1970

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THE ROLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL CURRICULA OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, AND THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD 1964-1970

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Short Title

THE O.T. AND LUTHERAN CURRICULA; Rast; Th.D., 1971.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the May 1970 issue of School Review, Prof. Mark Krug of the University of Chicago presented an analysis of "how some U. S. history textbooks, widely used throughout the country, deal with Negroes and the fight for human and civil rights."[1] While Prof. Krug admits there has been marked improvement in the textbook treatment of Negroes over the past few years, he concludes that the need for "major improvement, and major revisions" in materials still exists.[2] The University of Chicago professor then proceeds to itemize five steps toward improvement to be taken by publishers and writers of secondary school textbooks.

Prof. Krug's study is mentioned here merely to provide an indication of how this study of high school level Old Testament curricula will proceed and what information and guidance this study might offer publishers and writers of these curricula. The Krug study was not a statistical analysis of United States history textbooks, but a thematic

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[1]Mark M. Krug, "Freedom and Racial Equality: A Study of 'Revised' High School History Texts," School Review, LXXVIII (May 1970), 297.

[2]Ibid., LXXVIII, 347.

investigation of topics like plantation slavery, abolitionism, slavery compromises, the Civil War, reconstruction, and the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision. Similarly, this study of Old Testament curricula will be topical rather than statistical and will take into account, as Krug did, "not only what is in the textbooks, but also what has been advertently or inadvertently left out."[3]

The aim of this study is to determine how the various curriculum materials present Word of God in the Old Testament. Accordingly, topics or categories to be dealt with include revelation, Bible, the unity of the testaments, salvation, morality, and historical-critical exegesis.

In a general way, then, this study proposes to engage in what educators would call descriptive research. One type of descriptive research is content analysis, the use of a set of techniques to determine certain specified characteristics of verbal communication. According to Gephart and Ingle, education professors at Indiana University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the purpose of content analysis "is to establish a clear description of materials and phenomena under investigation.[4] George Mouly, chairman

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[3] Ibid., LXXVIII, 298.

[4] William J. Gephart and Robert B. Ingle, Educational Research: Selected Readings (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969), p. 216.

of the University of Florida's educational psychology department, explains that:

> not only is analysis really a form of description . . . without analysis to provide a deeper insight into their basic nature, the adequate description of phenomena is relatively impossible.[5]

An example of content analysis relative to Christian education curriculum materials and involving statistical computations is Bernhard Olson's well-known study on intergroup relations in Protestant curricula.[6] By assigning numerical weights or values to specific data, Olson was able to measure the extent of prejudice evidenced by various denominational curricula. Olson's study corresponds to the definition of content analysis proposed by Berelson and Lindzey, that is, "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."[7] Another definition of content analysis is "any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying

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[5]George J. Mouly, The Science of Educational Research (New York: American Book Company, 1963), p. 281.

[6]Bernhard E. Olson, Faith and Prejudice (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963).

[7]Bernard Berelson, "Content Analysis," Handbook of Social Psychology, edited by Gardner Lindzey (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), I, 498.

specified characteristics within the text."[8]

When the author began his study of Lutheran Old Testament curricula, he attempted at first to follow the above definitions of content analysis and to model the study after Bernhard Olson's work. It soon became evident, however, that the statistical expertise required for this kind of analysis was lacking. In addition, establishing a research design to measure theological concepts statistically and to derive from these significant theological inferences also appeared questionable. Statistical studies involving theology or religious convictions sometimes amount to little more than table after table of frequency distributions. An analysis of ideas, belief, and convictions, therefore, seemed more appropriate.

The author then turned to Prof. Krug's article in School Review. Prof. Krug's model of a non-statistical and idea-centered evaluation of curriculum materials suggested that this present study could proceed along similar lines. In addition, a significant theological analysis of curriculum materials in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod had already been carried out without the use of statistical measures.[9] For these reasons, then, it was decided to do a

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[8]Philip J. Stone and others, The General Inquirer: A Computer Approach to Content Analysis (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 5.

[9]See Walter R. Bouman, "The Teaching of Religion: A

theological analysis of the content of specific high school level Old Testament courses published by the three major Lutheran bodies in America.

High school level courses were chosen because the author's present position on the Missouri Synod's Board of Parish Education involves him with these materials. An Old Testament emphasis was selected partly because of the author's interest in that field of study and partly because of the interesting questions the Old Testament poses for Biblical interpreters and Christian theologians.

Courses from all three bodies were selected because of recent efforts on their part to work together more closely. All three bodies belong to the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., and all three already participate in various joint publication projects. Moreover, there is strong indication that the respective Boards of Parish Education are attempting to move in the direction of one curriculum for all three bodies rather than three separate curriculums as presently published. When and whether the latter will come to pass is uncertain at this time.

Nevertheless it was felt that a sampling of high school level courses from the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran

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Theological Analysis," The Teaching of Religion, edited by John S. Damm (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1965). This analysis is relatively minor in scope and one among few attempts to subject Lutheran curriculum materials to close examination.

Church in America, and The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod would result in certain conclusions about how the churches might proceed in the production of joint curricula. Six sample courses were selected according to two categories: topical studies and biblical studies. Three courses were selected in each category and the Old Testament content of the courses subjected to analysis. The bibliographical data on the courses is noted both in Chapter IV and in the Bibliography at the end of the thesis.

Readings in various educational research sources confirmed that an analysis of Lutheran curricula could be a valuable undertaking. Stone's discussions regarding the techniques of content analysis repeatedly reinforced the fact that "words and sentences are important human artifacts" worthy of scholarly attention.[10] Moreover, C. Ellis Nelson, professor of practical theology at Union Seminary, New York, had offered the opinion that curriculum and specific curriculum materials are "the self-image of the church and . . . the most reliable place to examine the actual beliefs of a denomination."[11] If Nelson is correct, then the conclusions of this study might be understood as

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[10]Stone and Others, p. 3.

[11]C. Ellis Nelson, "The Curriculum of Christian Education," An Introduction to Christian Education, edited by Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 157.

characteristic also of the three Lutheran synods and not just of the materials analyzed. Elsewhere Dr. Nelson suggested that "curriculum has a tendency to be a practical expression of a philosophy."[12] It seems that the present study can serve only as a first step in identifying the philosophy that lies behond Lutheran curricula.

In an attempt to find a starting point for the study, it became necessary to note in a general way the character of religious education in the twentieth century. Liberal theological presuppositions growing out of a belief in divine immanence and in the evolutionary progressive goodness of the human race characterized much of religious education in the first three decades of the century. However, in 1941, H. Shelton Smith of Duke University tried to identify the weaknesses of "the thought-patterns of liberal Protestant nurture" and to bring about certain revisions.[13] Smith's book became a watershed in the religious education movement and set in motion a rethinking of the theological bases for religious education during the next 20 years.

Before Smith's challenge, the Bible had been used as a "resource" for religious education, that is, a book that contained men's religious insights and experiences that

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[12]C. Ellis Nelson, Issues Facing Christian Educators (Geneva: World Council of Christian Education, 1968), p. 22.

[13]H. Shelton Smith, Faith and Nurture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. viii.

might help other men deal with their problems in later times. After Smith's challenge and because of the return to a theocentric, transcendentalist, Trinitarian theology that was already underway, there arose a tendency to go beyond the view of the Bible as "resource." This tendency, however, was already evident in the Objectives in Religious Education written by Paul H. Vieth in 1930 for the International Council of Religious Education, especially the statement relating specifically to the Bible: "To lead growing persons to a knowledge and appreciation of the Bible."[14]

Eventually there emerged a new view of the Bible in church education. In 1961 Dr. Sara Little of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, published The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education, which showed how revelational theology had taken hold of most of Protestant Christian education programs by the late 1950s. According to this "new" revelational theology, the Bible is a record of God's mighty acts through which He continues to reveal Himself to men.

Dr. Little's study, then, furnished possibilities for carrying through the present study. If revelational theology of the "mighty acts of God" kind as described by

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[14]Paul H. Vieth, Objectives in Religious Education (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 88.

Dr. Little dominated and continues to dominate contemporary Protestant Christian education curricula, is it possible that Lutheran curricula, when dealing with Old Testament content, might reflect a similar view? And is the "mighty acts of God" view the only view within Protestantism today? Is it possible that there is another view that can be slotted at the opposite end of a revelation continuum?

It was obvious that the latter question had to be answered affirmatively. Christian educators of the fundamentalist, evangelical, and neo-evangelical types have reacted against the "mighty acts" or "event" understanding of Scripture. They have chosen to remain with a more traditional, literal, and often biblicistic view of the Word of God. The question, therefore, once more needed to be asked: Do Lutheran curricula, when dealing with Old Testament content, reflect a fundamentalist or evangelical view?

Finally it became clear that any analysis of Lutheran curriculum materials had to proceed with a clear picture of how early Lutheranism conceived of Word of God in the Old Testament. At this point, then, a basis for analyzing the Lutheran materials began to emerge.

It was decided that the study should examine whether selected high school level Lutheran curricula in their understanding of the Old Testament as Word of God espouse the accents of "mighty acts of God" theology, or the accents of fundamentalism and evangelicalism, or both. It was also

decided that the analysis should be undertaken within the context of a Reformation understanding of Word of God, the antithetical relationship between the two works of God, law and promise, and their counterparts on the human level, faith and unfaith. A hypothesis was framed to guide the study: the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula occasionally reflects the accents of "mighty acts of God" ("event" centered) theology or literal, biblicistic ("word" centered) theology, thereby compromising the Reformation understanding of Word of God.

There are, of course, definite limitations to the study. A larger sample of materials would have given the conclusions greater validity. In addition, the analysis of the materials themselves would have been more reliable if some kind of statistical design could have corroborated the findings. As it stands, the collection of pertinent data from the materials was highly subjective. And the margin of error regarding the author's understanding of course content must frankly be acknowledged. If errors in understanding have occurred, they are not intentional. The courses were each read carefully many times to make certain errors would be at a minimum.

It should also be acknowledged that this is not an exhaustive study of the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula. Even in establishing criteria for the analysis, it was impossible to go into great detail regarding

the "word," "event," and Reformation understandings of the Old Testament. Each of these Word views could easily constitute a separate study of their own. Moreover, the purpose of this study led to an investigation of only the larger ideas presented in the curriculum materials themselves. Further studies of this type, therefore, could focus on some of the details that had to be ignored by this initial probe.

A word of caution needs to be expressed regarding the "word," "event," and Reformation categories used in this study. In content analysis the researcher faces the problem of analyzing information which is subjective in character. Lutheran curriculum materials are subjective in that they are obliquely "Lutheran." Nevertheless the themes running through the materials need to be reliably classified in some meaningful way if the materials are to be interpreted. According to the techniques of content analysis, the relevant characteristics of the materials are determined through the systematic and rigorous use of categories.[15] The "word," "event," and Reformation categories, therefore, tend to be exclusive and to separate systematically and rigorously the relevant characteristics of the materials into one category or the other when, in fact, the materials in themselves are not that exclusive.

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[15]John L. Hayman, Jr., Research in Education (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 79-84.

Finally it should be noted that this study was undertaken just as a new curriculum (called Mission:Life) for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod was about to appear. Since the author participated in the development of the new curriculum, he was often tempted to refer to it and to critique the 1960 materials in the light of what is to come. However, it was felt this would be unfair to the materials analyzed since, in a sense, this is an historical study of materials published between 1964 and 1970.

The thesis begins with a survey of the place of the Bible in Protestant and Roman Catholic curricula of the late 1960s. This survey, which includes considerable material from Lutheran sources, is intended to demonstrate the significant if not central role of the Bible in all Christian education curriculums. The assumption is that all of the curriculums function with certain general understandings of the Bible as Word of God, particularly the Old Testament as Word of God. Chapter III outlines what this study believes are the three main understandings in Christian education today: (1) Word as word; (2) Word as event; and (3) Word as law and promise. The summaries of each of these stances provide the criteria for analyzing the six high school level Lutheran courses in Chapter IV according to the stated hypothesis and according to the six topical categories mentioned earlier. The final two chapters summarize the findings of the analysis and attempt to

chart a course for the use of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula of the future.

In view of the author's present position as an editor of Christian education materials and in view of his experience as a teacher of theology, the study was both interesting and exciting. Through the great amount of reading that became necessary, many new ideas were discovered and related to previously held points of view. The study also forced the author to sharpen his understanding of his own denominational tradition which, in turn, led him to a greater appreciation of that tradition. In addition, the greatest value of the entire undertaking resulted from discussing the ideas of the study with others (family, friends, and colleagues) and from living day-by-day with the promises of God in the Old and New Testaments.

The present study, of course, places great emphasis on curriculum materials. In fact, it may appear that the author feels the church stands or falls by the materials it publishes. Such is not the case. Although curriculum materials are important and should present the Word of God in its proper sense, the materials themselves cannot carry final responsibility. The teacher has that responsibility. Therefore, Prof. Krug's remarks at the conclusion of his textbook analysis should be kept in mind throughout the study that follows:

American history textbooks have been analyzed and criticized with increasing frequency in recent years. Some of this criticism is deserved, but other attacks are unjustified. The textbook as a tool of instruction has its strong and weak points and it has a role to play in the process of instruction, but it makes little sense to blame it for all the ills that afflict our schools. Even when the textbooks used in a particular classroom are dull, inane, and not very accurate, they are not responsible for dull and ineffective instruction. That responsibility belongs primarily to the teacher. A teacher who relies only on textbook instruction and who is not ingenious enough to overcome the deficiencies in the textbook ought not to be in the classroom.[16]

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[16]Krug, LXXVIII, 347.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLE IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

As was mentioned in the introduction, this chapter presents a survey of the place of the Bible in Protestant (and Roman Catholic) curricula of the late 1960s. The chapter aims to demonstrate the significant if not central role of the Bible in all Christian education curriculums. Although references are principally to American educators and theologians, the chapter occasionally includes references also to European educators and theologians by way of comparison and by way of noting the European influence on American Christian education. In addition, the chapter attempts to take into account D. Campbell Wyckoff's claim that "Christian education and its curriculum evidently respond to change in the world and the climate around it" including:

> changes in the national and international situation, the prevailing outlook of the people, philosophy, psychology and other behavioral sciences, education, theology, and the way the church lives and does its work.[1]

The main point of the chapter is that every Protestant curriculum makes use of the Bible for different reasons and

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[1] D. Campbell Wyckoff, Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 50.

with different hermeneutical principles reflected in those reasons along with different notions of the Word of God. It seems, therefore, that if one understands the underlying Word view of the various curriculums, he would at the same time acquire a grasp of the whole framework of the educational materials and their assumptions. For,

> the way we organize our churches, develop codes of ethics, publish our Christian education courses, in short, everything we do depends on how we understand the Word.[2]

The nature and significance of the Bible has always been a profound concern of the church and of Christian education. In the past decade, for example, a number of studies have appeared bearing titles like The Bible Today For Those Who Teach It, The Bible in Christian Teaching, Imparting the Word: The Bible in Christian Education, and The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education.[3] Each of these studies intended to explain the nature of the Bible, how the church should use the Bible, and how the Bible's message is relevant for the times.

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[2]Frank W. Klos, Confirmation and First Communion (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968), p. 77.

[3]Clifford M. Jones, The Bible Today For Those Who Teach It (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964); Holmes Rolston, The Bible In Christian Teaching (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1962); Iris V. Cully, Imparting the Word: The Bible in Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Sara Little, The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1961).

These studies reflect a gradual shift in the way the Bible was used. The reevaluation of the Bible's message and role in the church prompted Christian educators to develop new models of Bible study which incorporated the ideas of personalistic-relational psychology and the visual language of Marshall McLuhan.[4] In the process, traditional models of Bible study and Bible use were often set aside. Instead of the emphasis on the literal transmission of biblical truth there appeared an emphasis on dialogue and the language of relationships as well as a highly significant increase in visual communication of the Word.[5]

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[4]See Allan Hart Jahsmann, Power Beyond Words (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969) for a summary of many of the new ideas and models in Christian education and John S. Damm, The Teaching of Religion (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1965), pp. 6-7; especially pp. 12-14 where he draws upon Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education (New York: Vintage Books, 1960). See also Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: Signet Books, 1964). Iris V. Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction in American Catechetical Literature," Catechetics For The Future, edited by Alois Müller (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 139, comments on the McLuhan thesis: "The Bible comes to us as the written record of the word of God, and--for people who like to read--this is a useful form of communication. The McLuhan thesis of a new tribalism should make us reflect that the Bible began as an oral tradition. The story needs to be heard: to be told by person to person, to be witnessed to in personal and community experience, and to be celebrated in the liturgy. The next attempts at curriculum re-writing may have to take seriously such kinds of response to the Bible."

[5]Ruel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1963). See also by the same author Man's Need and God's Action (New York: Seabury Press, 1953). An

Some church members were confused by these developments. As new Christian education materials reflecting the new models began to be produced, church members could be heard asking the time-honored question concerning the Bible's role. In some instances, in fact, they could be heard deploring what they regarded as a serious flaw in the new models and materials, that is, the failure to make substantial use of the Old and New Testament writings and to present biblical truth according to traditional models.

The nature and significance of the Bible, therefore, remained a profound concern of the church and of Christian education. The fact is even more understandable when it is remembered that Christian education always involves programs, methods, and materials and that, as C. Ellis Nelson has pointed out, "every curriculum is an interpretation of the Bible."[6]

The Bible has always been a central concern of Lutheran curricula because of the denomination's emphasis on sola Scriptura and on the Word of God in the Bible as a means of grace. Lutherans teach that God's grace is hidden except as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, and that the

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example of a combined personalist-relational and visual approach in curriculum is Choose Life (Chicago: Argus Communications, 1968).

[6]C. Ellis Nelson, "The Curriculum of Christian Education," An Introduction To Christian Education, edited by Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp.157-168.

Bible is the record of that revelation. In addition, Lutherans contend that the Bible is the only source and norm for the church's teaching and life because the Bible is the prophetic and apostolic witness to the Gospel.[7]

It is no surprise, then, that Lutheran curricula have consistently stressed Bible study and interpretation. A recent promotional brochure for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod's "Life in Christ" curriculum described the curriculum as one that "teaches basic truths of the Gospel," that "studies the Bible as salvation history," and that "relates the Word of God to life in today's world."[8] A brochure describing The American Lutheran Church curriculum included that denomination's general objective of parish education which pledges to teach faithfully God's truth revealed in the Old and New Testaments.[9] While the current

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[7]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 5.

[8]The Concordia Catalog 1970-1971 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), p. 6. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod will be hereafter designated LCMS.

[9]The American Lutheran Church Curriculum, 1969-70 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p. 2. The American Lutheran Church will hereafter be designated ALC. The ALC parish education objectives reads: "In accordance with God's revelation in the Old and New Testaments, in response to the Savior's great commission, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order that men may live in Christ, The American Lutheran Church pledges itself in its program of parish education to teach faithfully God's truth--confronting persons with God and what He has done for men . . ."

Lutheran Church in America brochure makes no comprehensive theological claims for its curriculum,[10] an earlier piece used to introduce the new LCA curriculum noted that,

> for the first time your congregation can have Christian education that blends the insights of educational science and Lutheran theology (and which) unfolds the whole message of the Bible . . .[11]

A survey of high school level courses offered by the three Lutheran bodies lends additional weight to the claim that the Bible is a central concern of Lutheran curricula. Of the 26 high school courses listed in the LCA curriculum, 6, or approximately 23 per cent of the courses, are strictly biblical. By "strictly biblical" is meant that the courses are studies of Bible content, either an entire book of the Bible or studies of selected Bible passages. Of the 18 high school level courses listed in the ALC curriculum, 3, or approximately 17 per cent, are strictly biblical. The LCMS lists 16 high school level courses, 15 of which, or approximately 94 per cent, fit the strictly biblical category.

The picture changes somewhat if courses which are topical in nature, but whose descriptions clearly specify that the courses incorporate Bible study activities, are included in the tabulation. Accordingly, the number of LCA

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[10] Timely Teaching Tools: LCA Parish Education Curriculum, 1970-1971 (Philadelphia: The Board of Parish Education and the Board of Publication, 1970). The Lutheran Church in America will hereafter be designated LCA.

[11] A New Light On Christian Education: The LCA Parish

courses increases from 6 to 11, or 42 per cent of the total. The ALC tabulation increases from 3 to 9 courses, or an even 50 per cent. The LCMS tabulation remains the same.

Lutheran curricula makes substantial use of the biblical writings. This does not imply, however, that other Protestant curricula do not. In fact, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Although new instructional models have been developed and new curricula produced throughout Protestantism, often radically different from traditional Sunday school methods and materials, the central concern of Protestant Christian education remains the message of the Old and New Testaments.

Iris V. Cully recently completed a survey of 11 Protestant and Roman Catholic curriculums and noted that in each of these the Bible was a central concern. Dr. Cully added that "the Bible has been the basic instructional material within United States Protestantism since the rise of the Sunday school early in the nineteenth century."[12] The implication of Dr. Cully's statement is that the Bible not only has been but continues to be basic to Protestant Christian education programs.

Education Curriculum (Philadelphia: The Board of Parish Education, n.d.), p. 1.

[12]Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," p. 128.

A review of some of the curriculums studied by Dr. Cully supports the above claim. At the same time, such a review suggests that within the past decade the Bible has also become a more basic material for Roman Catholic religious education programs.

The "Christian Faith and Action"[13] curriculum produced by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., proposes as one of its goals the development of intelligent Bible interpretation. Accordingly, children in grades 1 and 2 study stories about biblical people; grades 3 and 4 study certain important segments of Bible history like the Exodus, the Israelite kingdom, and the life of Christ; grades 5 and 6 engage in a broad survey of Bible history; grades 7 to 9 study the nature and authority of the Bible and interpretative skills; grades 9 and 10 through senior high and adult classes use interpretative skills in the areas of worship, ethics, and theology. The point of the curriculum, which evidences a high regard for biblical scholarship, is the development of Christians who know what the Bible says and what it means, and who can, in turn, apply this information to life.

The American Baptist Convention and the Disciples of Christ have begun production of a new curriculum called

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[13]Christian Faith and Action (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, 1970).

"Christian Faith and Work Plan."[14] A key concept in this new curriculum is "crossing-point," the intersection of the learner's life situations and the Gospel. Most units in the curriculum will apparently begin with life situations which will then be related to extensive lists of biblical references. In each year of the graded curriculum, there will be at least one study that fits the strictly biblical category defined earlier for Lutheran curricula.

The mighty acts of God recorded in the Bible and experienced in the lives of His people is the unifying theme of the "Covenant Life Curriculum,"[15] a joint project of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Moravian Church, and the Reformed Church of America. The curriculum plans comprises two-year cycles which alternate the themes of the Bible and the Christian life.

The "United Church Curriculum"[16] of the United Church of Christ seems to be more experienced-centered than Bible-centered at first glance. The curriculum attempts to help persons see themselves in relation to others, the world, the church, and God. Nevertheless this psychological orientation gives way to a biblical orientation as specific Bible

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[14] Christian Faith and Work Plan (Valley Forge: American Baptist Convention, Judson Graded Series, 1969).

[15] Covenant Life Curriculum (Richmond, Va.: Covenant Life Press, 1964).

[16] United Church Curriculum (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1962).

stories and passages are used to identify and explain these relationships. Dr. Cully describes this approach as "an 'existential' use of the Bible."[17] The approach is apparently intended to arouse and motivate people to read their Bibles.

Popularly known as "The Seabury Series" but more accurately identified as "The Church's Teaching Series,"[18] the curriculum of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America revolves around the life and needs of the learner. The Bible, however, remains integral to the entire curriculum. Teacher's manuals contain resources for developing individual study units around pertinent biblical materials.

In recent years Roman Catholicism has experienced a resurgence of biblical and liturgical interest that has had a profound effect on that denomination's catechetical instruction and curricula. The "Come to the Father" series[19] and "The Christian Inheritance" series[20] are examples of the salvation history approach in Bible study. More life-experience approaches, although still using ample biblical

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[17] Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," p. 134.

[18] The Church's Teaching Series (New York: Seabury Press, 1955).

[19] Come to the Father (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1966).

[20] The Christian Inheritance (Winona, Minn.: St. Mary's College Press, 1968).

content, appear in series like "Time For Living"[21] and "Choose Life."[22]

It is, therefore, incorrect to suggest that the Bible has been played down in Protestant or Roman Catholic Christian education curricula because of novel approaches that fail to impart the Word. On the contrary, Protestant and Roman Catholic curricula today use as much biblical material as they ever did and, in some cases, even more.

To be sure, models for teaching the Bible and basic approaches to Bible study along with teaching materials have changed. In her survey, Dr. Cully noted these changes by grouping the various curricular materials into categories such as Bible-centered, experience-centered, or combined Bible and experience-centered. No matter what the approach, however, the intent of all the curriculums ultimately was to teach biblical content.[23]

The mere use of biblical stories and phrases, however, does not always result in an effective role for the Bible in Christian education. As Dr. Cully points out, "Professional educators frequently insist that there is little motivation for learning the content of the Bible

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[21] Time For Living (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.

[22] Choose Life.

[23] Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," passim.

unless this can be shown to have meaning for the learner's life."[24] Perhaps this explains why two fairly recent surveys reported that only small percentages of Christian youth read the Bible.[25] Besides, Ronald Goldman has argued that the mere use of biblical stories and phrases without regard for the individual's age-level characteristics may result in learnings opposite those intended by the teacher or denominational curriculum writer.[26] Nevertheless, Dr. Goldman admits that the Bible continues to be

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[24] Ibid., 129.

[25] Merton P. Strommen, Profiles of Church Youth (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 241, concludes: "An uncomfortably large number of youth refer to their Scriptures only occasionally. Most Lutheran youth do not draw spiritual help from God's Word . . ." In a study of National Sunday School Association (NSSA) related evangelical churches, Roy B. Zuck and Gene A. Getz, Christian Youth--An In-Depth Survey (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 47, arrived at the more modest conclusion "that only a fourth of the teens (2,646 participated in the survey) read the Bible daily." Elsewhere, p. 157, Zuck and Getz conclude: "Teens involved in daily Bible reading and prayer reported greater satisfaction with many aspects of their lives . . . . The youths who said they read the Bible and prayed daily were definitely more satisfied with their Christian lives, their churches' ministries to them, their boy-girl relationships; and they had fewer doubts about evangelical doctrines. Religiously oriented youths also were more occupied with religious, social and intellectual goals, whereas the nonreligious teens placed more value on economic and comfort goals. Far more nonreligious than religious youths said they approved of--and also participated in--almost all the practices pertaining to questionable morals and ethics which were measured in the survey."

[26] Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking From Childhood To Adolescence (New York: Seabury Press, 1964), pp. 68-86. H. F. Mathews, Revolution In Religious Education: A Commentary (Oxford: The Religious Education Press, Ltd., 1966),

an important book,

> read at all kinds of religious services (sometimes in a special voice and in a highly artificial manner) and to the child the adult world appears to respect and revere it.[27]

On the American scene, Dr. Cully explains what she regards as the critical dilemma of Christian education in spite of the continuing concern over the role of the Bible:

> Generations of children have attended Protestant Sunday schools and grown up without any mature understanding of the Bible. Each twenty years a new curriculum promises to do an improved job, but nothing changes. The problem does not lie in the choice of material or methods. It lies in the secular orientation of American Protestants who find that they can live effectively without the Bible. Until or unless they find otherwise, they will continue to espouse its use--for children.[28]

The above is a rather sad commentary on the centuries-long efforts of Christian educators to promote mature understanding of the Bible. "All religious instruction proclaims

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pp. 11-12, comments: "In the last few years a whole group of researchers, the best known being Harold Loukes and Ronald Goldman, have stabbed us wide awake with the pronouncement that religious education ought to be 'child-centered.' They have studied objectively the reactions of children to our continual reiteration of Bible stories, and have spread despondency and alarm by their revelations of the wrongful concepts of God and of religion which children have expressed after receiving such 'religious' teaching. Other studies have analyzed the attitudes of adolescents to religious faith and life, and have made it quite clear that we have failed to educate this generation of school-children into the Christian faith."

[27]Goldman, p. 69.

[28]Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," p. 138.

the Word of God," says Ramón Echarren, "and therefore aims to promote and nourish the life of faith."[29] That Christian education has so often failed in its purpose is a fact that continues to grieve educational leaders in the church today. Speaking out of the English context, H. F. Mathews says:

> We have gone on merrily believing (as good Protestants can be forgiven for believing) that our main concern should be with the Bible as the record of God's action in time with His people. Our religious education has been gloriously Bible-centered . . .[30]

Apparently Mathews would like to see less emphasis on biblical content and more emphasis on experience. That this is the case can be demonstrated by the favorable light in which Mathews discusses the experience-centered teaching enunciated by Douglas S. Hubery, a former colleague of Ronald Goldman in England.[31] It would be unfair to Hubery, however, if the impression were left that he has no use for the Bible. What Hubery criticizes and what Mathews possibly has in mind is that Christian education often disregards the capability of the group to grasp the true meaning of the Bible. Otherwise, Hubery says, there is:

> nothing more fascinating than to meet a group of young people who are really seeing the Bible for

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[29] Ramón Echarren, "Communicating the Faith in Present-Day Society," Catechetics For The Future, p. 13.

[30] Mathews, p. 11.

[31] Ibid., pp. 129-137. Hubery's position is explained in his book, Teaching The Christian Faith Today (Nutfield, England: Robert Denholm House, 1965).

> the first time and who want to come to grips with its truth and the uniqueness of its expression.[32]

The Bible, therefore, remains the basic instructional material or resource for Christian education. Christian educators seem agreed that the Bible should be allowed to speak its own message to man, that it should be allowed to tell the story of what God has done, is doing, and promises yet to do. Through its pages, the educators believe, men will meet the living Lord Jesus Christ to whom the Bible bears witness.[33] Moreover, according to some of the educators who adopt a literalistic interpretation, the nature and significance of the Bible is also to be found in the perfect guidance it offers for Christian life and

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[32]Hubery, p. 100.

[33]See Marshall C. Dendy, Changing Patterns In Christian Education (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1964), pp. 84-85: "The Bible is the basic material of the educational work of the church . . . . The Bible . . . is the spectacles through which a man may see God. Through the pages of Scripture we seek to meet the living Saviour of whom the Scriptures testify." Dendy's book is a discussion of the "Covenant Life Curriculum" of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Dendy is executive secretary of that denomination's Board of Christian Education. See also Gerald H. Slusser, A Dynamic Approach to Church Education (Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1968), p. 87, for a view of the Bible as "resource": "The most important printed resource is the Bible itself, and second, the tradition of the church as recorded in its history and confessions and creeds down through the centuries. No one is well advised to strike out a theology of his own without coming to grips with the depth of thought that has gone before."

conduct.[34]

While Christian educators can agree that the Bible is basic to their programs, they cannot agree on the approach church schools ought to take in teaching the Bible so that it might speak its own message. Marshall Dendy, for example, comments:

> There have been times when educators thought the purpose of the church was to teach the content of the Scriptures and have the learner become thoroughly familiar with it. While Biblical content is important, the goal of Christian education is not solely that the content of Scripture should be mastered. One could know the Bible and be able to quote much of it from memory and still fail to enter into new life through Christ. The memorization of the names of the kings of Israel and Judah, the names of the Apostles, and the names of the books of the Bible do not necessarily result in a new life in Christ.[35]

The point Dendy seems to be making is that the Bible needs interpretation before it can meaningfully involve the hearer in its message and lead toward new life in Christ. But how is the Bible to be interpreted? Some Christian educators have answered that the Bible needs to be interpreted according to the needs of individuals and their

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[34]Peter R. Person, An Introduction To Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 71, quotes propitiously the objectives of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America in 1950: "To develop in all persons a belief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the perfect guide to Christian life and conduct." Elsewhere, p. 72, he adds: "Our Bible is sacred history. It consists of the record of God's dealings with individuals and nations." Regarding the creation, fall, and redemption, he says: "This information [underlining mine] is essential in a curriculum of Christian education." The use of the term "literalistic" will be explained in the next chapter.

[35]Dendy, p. 80.

relationships with one another in the present.[36] Others argue that to allow the Bible to speak its own message is not to interpret it at all, but merely to translate Bible words and phrases into the kind of language understandable to twentieth-century man.[37]

The importance of arriving at a meaningful understanding of the Bible is underscored by the fact that "the Bible is the central document for Christian education" and "the church depends upon the open Bible."[38] Moreover, some Christian educators are convinced that it is through the Bible's message that the church is formed and re-formed.[39] At the same time, however, other Christian educators argue that it is not the Bible that reforms the church, but men who hear the Word of God in the Bible.[40]

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[36]Jahsmann, p. 44: "To be heard and received as the life-giving message of Gospel truth that it is, the communicated Word must be interpreted in terms of the needs, human relations, and actions of people living in the present."

[37]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[38]Rachel Henderlite, The Holy Spirit In Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 58.

[39]Ibid. Henderlite says: "the church is formed and reformed by the Word of God which comes to us in the Bible."

[40]Thus J. Gordon Chamberlin, Freedom And Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 133: "In every age the church has depended upon educated men to stand against its corruption, temporizing, misplaced loyalty, and sin, and call it forth to its true task. The church is not reformed by the Bible, but by men who when educated are able to understand the word God speaks through the Bible to His erring church."

In either case, the need for a meaningful understanding of the Bible becomes obvious. This need comes into even sharper focus as one continues through the growing mass of literature on the church's teaching function. One begins to wonder, for example, how useful the Bible "as a major locus of dialogue in a witnessing community"[41] can actually be without an understanding of its basic message.

Karl Nipkow, teacher of religion in the German evangelical church, has described how biblical exegesis has become "the fundamental form of instruction" among the evangelical churches of Germany.[42] Pointing to a pilot study of Frankfurt-Wiesbaden area youth, ages sixteen to nineteen, however, he notes that the Bible, doctrine, and church history have been relegated to second place. In their place the youth "wanted the areas of 'sociology of religion,' 'basic religious philosophies and comparative religion,' and 'problems of everyday life (social behavior),' to be given pride of place."[43] It seems, therefore, that in spite of the insistence on Biblical study, Christian education is not getting through to youth. The reason for this, at least in

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[41]Letty M. Russell, Christian Education In Mission (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 83.

[42]Karl Ernst Nipkow. "Beyond the Bible in Religious Education," Catechetics For The Future, pp. 43-44.

[43]Ibid., p. 46. Nipkow uses the research of J. Fuhrmann, Religionsunterricht in der Höherer Schule (Limburg: Diocesan Youth Department, 1958), p. 21.

part, may well be a failure to grasp the Bible's basic message and to allow the Bible to speak its own message into the life-situations of contemporary man.

Compounding the Christian educator's difficulty in producing individuals who are mature in their understanding of the Bible are the diverse developments in contemporary biblical and theological studies. These developments have important implications for Christian educators as they attempt to effectively communicate the Bible's message. In fact,

> anything that bears upon that message, either with reference to its content or the method by which it is transmitted, necessarily affects the work of religious educators.[44]

H. F. Mathews' book is an example of how the insights of biblical scholars and educators shape the Christian educator's task. Writing within the context of the required religion courses in English schools, Mathews deals successively with J. A. T. Robinson's Honest to God, the demythologizing of Rudolph Bultmann, research on the learning of biblical and theological concepts by Ronald Goldman, Ian T. Ramsay's discussions regarding the use of religious language, the beliefs of Christian humanists, and the experience-centered teaching of Douglas Hubery.[45] All

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[44]Damm, p. 1.

[45]Mathews, passim.

of these developments, Mathews would say, have combined to produce a revolution in Christian education.

Even if one remains with the more narrow definition of Christian education as teaching Bible content, the diverse developments in biblical and theological studies still compound the problem of how to interpret the Bible and teach it in church schools. In recent years these studies included the "Christomonism" of Karl Barth, the existentialism of Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich, the application of Alfred N. Whitehead's "process philosophy" to biblical interpretation, and the synthesis between the biblical faith and reason in Anglican and Roman thought.[46]

Moreover, in a doctoral study for Yale University, Sara Little examined the Bible's role in contemporary Christian education and was able to identify two historic understandings and uses of the Bible as revelation. When revelation has been equated with the words of the Bible, she noted, the church has used the Bible as an objective authority and has imposed upon Christian education the task of offering biblical instruction. On the other hand, when revelation has centered in religious experience, the church has viewed the Bible as a human document with primarily

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[46]Daniel Day Williams, What Present-Day Theologians Are Thinking (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), pp. 40-67. See also John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

subjective authority and has imposed upon Christian education the use of the Bible as "resource."[47] The second approach, Dr. Little observed, characterized much religious education in the early twentieth century.[48]

After analyzing the ideas of revelation in the writings of William Temple, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Emil Brunner, and H. Richard Niebuhr, Dr. Little concluded that a new synthesis or consensus on revelation has occurred although, in some respects, the process is still underway. Nevertheless she offered the following five-point summary of ideas of revelation and suggested that this is the prevailing view in Christian education today: (1) revelation is essentially the self-disclosure of God; (2) revelation takes place through God's mighty acts, events on the plane of history apprehended by faith as God's action; (3) revelation, as God's confrontation of man within the covenant community, is determinative of man's existence; (4) reason, now assigned a new role, is not the basis for revelation, but instead helps make it intelligible; and (5) the Bible, as witness to and participant in the event of revelation, is of unique significance in the church and in the life of man.[49]

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[47]Little, pp. 24-25.

[48]Ibid., p. 25.

[49]Ibid., pp. 57-62.

Elsewhere Dr. Little described the prevailing view of revelation in Christian education as follows:

> Revelation is dynamic, not static. It is the activity of a living God who discloses Himself to His people through historical events. As He enables His people to perceive the meaning in those events, He draws them into a relationship with Himself which is simultaneously revelation and salvation. The Biblical record witnesses both to event and its meaning, becomes an instrument for understanding and entering into the meaning of God's ongoing activity, and points to the completion of His purposes for mankind beyond history.[50]

The role of the Bible in contemporary Christian education, therefore, is to witness to God's mighty acts, to confront the learner with God and His ongoing activity, and to help the learner experience what John Baillie calls the "hic et nunc" of God's self-disclosure.[51]

A brief review of the curriculums mentioned at the forepart of this chapter will substantiate the fact that this new synthesis or concensus on revelation described by Dr. Little, no matter its weaknesses of ambiguities, is the prevailing view in Christian education today. Moreover, it may well be, Dr. Little says, that the word "revelation" will be replaced by the word "hermeneutic" as

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[50]Sara Little, "Revelation, the Bible, and Christian Education, An Introduction To Christian Education, p. 44.

[51]Baillie, pp. 104-105: "It follows that God reveals Himself to me only insofar as I apprehend Him. Such apprehension, however, must be a fact of my own present experience or nothing at all . . . . through the past God reveals Himself to me in the present."

a key concern in our contemporary theology.[52] She then notes that the idea of revelation will not be abandoned in the process. Rather, it will be assumed "as stress is laid on biblical interpretation and on communication."[53]

Lutheran programs of Christian education in the 1960s offer support for what Dr. Little says. For example, three recent books, one each from the LCMS, ALC, and LCA, demonstrate how Lutheran education materials today understand the nature and significance of the Bible.[54]

The LCA book notes that "contrary to popular belief, the Bible is not an easy book to understand."[55] The book also recognizes the enormous knowledge explosion of the past decade together with the growing acceptance of the historical-critical approach to Bible study and the movement toward renewal in the life of the church. The ALC book reads:

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[52]Little, "Revelation," p. 48.

[53]Ibid., p. 49.

[54]Herbert T. Mayer, Interpreting the Holy Scriptures (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967); Theological Professors of The American Lutheran Church, The Bible: Book of Faith (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964); Robert J. Marshall, The Mighty Acts of God (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1964). Correspondence with two and personal conversation with one of the executive secretaries of parish education for each of the respective synods revealed that the books represent a basic example of the biblical approach used in the curriculums.

[55]Marshall, p. 8.

> There has been a great increase of knowledge about the Bible in recent years. Responsible leaders should be informed by what is known at the present time. All of us who use and teach the Bible need to deepen our understanding of both the nature and message of our great heritage.[56]

The LCMS book adds that,

> reformation of the church in any age cannot take place without a serious reexamination of the foundations and norm of the church in its sacred Scriptures, the Word of God.[57]

All three of the Lutheran books clearly stress the importance of studying, understanding, and using the Bible. The LCMS book, however, refers to "misused Biblical texts" and "false or unwarranted teachings [which] . . . take on the authority of God's Word."[58] Church school teachers, therefore,

> must be able to rightly discern and interpret the Word of Truth and to guard against a careless, misperceived, prejudicial, inaccurate, false, or sentimental teaching of the Bible.[59]

The ALC book refers to "the great revealing acts of God" and to the Bible as the record of man's faithful response to these acts.[60] In addition, the book stresses the importance of knowing the correct original meanings of

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[56]ALC Theological Professors, p. 5.

[57]Mayer, p. 3.

[58]Ibid., p. 4.

[59]Ibid.

[60]ALC Theological Professors, p. 5.

biblical texts so that one can distinguish between "what parts of the entire message seem to apply to that particular time and place, and what parts seem to apply to us now."[61]

Finally, the LCA book proposes to provide a perspective on or a panoramic view of the Bible by blending the story of the creation of God's people and God's self-revelation in that story with the historical development of the biblical record. The book argues that "a strong faith seasoned with careful scholarship constitutes the most rewarding approach to Bible study."[62]

All three Lutheran bodies focus on the Word and, as has been demonstrated above, on the Bible as Word of God. In addition, each body has its own convictions regarding the correct interpretation of biblical texts and regarding the proper use of the Bible as essential, normative, and inspirational for the church's mission. One is therefore led to believe that the concern for correct interpretation and use of the Bible will be evident also in church school courses such as high school level courses that use Old Testament texts. An analysis of these courses will be undertaken in Chapter IV. For the present, however, it

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Marshall, p. 8.

will be helpful to examine the three books further to get an idea of the concept or idea of the Word that might appear in the courses to be analyzed.

To begin, it should be noted that all three books evidence similar concepts of the Word, although there are subtle differences in emphasis. All of the books seem to reflect the influence of such theologians as Gerhard Ebeling who, following Bultmann's concern for the problem of communication, stresses the functions of words or the "word-event."[63] The ALC book explains that "God has . . . seen fit to reveal Himself through mighty and gracious acts in history--man's history," and describes the Bible as "preeminently a book of witness to the saving acts of God in Christ."[64] Similarly the LCA book declares that "the Bible records God's mighty acts for man's salvation" and that "in the Bible God is revealed in the events of history interpreted by those gifted with special insight."[65] The Bible records five events or mighty acts of God "by which God helped His people and taught them many truths about Himself," says the LCMS book.

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[63]See Ebeling's 1966 Earl Lectures at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif., which have been reproduced in book form, God And Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

[64]ALC Theological Professors, pp. 24 and 31.

[65]Marshall, pp. 10 and 14.

> When God acted, or as the Bible expresses it, when He spoke or sent forth His Word to produce action, He often caused men and women to explain the meaning of His action to the people.[66]

The LCMS book states, "one can view the Bible as containing reports about God's revelation while at the same time being revelation."[67]

In discussing the Word of God, then, it is obvious that the three church bodies (at least in these books) connect the Word with the idea of revelation. God reveals, discloses, or makes Himself known to man through the Word. The LCMS book defines revelation as "that process by which God communicates divine truth and understanding to man."[68] "Word-event" is the substance, and revelation is the process or method that continually carries the substance into the present.

As already indicated, each explains that God reveals Himself through His mighty acts and the interpretation of those acts.

> Much of the Bible . . . is the inspired record of and witness to God's revelation of Himself through His mighty acts,"

says the LCMS book.[69] Such revelation, the LCA book adds,

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[66]Mayer, pp. 13-14

[67]Ibid., p. 13.

[68]Ibid., p. 18

[69]Ibid., p. 14.

always includes two elements: "a special event and a special person or persons to interpret the event."[70] Otherwise revelation is natural or general, that is, merely seeing God's influence in the things He has made.[71] The ALC book says:

> So we acknowledge that God has constantly provided a universal witness of Himself in the world of nature, but man remains critically dependent on something more. He needs a revelation that is not just informing, but powerfully transforming. He is helpless without the self-disclosing acts of a personal God, who graciously wills to make him His child. To that end God comes and speaks to man by word and deed in many different ways throughout history, but especially in Jesus Christ.[72]

All three bodies, then, ultimately narrow the concept or idea of Word to its highest expression and culmination in the living Word, Jesus Christ. "In this living Word," says the ALC book, "all the Scriptures find their meaning. He is the crucial content, God's Gospel message, the One who speaks through the written Word."[73] The LCA book refers to the opening chapter of St. John's gospel where Christ is called the "word" and adds:

> Here to know the Word is to know God as a living being . . . To know God is not to have an idea, but to live in a relationship with a personal being. We . . . need to keep this in mind as

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[70]Marshall, p. 14.

[71]Ibid., pp. 13-14. See also ALC Theological Professors, pp. 22-23.

[72]ALC Theological Professors, p. 23.

[73]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

> we think of the Bible as the Word of God.[74]

The LCMS book refers, in addition, to the opening chapter of Hebrews and concludes that therein Jesus is described "as God's greatest and final Word."[75]

What makes the Word of God authoritative? The Word has authority because it is the Word which comes from God. On this issue all three bodies are in agreement. The Word comes from God and is inspired by Him. "Inspiration," says the LCMS book,"[is] that process by which the Holy Spirit led a writer to write down what God had revealed to him."[76] Revelation and inspiration, while closely related, are nevertheless distinct. "The Holy Spirit often inspired an author to write only after a previous revelation had taken place (Eph. 3:1-7)."[77] A broad definition of inspiration favored by the LCMS book is:

> The inspiration of the Scriptures was God's way of giving us His Word in written form to accomplish the great purpose Paul mentions. The inspired Word serves God's Spirit as the means of creating faith in Jesus Christ and serves the believing Christian as his light for faith and life. And God's Word in written form, as in every other form, is truthful, inerrant, and completely dependable.[78]

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[74]Marshall, p. 16.

[75]Mayer, p. 12.

[76]Ibid., p. 18.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., p. 20.

The LCA book makes less mention of inspiration than the LCMS book. Nevertheless the LCA book says that God's revelation or self-disclosure through His mighty acts needed chosen individuals to interpret these acts for others. These interpreters or spokesmen for God were the real objects of inspiration. The LCA book explains:

> We need to be careful at this point. Inspiration often has been applied to both the man and his work. In the Biblical world the human personality was the real focus of God's inspiration. A man's writing was inspired because the man was inspired, and not vice versa.[79]

One can therefore properly speak of the Bible as coming from God, revealing God, and being inspired by God.[80]

An emphasis not on the inspiration of the Bible as the written Word of God, but on the inspired experience of the believing person characterizes the ideas expressed in the ALC book.

> When the Spirit speaks the Word of God's forgiving grace to me in my situation, then the Word of God is authoritative for me.[81]

In addition, the ALC book declares that not all of the Bible speaks with equal clarity regarding Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, "it is all of-a-piece; the whole is the

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[79] Marshall, p. 15.

[80] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[81] ALC Theological Professors, p. 142.

channel of the Spirit's enlightening work."[82]

However:

> The Word of God dare not simply be equated with the words of the Bible. Nothing leads to greater misunderstanding of Biblical inspiration than this false equation. Christian faith does not rest in a book, but in God, who has spoken His saving Word to us through His Son. We do not have faith in Jesus Christ because we believe in the Bible, but we trust in the Bible because the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith in Jesus Christ through the Bible.[83]

The ALC book continues by explaining that the Word of God

> is everything that is embraced in the Christian affirmation that God is the Living God--that He is absolutely different from all non-Christian ideas about God and that He has made Himself known to us.[84]

But the real emphasis in the ALC book is on the Spirit's enlightening work through the Bible.

> As the Word accomplishes God's purpose of bringing to men the saving knowledge of His revelation, and leading them to and keeping them in Christ, it demonstrates its infallibility.[85]

Furthermore:

> the Christian knows God's revealing activity as both objective (in the tangible Biblical record) and subjective (in his own encounter with Christ, the living Word). And by the working of the Spirit the former achieves its purpose in the latter; and the latter comes about only through the former.[86]

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[82] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[83] Ibid., p. 143.

[84] Ibid., pp. 143-144.

[85] Ibid., p. 29.

[86] Ibid., p. 30.

All three bodies agree that the Bible is a means of grace. "The words of the Bible have this great and marvelous power because the Spirit of God works through them," says the LCMS book.[87] The ALC book encourages a view of the Bible as witness to God's saving acts rather than a book of intellectual truths over which men divisively argue. "Then," says the ALC book, "the Bible will increasingly become for us what in fact it is: God's means of grace, the living revelation of the life-giving Word."[88] The LCA book concurs by repeatedly using the phrase "God's mighty acts for man's salvation."[89]

In summary, all three books stress God's revelation of Himself through a series of mighty acts or historical events and the inspired interpretation or interpreters of those mighty acts. In addition, all three books regard Jesus Christ as the living Word par excellence, the highest expression and culmination of Word. The Word, too, is a means of grace which calls the individual into a loving relationship with God and, in so doing, convinces the individual of the truth, authenticity, and infallibility of the Word.

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[87]Mayer, p. 15.

[88]ALC Theological Professors, p. 31.

[89]Marshall, p. 10, passim.

It was noted earlier that the three Lutheran books, despite their general agreement regarding the Word, contain subtle differences. For example, while all three bodies apparently want to communicate an alive and dynamic concept of Word, the LCMS book comes closest to remaining traditional in its understanding of Word. Traditional emphases on the Bible as the written Word of God, on revelation and inspiration, and on the Bible's truthfulness, inerrancy, and complete dependability appear with considerable regularity in the book's first chapter: "God's Word in written form . . . is truthful, inerrant, and completely dependable."[90] In addition, the book seems to belabor the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the writing and preservation of the Word. References to the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit total almost twenty in the first chapter.

The ALC and LCA books operate with a concept of Word that emphasizes the mighty acts of God more than the inspired interpretation of those acts. As has already been pointed out, the LCA book explains that God's self-disclosure involves two elements: (1) a special event, and (2) a special person or persons to interpret the event.[91] It is the interpreter who receives the gift of special insight and not the written Word. "A man's writing was

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[90]Mayer, p. 20.

[91]Marshall, p. 14.

inspired because the man was inspired."[92] The ALC book agrees by asserting that "Holy Scripture . . . is the Word of God as it witnesses to the saving action of God in redemptive history."[93] The written Word, therefore, is secondary to the actual experience of the action of God.

On the basis of this review of three key books that relate to Lutheran education programs, this study has attempted to demonstrate that Lutheran curricula have the Bible as a central concern. Moreover, each of the Lutheran bodies has its own convictions regarding the interpretation of biblical texts and regarding the use of the Bible in its essential, normative, and inspirational role in the life of the church. How and whether these convictions are implemented in Lutheran curricula that deal with Old Testament content will become the focus of Chapter IV.

Before proceeding with the present study, the following cautionary remarks offered by a contemporary Christian educator ought to be taken into account. If, on the one hand, the nature and significance of the Bible in Christian education is such that the church engaged in an exclusive kind of biblical teaching, then the church should realize that it may be attempting to escape from real-life problems.

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[92] Ibid., p. 15.

[93] ALC Theological Professors, p. 145.

If, on the other hand, the church undertakes a completely life-centered program of Christian education, its teaching will escape being secular only when the teacher brings to life a profound and meaningful understanding of the Bible.[94]

Nevertheless it must be recognized that the trend of Christian education today is toward a more experiential and personalist approach in content, methods, and materials.[95] This trend has emerged because of the depersonalizing effects of a technological society and in view of the fact that America seems to have adopted secularism as a national ethic. In addition, the apparent ability of science to improve the conditions of life has rendered reliance upon a supernatural deity almost unnecessary. Van Cleve Morris of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, explains further:

> The argument is that religious instruction is no longer necessary--indeed, is not even relevant--to the induction of the young into the American experience. Furthermore, such instruction divides and splinters the American polity because religious "knowledge" is of the sort which has no way of being either confirmed or refuted by any generally accepted method of inquiry.[96]

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[94]Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," p. 136.

[95]Damm, p. 6: "we are in an era in which, precisely because a depersonalizing process confronts us daily, a catastrophe will befall us unless we react and realize more deeply the uniqueness of our personal lives."

[96]Van Cleve Morris, Existentialism In Education (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 144.

At the same time, however, Morris refers to the universal existential need for recognition, a need that is "essentially religious in character."[97] The personalist approach in Christian education attempts to answer man's fundamental alienation from himself, his fellowmen, and God. "Most people," says Age Holter, professor of religion, University of Trondheim, Norway, in a report to a 1969 conference on Christian education, "need help in understanding their existence and seeing a meaning in it." He then adds that "the best help we can offer is to bring biblical texts to speak to secular man's existential situation."[98]

The personalist approach, with all that can be said in its favor, deserves a word of caution since personalism may deny comparable concern to social development. The Bible is not a record about people who share the highly individual outlook that characterizes western man. In fact, Dr. Iris Cully suggests that the corporate nature of Israel as the people of God:

> should enable us to bring Biblical insights to bear more tellingly on the responsibility of Christian families, of the church, and of so-called Christian peoples for the deep-seated problems of mankind.[99]

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Age Holter, "An Understanding of Secular Man by Christian Education," Christian Education in a Secular Society, edited by Gustav K. Wiencke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 124.

[99] Cully, "Problems of Bible Instruction," p. 136.

She adds, however, that "no curriculum shows evidence of sensing this parallel."[100]

The above cautionary remarks regarding exclusively biblical or life-centered teaching in Christian education programs as well as an emphasis on personal development to the exclusion of social concerns indicate that the role of the Bible (including the Old Testament) in Christian education ought to deal with these cautions.

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[100] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD TESTAMENT AS WORD OF GOD

The Bible has always been and continues to be a central concern of Protestant Christian education programs. Related to this concern are certain presuppositions regarding the Bible's authority and the Bible as the Word of God. Within contemporary American Protestantism these presuppositions generally move along a continuum that stretches from a form of literalist biblicism where the words of Scripture are equated with revelation to God's revelation of Himself in the events the Scriptures record and interpret. It was noted in the previous chapter that the latter position is dominant within Christian education today.[1]

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[1]Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking From Childhood To Adolescence (New York: Seabury Press, 1964), p. 68, would construct the continuum somewhat differently. He says: "A small minority tends to represent a biblio-centric viewpoint and to regard the Scriptures as directly inspired by Gold, holding that its authority lies in the words themselves. Inspiration is almost regarded by this group as infallibility, and the Bible is true because it claims to be true. That claim is authoritative because it stems directly from God. At the other extreme is another small minority who would interpret these words in a very liberal manner, seeing the Bible as one of the sources of religious truth but as essentially a man-made account of his own search for God, inspired indirectly by the divine and containing a unique account of this search of one particular nation. In between these two extremes the current view of Biblical theology, to which the majority of Bible scholars would subscribe, occupies a middle position. It does not subscribe to the infallibility of Scripture but places it in an important central position, and while utilising critical modern scholarship

The "word" to "event" continuum applies to the revelation of God in the Old and the New Testaments. Contemporary Christian educators regard both as the Word of God. However, since this study deals with the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula, this chapter will attempt to explicate how the poles at either end of the continuum understand the Old Testament. An attempt will then be made to present a Reformation understanding of the Old Testament as Word of God and to see where this understanding should be placed along the continuum, if at all. Resulting from these procedures should be certain criteria that can be used to evaluate selected Lutheran curriculum materials.

No attempt will be made to rank one or the other of the "word," "event," and Reformation views higher than the next. Instead, this chapter will try to present each view in an objective manner and to offer all three views as a critical base for analyzing specific curriculum materials and courses in Chapter IV.

Before presenting the three views, however, it seems necessary to make a few general comments regarding them. All three are similar in that they all begin with a soteriological concern. This will be noted at various points in

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has tended to react against much of the analytical criticism of the past fifty years." Goldman's "middle position" would seem to correspond to the "event" pole on the above continuum.

the chapter. The common soteriological concern makes it possible to place the three views side-by-side even though historically the Reformation view comes from the pre-Enlightenment period and the "word" and "event" views from the post-Enlightenment period.

This chapter will also demonstrate that the idea of revelation is central to the "word" and "event" views, an understandable development in view of their post-Enlightenment origin. According to Carl-Heinz Ratschow, Enlightenment theology accepted revelation as its central principle, "as the common denominator for all acts of divine self-disclosure, for all sources of information concerning God no matter where and how they occurred."[2] With revelation as a central principle, it will be seen that for the "word" and "event" views, or for the fundamentalist and neo-orthodox theologian, the epistemological question becomes the soteriological question.

On the other hand, this chapter will show how the Reformation view tries to remain with the soteriological question through the use of a law-promise dialectic. "When the biblical revelation is understood as Law and Gospel," says Ratschow,

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[2]Carl-Heinz Ratschow, "Revelation," in The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), III, 2051.

> it becomes unmistakably clear that here we are face to face with no theoretical proposition but with something that actually challenges, summons, and rouses us . . .[3]

The ultimate focus of this study, then, is to determine whether, in fact, Lutheran curriculum materials are able to maintain the Reformation's law-promise dialectic, or whether for the materials the epistemological question becomes the soteriological question.

Word As Word

At the one end of the continuum is a form of literalist biblicism. It will be necessary to explain this term so that its particular perspective on the Old Testament might become clear.

The literal and biblicistic approach to Scripture can be explained in part as an extension of the fundamentalist movement in America which flourished in the early part of the twentieth century. Fundamentalism was originally a reaction against nineteenth century liberalism. Liberalism had emphasized the reasonableness of Christianity through the application of evolutionary and historical-critical methods to Scripture.

In 1910 fundamentalism, which had already taken root in many denominations, surfaced in a publishing event

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[3] Ibid., III, 2052.

involving Milton and Lyman Stewart and a series of ten pamphlets entitled The Fundamentals. The Stewarts prominently featured five points in the series: (1) the infallibility of the Bible; (2) the Virgin Birth of Christ; (3) His Substitutionary Atonement; (4) His Resurrection; and (5) His Second Coming.[4]

Fundamentalism continued into the famous Scopes Trial of 1925, although it suffered some public embarrassment in the convincing arguments of the great infidel, Clarence Darrow. Nevertheless fundamentalism by no means faded from the scene at this point. It has, in fact, continued into the 1960s and 1970s, often in revised forms. The inerrancy of the Bible is as important to fundamentalist types today as it was earlier in this century. And while the liberalism of the nineteenth century is no longer the target of fundamentalist reaction, mid-century neo-orthodoxy in America is.[5]

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[4]The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.), I and II. See also Paul R. Sponheim, Contemporary Forms of Faith (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), pp. 52-53. Kendig Brubaker Cully, The Search for a Christian Education--Since 1940 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 95, reproduces a summary of The Fundamentals by Gabriel Hebert: "There are clearly two strands; one is the 'battle royal for the fundamentals,' for the Gospel of God itself, and the other is the rejection of scientific and critical-historical theories which appear to be inconsistent with faith in God's revelation."

[5]Sponheim, pp. 53-54: "Now it is not the liberalism of the nineteenth century, but the neo-orthodoxy of the

It would be unfair and, indeed, inaccurate to imply that all literal and biblicistic interpretation of Scripture is equal to the fundamentalism of the early twentieth century. The use of the terms "literalism" and "biblicism" in this study is intended to embrace all forms of fundamentalism as they have survived through the 1960s. The terms, then, include also the neo-evangelicalism represented by the magazine Christianity Today and its well-known former editor, Carl F. H. Henry.

In his book, Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought, Dr. Henry outlines some of the differences between early fundamentalism and the new forms of evangelicalism of which he is a proponent. He stresses particularly the intellectual presentation of biblical truth as opposed to the sometimes naive and anti-intellectual approaches of early fundamentalism. The approach of neo-evangelicalism, he adds, is much more positive than the largely negative polemics of the first part of the century. In addition, the newer evangelical scholars avoid the "reactionary defenses of the past" while, at the same time, holding to "the high view as over against the classic

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twentieth against which the protest is issued . . . from his position in the theological arena the fundamentalist perceives liberalism and neo-orthodoxy as constituting pretty much the same threat."

repudiation and the neo-orthodox evasion of Scriptural inspiration."[6]

Kendig Brubaker Cully has taken note of the subtle distinctions that exist among fundamentalist and evangelical thinkers and has suggested that they might be grouped according to the following four categories: (1) anti-intellectualistic fundamentalists; (2) intellectually-oriented fundamentalists ("conservatives"); (3) evangelicals (fundamentalists who are intellectually oriented but desire to stress the evangelistic enterprise of the Christian witness); and (4) neo-evangelicals (intellectuals who put a stress on rationalistic doctrine but still espouse a strong evangelistic concern--evangelistic academicians, as it were).[7] Cully admits, however, that the distinctions involved in these groupings are at best artificial.

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[6]Carl F. H. Henry, editor, Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 8. The "high view" of Scripture seems to be a favorite term among evangelicals. See Lois E. LeBar, Education That Is Christian (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1958), p. 119: "The strength of the evangelical position has been the retention of this high view of Scripture." See also Frank E. Gabelein, "Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education." An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education, edited by J. Edward Hakes (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 42: "In any case, a high view of Scripture is the essential watershed for the ultimate frame of reference." Dr. Gabelein explains that the "high view" of Scripture is one "that must accord with Christ's view of the Bible as the completely irrefragable and fully veracious Word of God."

[7]Cully, p. 97.

Whatever the distinctions among fundamentalist and evangelical thinkers might be, all insist on certain doctrinal views derived from what fundamentalists call "Biblical truth."[8] In Christian education this insistence on certain doctrinal views began when objections to the traditional Sunday school Bible-centered curriculum were issued in the early twentieth century. According to Harold C. Mason, chairman of the department of Christian education, Asbury Theological Seminary, it was:

> the impact of naturalism and rationalism upon Biblical studies in colleges and seminaries [that] gave rise to a persistent protest against the traditional program of the Sunday school.[9]

The return to an "orthodox" Bible-centered curriculum did not occur until a 1944 meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals voted to form an evangelical Sunday school association. It was not until 1946, however, that the new group called the National Sunday School Association came into being.[10] Ever since, the association has guided the development of evangelical graded Bible lessons, both denominational and interdenominational, published by such evangelical firms as Moody Press and Scripture Press of

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[8] Ibid., p. 94.

[9] Harold C. Mason, "The History of Christian Education," An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education, p. 32.

[10] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

Chicago and Gospel Light Publications of Glendale, California.

Common to all of these evangelical Bible lessons is a literal and biblicistic approach to Scripture including, of course, the Old Testament. The words of the Bible are viewed as the means through which God reveals Himself to men and through which He teaches man how to live. Sponheim comments: "That God speaks in the Bible's every word has been certain for fundamentalists since the emergence of the controversy."[11]

Fundamentalists and evangelicals center their teachings in the concept of revelation. They speak of a general revelation of God in nature and a special revelation of God in Jesus Christ. With respect to special revelation, H. W. Byrne, dean of Huntington College, Huntington, Indiana, says that the two modes through which this revelation has come to man are "the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the Bible." He then adds that "Christ is the living Word and the Bible is the written Word."[12]

Although the two modes of special revelation are distinguishable, there seems to be little intent on the part of evangelicals to value one above the other. Jesus

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[11]Sponheim, p. 54.

[12]H. W. Byrne, A Christian Approach to Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 223.

Christ and the Bible are one and the same as far as revelation is concerned. What God revealed about Himself in Jesus Christ, He revealed also in the Bible. Jesus Christ and the Bible are one and the same as far as revelation is concerned. What God revealed about Himself in Jesus Christ, He revealed also in the Bible. Jesus Christ and the Bible belong together. What they say about God is identical. Lois LeBar writes:

> We evangelicals concur wholeheartedly on the place of the Bible in teaching. . . . We have staunchly defended the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and the infallibility of our authority against those who would judge the Word of God rather than letting it judge them. We hold that God has revealed Himself objectively in the propositions of Scripture, as well as in its history and narratives and poetry. Our subjective experience of Christ stems from the doctrines of the Word. We hold that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).[13]

Dr. LeBar, who has had considerable influence in fundamentalist and neo-evangelical educational circles, does not quarrel with the place of the Bible in evangelicalism. She would agree that evangelicals hold to a "high view" of Scripture. Nevertheless she does take issue with the way evangelicals use or fail to use Scripture. According to Dr. LeBar, the main problem in the use of Scripture is getting through the written word to the Living Word and translating doctrine into life.[14]

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[13]LeBar, p. 119.

[14]Ibid., p. 121. It is not clear in this context exactly

If evangelicals understand the use of Scripture as getting through the written word to the Living Word, then it is clear that their understanding of the Old Testament revelation would hinge on this same principle. The Old Testament is the Word of God because its words reveal Christ. This, in effect, is what Roy B. Zuck, executive director of Scripture Press Foundation, means when he writes:

> Christ, the living Word, is central in the Bible, the written Word. He is the Saviour, the Lord, the Friend, the Intercessor, the coming King on whom all Scripture is focused.[15]

The revelation of Christ in the Old Testament, however, is progressive. Byrne writes:

> The Old Testament is a progressive, historical, ethical, and prophetic record of God's self-revelation, which anticipates and culminates in redemption through Jesus Christ.[16]

This progressive record of God's self-revelation needs to be learned, to be studied, and to strung together in one's

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what is meant by "Living Word." However, see Lois E. LeBar, "Curriculum," An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education, p. 90: "The written Word was given to reveal the living Word. In all things Christ should have preeminence. Yet He can be known only through Scripture. Therefore the Christian curriculum is centered in the Word of God, written and living. What other center can possibly be as dynamic as Life Himself! The curriculum is centered in the Person for whom everything was created and in whom it will culminate."

[15]Roy B. Zuck, The Holy Spirit In Your Teaching (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1963), pp. 104-105.

[16]Byrne, p. 227.

mind. Nothing in this progressive revelation is unimportant. For:

> the whole Bible is built around the story of Christ and His promise of life everlasting to men. It was written only that we might believe and understand, know and love, and follow Him.[17]

The Old Testament revelation, therefore, is the Word of God because:

> The Old Testament is an account of a nation (the Hebrew nation). The New Testament is an account of a Man (the Son of man). The nation was founded and nurtured of God in order to bring the man into the world (Genesis 12:1-3).
>
> God Himself became a man so that we might know what to think of when we think of God (John 1:14; 14:9). His appearance on the earth is the central event of all history. The Old Testament sets the stage for it. The New Testament describes it.[18]

Evangelicals regard the entire Bible as the Word of God and argue that it consists of revealed truths. The emphasis, however, is upon the verbal revelation of divine truth. While acknowledging the importance of the mighty acts of God, evangelicals nevertheless point out that "the Biblical position is that the mighty acts of God are not revelation to man at all, except insofar as they are accompanied by words of God to explain them."[19] Thus verbal or

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[17]Henrietta C. Mears, What The Bible Is All About (Glendale, Calif.: Regal Books, 1966), p. 13.

[18]Ibid., p. 12.

[19]J. I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 92. See also Edward J. Young, "The Canon of the Old

propositional revelation is a necessary part of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ. In fact, the person and work of Christ could never have been understood without verbal revelation.[20]

The fundamentalist or evangelical view of the Old Testament as Word of God, therefore, is as follows:

> The Old Testament is the Word of God. It is a message, a revelation to us from none other than God Himself. Without it much in the New Testament would not be understandable. The Old Testament provides the proper background for the interpretation of the New. It tells how God created the world, how man fell into sin and how God announced to man His intention to save him and to form a people for Himself. By means of type and prophecy, the Old Testament points forward to the One whom God was to send to save mankind, and in Jesus Christ, the Old Testament promises received their fulfillment.[21]

The above explanation assumes a literal and biblicist approach to the Old Testament. As Word of God the Old Testament is an authoritative revelation from God Himself.

Testament," Revelation and the Bible, edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 156: "The Scriptures are full and explicit in their teaching about special revelation. Such revelation involved the communication of God's words to man. Despite much that is being written today, it was not confined to great acts of God, but rather consisted of both acts and words. The words were essential in order that the acts might be understood. When God's saving words were written down, this written record was in itself revelation and also an integral element in God's plan of salvation."

[20]Packer, p. 92.

[21]Edward J. Young, "The Old Testament," Contemporary Evangelical Thought, edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Great Neck, N.Y.: Channel Press, 1957), p. 13.

Every word of the Old Testament belongs to that revelation. In addition, the Old Testament is background for the New and through type and prophecy looks ahead to the Messianic age.[22]

However, William Hordern, professor of systematic theology at Garrett Biblical Seminary, takes issue with the assertion that the fundamentalist is a literalist. Instead of following the literal words of Scripture, Hordern argues that the fundamentalist follows Scripture's natural meaning. Where the Bible indicates it should be understood literally, the fundamentalist will be a literalist. However, where the Bible speaks in poetic or allegorical language, the fundamentalist will understand it accordingly. As Hordern says, "he (the fundamentalist) is not required to lop off his right hand or pluck out his eye because Jesus told men to do this."[23]

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[22]It is perfectly natural, then, that fundamentalists or evangelicals find a futuristic soteriology in the Old Testament. God's ancient people were saved by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ which they expected. Thus J. Barton Payne, "The B'rith of Yahweh," New Perspectives on the Old Testament, edited by J. Barton Payne (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1970), p. 251: "Yet all evangelicals agree that redemption occurs only through a sinner's identification by faith with the atoning sacrifice of Christ (Mt. 3:15, I Pet. 2:24) and that this truth applies equally to the saved of all ages, to those of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament (Heb. 10:40)."

[23]William Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 71-72.

Nevertheless, according to this study, the fundamentalist can still be described as one who holds to a literal and biblicistic view of Scripture and who regards his position as diametrically opposed to the so-called "liberal" position. While fundamentalist and liberal both value textual studies, investigation of literary forms, and the study of grammatical constructions in the Old Testament, the fundamentalist or evangelical parts company with the liberal also on the issue of higher criticism. The fundamentalist sees an obvious weakness in the liberal position in that the liberal refuses to sufficiently emphasize the divine aspect of Scripture. In addition, the liberal approaches Scripture with the explicit or implicit presupposition that a natural as opposed to a supernatural cause can be offered in explanation of the miraculous events recorded in the Scripture.[24]

For this reason, the fundamentalist stresses the authority of the Bible and the necessity for man to submit to that authority. With reference to the Old Testament, Christ's use of it establishes its authority. Roy Zuck says:

> Christ used His personal authority to endorse and confirm the authority of the Old Testament. Christ is the ultimate Authority, but it is through the Bible that He now exercises His divine authority,

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[24] Ibid., p. 72.

> imparting authoritative truth. The Bible is clothed with His authority. Therefore, in a sense, both Christ and the Bible are authority.[25]

The stress on the supernatural divine authority of Scripture contrasts with the naturalistic approach of liberal theology. The stress on the Scripture's divine authority likewise leads to a literal and biblicistic approach to the Old and New Testaments. God reveals verbal and propositional truths about Himself in the Bible. This "high view" of the Bible creates for it a central or preeminent place in all Christian teaching. Lois LeBar explains:

> Evangelicals who accept the authority of Scripture have little problem making the Word of God central in their teaching. They are deeply grateful that the way of eternal life has been made so plain in words. They teach special revelation as rational, since it is not contrary to reason though some of it may be beyond reason; as historical, since God used decisive historical acts to disclose Himself; as objective, since God has provided us the security of a permanent verbalized expression of truth about Himself; as personal, since the purpose of the Bible is to bring about personal dealings with God Himself (John 5:39). Evangelicals teach "thus saith the Lord" with a ring of authority.[26]

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[25]Zuck, p. 98. See also LeBar, Education, p. 126: "Scripture was so much a part of His (Christ's) being that He used it for many purposes by many methods. He used it to defeat Satan, to reveal who He was, to give authority for His words and deeds, to show the fulfillment of prophecy, to stimulate thinking and questioning, to answer questions, to instruct in righteousness, to correct wrong concepts and practices. He was continually showing the relation of the Old Testament to the matter at hand. He summed up all the Old Testament commandments in two that require love rather than knowledge, though of course love based on knowledge."

[26]LeBar, "Curriculum," p. 91. See Byrne, p. 245, where

Not only does the literal and biblicistic approach to the Old and New Testaments, then, result in verbal and propositional truths about God, but such an approach also enables one to find specific moral direction in Scripture. The verbalized and authoritative Word of God in the Old Testament makes clear God's will for mankind. That is one reason the Old Testament is needed today. So argues Edward J. Young. "In simple language," says Dr. Young, "it [the Old Testament] tells what is right and what is wrong."[27]

It becomes evident that, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the "word" view of the Old Testament allows the epistemological question to become the soteriological question. Lois LeBar, for example, was cited as an evangelical theologian who expressed concern about getting through the written word to the Living Word, Christ. Dr. LeBar's concern here may appear to be soteriological.

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the author provides the following six-point outline regarding the implications of revelation for education: (1) Christian education becomes a matter of the interpretation of God's revelation; (2) the purpose of education is to show God revealed; the objective of education is to qualify man to reveal God; (3) the content of education is provided through a curriculum which is directly God-related and God-revealing; (4) theology provides a systematization of the attributes of God which students and teachers should expect to see revealed in all truth; (5) God has revealed Himself in three ways: general Self-revelation through nature, personal Self-revelation through His Son, and special Self-revelation through the Bible; and (6) the Bible provides the integrating and correlating factor in the curriculum.

[27]Young, "Old Testament," p. 13.

Similarly, J. I. Packer was cited as one who felt verbal revelation was necessary in order to understand the work of Christ. Again, Dr. Packer's concern may appear to be soteriological.

However, the strong emphasis on revelation and the "high view" of Scripture indicates that the center of the fundamentalist or evangelical concern is really epistemological. A further example of this is provided by A Survey of Israel's History, an Old Testament history written to substantiate "the traditional conservative position regarding the Bible."[28] The book refers to the "wealth of information" in the Old Testament, but acknowledges that "the main purpose of the Old Testament is other than to present history."[29] The Old Testament's main purpose is recognized as soteriological, that is, a portrayal of "God's interest in, and preparation for, His redemptive provision for sinful man."[30] Nevertheless in "portraying" God's redemptive provision for sinful man, the book draws upon the "rich treasure of information" regarding Israel's history in the Old Testament.[31] The epistemological question thus becomes the soteriological question.

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[28]Leon J. Wood, A Survey of Israel's History (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 12.

[29]Ibid., p. 18.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., p. 17.

A possibly clearer example of the combination of epistemological and soteriological concerns in the "word" view is offered in the introduction to a book entitled The Gospel in the Old Testament.[32] The title of the book indicates a soteriological concern. However, author Don Brandeis of the Evangelist's Study, Tallahassee, Florida, shows that his concern with the Old Testament is basically epistemological. Brandeis writes:

> This book [The Gospel in the Old Testament] has been written to foster the desire to study more diligently the Divine Library. Along with other books that have dealt with revelation may it be used to stimulate sound thinking, a good evangelical faith full of wisdom and zeal according to the Knowledge of the Most High as revealed through His final source of truth--Jesus Christ.[33]

It will be helpful at this point to summarize what has been presented above as the literal and biblicistic approach to the Old Testament.

(1) In the first place, it should be noted that this approach accentuates the revelatory character of the Old Testament record. Because the words of the Old Testament reveal truths about God and His will, the Old Testament is the Word of God. In addition, the Old Testament is a divinely inspired and authoritative revelation because it comes directly from God Himself. The Word of God, therefore, is the revelation of God recorded verbally in the Old and New Testaments.

(2) The revelation of God is also historical and comes through God's might acts. However, the divinely

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[32]Don Brandeis, The Gospel in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960).

[33]Ibid., p. 11.

inspired and given words of the Old Testament are necessary to understand these mighty acts.

(3) The revelation of God in the Old Testament is progressive. The verbally inspired words of God are not to be understood on a flat level, but as progressing chronologically from the simple and elementary to the more detailed and sophisticated. For example, the revelation regarding the Messiah in the earlier portions of the Old Testament becomes increasingly sharp and full the closer the narrative comes to the New Testament period. The Old Testament period, therefore, should be understood as background and foundational for the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ.

(4) The center of all revelation is Christ. It is necessary, therefore, to get through the written words of the Bible to the Living Word. Yet the Living Word can only be known through the written Word of God. Through type and prophecy the Old Testament points forward to Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The Old Testament is thus an authoritative revelation of God concerning Jesus Christ. In fact, the atoning sacrifice of Christ is already sufficiently explicit in the Old Testament that God's ancient people were saved by believing in it.

(5) The Old Testament is the Word of God also in the sense that it reveals the will of God and provides explicit moral direction regarding right and wrong kinds of conduct.

(6) Higher criticism (historical-critical method, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism) undermine the Old Testament revelation by mitigating its supernatural origin and authority in favor of naturalistic explanations.

Word As Event

At the opposite end of the continuum is the so-called "event" understanding of the Old Testament. Although reference to this new concensus on revelation was made in the previous chapter, it will be necessary here to explain

further what is meant by "event" so that this perspective on the Old Testament as Word of God might become more clear.

The understanding of Word of God as event seems to be rooted in the religious and philosophic teachings of Søren Kierkegaard in the first half of the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard was an existentialist thinker. He insisted that all true thought must begin with the concrete person in a concrete situation. This insistence constituted a revolt against abstract thought in philosophy and religion. Kierkegaard focused instead on man as he exists in relation to God, his fellowmen, and the universe. He taught that the aim of philosophy and religion was not to know dogmas or ideas but to live them.[34]

The Kierkegaardian view was picked up in the early 1900s by Karl Barth, a young German pastor. At first a liberal theologian, Barth's views began to change after the First World War shattered his optimism about man. He became convinced that he must preach the Word of God and not merely his own opinions. The preacher's task, he

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[34]Søren Kierkegaard, On Authority and Revelation, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 57-68. See also Avery Dulles, Revelation Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 65-66. Also Arlis John Ehlen, "Old Testament Theology as Heilsgeschichte," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV (October 1964), 517-544, where existentialism is identified as only one component in the "event" understanding of the Old Testament. The point of the article is that the "event" view seems to arise in large part from the older Heilsgeschichte approach.

believed, was to preach in such a way that the Word of God could speak to man.

Barth, however, did not espouse the fundamentalist view which identified the Word of God with the words of the Bible. The words of the Bible like Jesus Himself, he said, are merely tokens through which the Word comes to man. Thus revelation is not just knowledge about God, but is ultimately God Himself acting in man.[35]

John Baillie[36] explains that Barth taught that the Word of God always reaches man in a threefold form--as preached, written, and revealed. From the human point of view, preaching comes first. Yet all Christian preaching derives from the prophetic and apostolic witness in the Bible. This witness, however, is to be distinguished from the revelation itself which is essentially an event--geschehene Offenbarung. Baillie summarizes the Barthian view as follows:

> What Scripture does is to recall (erinnern) and attest (bezeugen) an event which is prior to and to be distinguished from its own existence ("ein von ihrer Existenz verschiedene Geschehensein der Offenbarung Gottes selber"). "Revelation is therefore originally and directly what the Bible

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[35]Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 28-96.

[36]John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 63-64.

and the Church's proclamation are derivatively and mediately--the Word of God."[37]

Although not always reproducing Barth to the letter, mid-twentieth century American Protestantism began to use the ideas of this European theologian and to integrate them into their own understandings of the Word of God. On the Christian education front, for example, Holmes Rolston, who helped develop the "Covenant Life Curriculum," used Barthian ideas in trying to explain what role the Bible should have in Christian teaching.[38] Prior to this, Dr. Sara Little of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, had already issued what was to become a basic summary of the changing role of the Bible in contemporary Christian education.[39] Added to these two books were publications on the Bible's role in

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[37] Ibid., p. 64. See also Barth, p. 43, for the relation of Bible and Word of God: "It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what He says to us; not how we find the way to Him, but how He has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to Him, but the covenant which He has made with all who are Abraham's spiritual children and which He has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is this which is within the Bible. The word of God is within the Bible."

[38] Holmes Rolston, The Bible in Christian Teaching (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1962).

[39] Sara Little, The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1960).

Christian teaching by Dr. Iris Cully and Clifford M. Jones which again reflected Barth's influence.[40]

It should be noted in relation to the previous discussion of fundamentalism that the understanding of revelation as event was as much a reaction against nineteenth-century liberalism as was the fundamentalist movement. Those who espouse the event emphasis claim to be orthodox and, in fact, are frequently labeled "neo-orthodox." It has already been pointed out, however, that fundamentalist soon regarded the neo-orthodox theologians as not much different from their liberal predecessors.[41]

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[40]Iris V. Cully, Imparting the Word: The Bible in Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Clifford M. Jones, The Bible Today For Those Who Teach It (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

[41]John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 319-320, calls "neo-orthodox" an unfortunate term. Instead he prefers to talk about the "theology of the word" movement while admitting that other labels for the same movement, in addition to the two already mentioned, are "kerygmatic theology," "dialectic theology," and "theology of crisis." Macquarrie explains: "The theology of the word does not mean assent to orthodox propositions, nor does it mean literal assent to the words of the Bible. The theology of the word is in fact severely criticized by fundamentalists, for the word is conceived as the living incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, to whom, indeed, the human words of the Bible bear witness, but cannot express the fulness of the divine word . . . . If we wish to call theologians of this school 'neo-orthodox,' perhaps we should think of this term as meaning simply that they try to recapture the spirit of Reformation theology, as the classic period of Protestant thought, just as the Middle Ages were of Catholic thought."

The influence of neo-orthodoxy remains a major theological force in American Protestantism today. However, as John Macquarrie correctly notes, some of the original assertions of neo-orthodoxy have been modified and conflicts have developed within the movement so that this group of theologians and Christian educators now represents considerable diversity.[42] Nevertheless neo-orthodox theologians and educators agree that there is such a commodity as revealed truth which demands serious attention. In addition, neo-orthodox theologians and educators regard the Bible as a record or witness to the mighty acts of God through which He discloses Himself to men. Speaking of the diversity in neo-orthodox understandings of the Old Testament, Claus Westermann says: "If we ask what all these new approaches have in common, we are literally pushed to the answer that basic to all approaches is the insight that the Old Testament reports history or a story or events that happened."[43]

How, then, do contemporary neo-orthodox theologians and educators understand the Old Testament as Word of God? Speaking out of a Presbyterian context, Holmes Rolston

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[42] Ibid., p. 320.

[43] Claus Westermann, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament," translated by Dietrich Ritschl, Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, edited by Claus Westermann and James Luther Mays (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 44.

answers that both the Old and New Testaments are to be understood as the written Word of God; but before one can understand them as such, he must "understand the nature of the revelation events to which the Bible bears witness."[44] The Old Testament, therefore, is not the Word of God in the sense of being a revelation of God. Because the Old Testament witnesses to the events through which God has revealed Himself to man, however, it can be called Word of God.

Nevertheless the basic question remains regarding the nature of the "revelation events" about which Rolston speaks. The Presbyterian educator answers that "a revelation event is an incident experienced by one or more persons in which and through which the direct action of God Himself is recognized." He then adds:

> The Old and New Testaments provide for us a continuous sequence of such events in which a succession of persons received a series of related communications from the same one God.[45]

Contiguous with the actual revelation event is the understanding of that event in the believing community. The revelation event is filled with meaning for those who stand within the believing community but is an enigma to those outside. As far as the revelation event and the

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[44]Rolston, p. 13.

[45]Ibid.

written interpretation or understanding of that event in the Old Testament are concerned, Rolston explains:

> The revelation events came first. Through His Word and deed God called into being a Messianic people. And in time the people of Israel found it necessary to give an account of themselves through written documents which witnessed to the events that had called the people of God into being. We have in the Old Testament the literature of a unique people through which they point beyond themselves to the God who has made Himself known to them.[46]

What all of this makes clear is that Christianity is an historical religion. Christianity takes history seriously by assuming that knowledge of God is associated with real events that happen in human life. The main events recorded in the Old Testament are the call of the patriarchs, the Exodus, the Sinai covenant, the conquest of Canaan, and the Davidic government. In the New Testament the main events are the life and teaching of Jesus, His death, and His resurrection as Head of the church.[47] G. Ernest Wright and Reginald Fuller conclude that these eight events "carry in themselves for the Biblical man the main significance of life and history. It is by these great events that all else is interpreted. . . .Around them the whole Bible takes form."[48]

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[46] Ibid., p. 17.

[47] G. Ernest Wright and Reginald H. Fuller, The Book of the Acts of God (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 9-12.

[48] Ibid., p. 13. Elsewhere (pp. 11-12) Wright and Fuller

The Old and the New Testaments, therefore, constitute recorded testimonies to the revelation of God. As Word of God, the Old Testament records events and their meaning or interpretation that reveal God, His being and His works. Robert McAfee Brown explains:

> If you want to know how God makes Himself known, then look at the events of the history of the Jewish people, and you will find Him at work there, you will find Him making Himself known there, showing those people who He is, what He is like, what He demands of them, what He promises them.[49]

This view of revelation is reflected in the National Council of Churches objective for senior high young people.[50]

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point out that the record of these eight events does not constitute the biblical event. An event is merely a happening unless it has been interpreted to have meaning. Then it becomes an event of revelation. Therefore "with regard to the Biblical viewpoint I either accept or I reject the general over-all conviction that these happenings in the history of the ancient Near East are indeed significant in that they convey a real knowledge of the true God. This is a conviction which is shared in a community of faith, which is given certainty through the experience of the church through the centuries, together with the examination of rival views as to the meaning of life and history."

[49]Robert McAfee Brown, The Bible Speaks To You (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 40-41.

[50]National Council of Churches, The Objective of Christian Education for Senior High Young People (New York: National Council of Churches, 1958), p. 14: "The objective for Christian education is that all persons be aware of God through His self-disclosure, especially His redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love--to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as sons of God rooted in the Christian community, live in the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope."

Those who understand Word of God as God's self-disclosure through events, then, do not place primary emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Old Testament. What is important are the events to which the Old Testament bears witness. The attempt here is to portray a dynamic concept of revelation, one that takes seriously the personhood of God and the "I-Thou" relationship He makes possible with man through His self-disclosing acts. The revelation of God in the Old Testament, according to Robert Boehlke, member of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the faculty of the Djakarta Theological Seminary, Djarkarta, Indonesia, is essentially "a relationship to be received and experienced." What one faces in the Old Testament are not words or a book, but the Lord Himself. "It is personal communication in which God imparts Himself even as man responds in faith."[51]

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[51]Robert R. Boehlke, Theories of Learning in Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 100. See also Eric C. Rust, Salvation History (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1962), pp. 17-18: "To find truth man must seek for the unchanging reality behind the changing. . . . God is no static, unchanging substratum of being, discoverable by human reason and expressed in abstract concepts. He is no object of man's thought, with whom man need not become actively involved. He is the living God, a dynamic personal being. He is known only where He chooses to make Himself known. He Himself takes the initiative and discloses Himself to man in such a way that man has to become personally involved with Him. God encounters man within the movement of history and through historical particularity."

The task of Christian education in the light of this understanding of Word is bringing about or making possible "participation in the Biblical events."[52] The student of the Old Testament should come to see that Israel's story is also his story. The Old Testament is an encounter between God and His people that is constantly new and lived again in the present. Charles Stinette, professor and chairman of field religion and personality, University of Chicago Divinity School, explains:

> The genius of event is that it draws the spectator into participation. He who reads the Bible or gives his attention to Christian worship or offers a cup of water to the afflicted, as if to Christ, is apt to find himself caught up as a participant in the drama of salvation beyond his expectations.[53]

At the same time, theologians and Christian educators holding to the above view caution that the event should not be considered in isolation from the revelatory situation. Otherwise one could expect direct communication with God in complete disregard of what He has already spoken. As a result, the Old Testament (and the New) would be for all practical purposes useless. Participation in the biblical events and encounter with God in these events must, therefore,

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Man cannot evade God; and when God encounters man redeemingly, man becomes involved with and committed to Him."

[52]Boehlke, p. 102.

[53]Charles R. Stinnette, Faith, Freedom and Selfhood (New York: Seabury Press, Inc., 1959), p. 130.

always be conditioned by the historic revelation of the prophetic and apostolic witness.[54]

The Old Testament, then, can in a sense be considered a means by which God reveals Himself to man. Through reading the Old Testament one can find God confronting him. Here again, however, theologians and Christian educators who hold to revelation through events add a caution. The caution is that one must carefully distinguish between God and statements about Him. Thus Robert McAfee Brown:

> The statements in the Bible have come out of the historical events which the Bible describes, and these statements have been gathered together, written down, pieced together, and translated, by men. We believe that these men were moved by the power and spirit of God in a singular way, but this did not make them cease to be men. We will therefore hear the word of men within the Bible as well as the word of God.[55]

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[54]Thus Boehlke, p. 101: "In revelation, the event and the revelatory situation belong together. . . . This further dimension of revelation is necessary to guard against any careless assumption that persons should expect direct communication with God independently from what He has already spoken. What is revealed in personal dialogue must conform in all essentials with the historic revelation as witnessed by the prophets and the apostles."

[55]Brown, p. 48. See also G. S. Hendry, "Reveal, Revelation," A Theological Word Book of the Bible, edited by Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 199: "The written words of the Bible are not to be identified directly with revelation any more than the spoken words of the original witnesses. But they are in a sacramental sense the instruments of revelation; they point beyond themselves to the word of God which is living (Heb. 4:12), and which alone is able to effect that personal encounter with God which is the end of revelation. The words of the Bible have no revealing virtue in themselves; in themselves they are 'the letter which killeth', but as testimonies of faith they can become the media of the life-giving Spirit (II Cor. 3:6)."

James Smart, who was instrumental in the development of the Presbyterian curriculum and who serves as lecturer in Christian education at Knox College, Toronto, Canada, prefers to describe the Old Testament as "the record of a gigantic dialogue between God and Israel." He notes, however, that it was equally important "to preserve not just God's precious words to Israel but also an account of Israel's response to God."[56] The written record of the Old Testament, both God's words and Israel's words, are significant for man. In the Old Testament one can hear both the word of God and the word of man.

It is probably at this point more than at any other that the "word as word" theologians part company with the "word as event" theologians. For the "event" theologians to suggest that the Old Testament is in part the word of men is to deny the "high view" of Scripture espoused by fundamentalists and evengelicals and to lay open the Old Testament to historical-critical techniques of modern biblical scholarship. All of which leads Smart to conclude: "Tragically, the book that should be one of the greatest unifying forces in Christendom has been a divisive force. . ."[57]

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[56]James D. Smart, The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 13.

[57]James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 136.

Nevertheless Smart and others openly encourage the critical approach to the Old Testament. Those who favor the "word as event" pole on the continuum believe that the Old Testament ought to be read critically, analytically, and with full attention to its historical setting, its types of literature, the circumstances under which it was written, and the motives that prompted the conduct of its characters as well as the authors in writing it.[58] Moreover, since the descriptions of the revelatory acts of God in the Old Testament were recorded by men, the possibility of an errorless Old Testament cannot be substantiated. As Rece and Beardslee have pointed out, "historical study will not sustain the once-popular Protestant view that the Bible is without error." The Emory University professors add that "errors of fact appear even in books which reveal truth with great clarity."[59]

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[58]Smart, Dialogue, passim. Georgia Harkness, Toward Understanding the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 22, talks about having a "teachable mind" when studying Scripture. She says: "This means using the best available tools of scholarship and being willing if necessary to give up cherished former ideas if new truth appears. God cannot speak to closed or biased minds. If, for example, we have been in the habit of thinking of God's total creation of the world as occurring in six days of twenty-four hours each and we learn that the creation stories in Genesis are a prescientific attempt to present great religious truth rather than accurate geology or biology, we fail to hear God speak if we refuse to change our minds."

[59]E. H. Rece and William A. Beardslee, Reading The Bible: A Guide (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 4-5.

Two final points need to be made regarding the "word as event" pole on the continuum. First, according to this approach, God is both the object and subject of revelation. He reveals Himself to man through His mighty acts. However, since the Old Testament records also the response of the Israelites to these mighty acts, one can find in their response an example of how to glorify God and serve one's fellowmen.[60] The Old Testament, therefore, has a didactic function in addition to its revelatory function.

Secondly, the purpose of God's self-disclosure through the events recorded in the Old Testament achieves consummation in Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and the realization of its hopes. Boehlke says that "revelation as Jesus Christ is the culmination and authentication of God's persistent movement toward man."[61] Jesus Christ, the events of His life, are a more complete and full revelation of God than that which went before.[62] This Person is truly the ultimate Word of God.

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[60]See Cully, Imparting, p. 14: "In both the teaching and actions of the people of the Bible he has the example of how one glorifies God and serves others."

[61]Boehlke, p. 95.

[62]Brown, p. 46.

The consummation of the Old Testament revelation in Jesus Christ also sheds light on how the events that preceded His incarnation should be understood. As von Hofmann has pointed out:

> The history recorded in the Old Testament is the history of salvation as proceeding towards its full realization. Hence the things recorded therein are to be interpreted teleologically, i.e., as aiming at their final goal, and thus as being of the same nature as the goal yet modified by their respective place in history. Since the course and the events of that history are determined by their goal, this goal will manifest itself in all important stages of its progress in a way which, though preliminary, prefigures it.[63]

Throughout the preceding explanation of the "word as event" approach to the Old Testament, only Protestant theologians and educators were cited. This study, however, would be remiss were it not to at least indicate that the rebirth of biblical study within Roman Catholic catechesis has also generally followed the "word as event" approach to the Old Testament. Within Roman Catholicism the approach most frequently appears under the label of "salvation history." Salvation history, then, is the unifying theme that

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[63]J. C. K. von Hofmann, Interpreting the Bible, translated by Christian Preus (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), p. 135. Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), I, 480, points out: "The idea of a history of salvation did not become part of Lutheran theology until they were set forth by Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann, of Erlangen, the only Lutheran theologian who was also recognized by the Reformed Church." See also Gerhard O. Forde, The Law-Gospel Debate (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), pp. 12-48.

dominates Biblical studies and Christian education curricula today within both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.[64]

At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that the centrality of the idea of revelation in the "event" view would be demonstrated. For this reason Dr. Holmes Rolston, participant in the development of the "Covenant Life Curriculum," was cited in reference to "revelation events to which the Bible bears witness." G. Ernest Wright and Reginald H. Fuller were mentioned regarding their contention that certain specific events recorded in the Old Testament constitute revelation, that is, that these events carry in themselves "the main significance of life and history." Robert McAfee Brown, Robert Boehlke, Charles Stinette, and others were also mentioned as supportive of the claim that revelation is central to the "event" view of the Old Testament.

Also at the beginning of this chapter it was noted that with revelation as a central principle, the epistemological question becomes the soteriological question in the "event" view. Although the "event" view together with the "word" and Reformation views begins with the soteriological question, the epistemological question ultimately supercedes all else.

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[64]For the application of salvation history in Roman Catholic catechesis see Gabriel Moran, God Still Speaks: The Basis of Christian Education (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), pp. 49-60. See also Sister M. Michael Doherty, Dynamic Approaches to Teaching High School Religion (New York: Alba House, 1969), pp. 165-212.

This, it seems, has also been demonstrated in the examination of the "event" view. Nevertheless, some clarification and elaboration of this point should prove helpful.

That the "event" view begins with a soteriological concern is quite clear. The Objective of Christian Education for Senior High Young People explained that Christian education aims to have all persons "be aware of God through His self-disclosure (revelation through events), especially His redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ . . ." Charles Stinette was quoted in reference to being "caught up as a participant in the drama of salvation . . ." Finally, Robert Boehlke and Robert McAfee Brown were quoted to establish the fact that "event" theologians regard Jesus Christ as "the culmination and authentication of God's persistent movement toward men." The "event" view, therefore, begins with a soteriological concern.

But does it follow through on that concern? The answer offered by this study is negative. From all appearances the "event" theologians and educators cited in this section believe that the revealed Word of God is God's saving acts, and that the essential content of that Word is therefore always the same. This seemed to be implied in the quotation from Holmes Rolston where he referred to a continuous sequence of events in Scripture "in which a succession of persons received a series of related communications from

the same one God." If these "related communications from the same one God" are essentially the same (as they would have to be), then it would seem important to have some knowledge of these communications. Man's problem, dilemma, or sin, then, would be a lack of knowledge of God. Revelation through God's mighty acts, therefore, is that which gives man the necessary knowledge.[65] In this way the epistemological question becomes the soteriological question for the "event" theologians.

The following quotation from Dr. Rolston indicates how epistemology and soteriology are combined in the "event" view. Especially noteworthy in this connection are the phrases "God has made Himself known" and "God . . . has not left them in complete ignorance."

> The Bible comes to us as a written record from the life of the people of God in various ages and points beyond itself to the way in which God has made Himself known in human history. An atheist would insist that we cannot have a valid revelation of God. He would deny that there is any such thing in history as revelation; but those who stand within the fellowship of the Christian church believe that the God who made them has not left them in complete ignorance of what they should believe concerning Him or of the duty which He requires of them. They believe that God at various times and places and in different ways has spoken to us through the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). They believe also that God has made Himself known to man in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They believe that in Jesus Christ the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us. And they

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[65] Forde, pp. 150-161.

> are convinced that the Bible is the indispensable book because they find in the Bible the written record that points beyond itself to the revelation of Himself which God has given to man.[66]

A summary of the "event" approach to the Old Testament as Word of God follows. This summary attempts to correlate with the six points listed at the end of the discussion of the literal and biblicistic approach to the Old Testament. The major differences and similarities between the two poles on the continuum will be expressed in the summary.

(1) The "event" approach to the Old Testament like the literal and biblicistic approach accentuates the revelatory character of the Old Testament. However, in the "event" approach God is both subject and object in the revelatory process. He reveals Himself through events or through His mighty acts. The Old Testament, therefore, is an authoritative revelation which can properly be called Word of God. The words of the Old Testament are not the revelation of God but a record of and testimony to the events through which He reveals Himself. The revelation events are primary and the written record secondary. These events reveal God Himself and not just truths about God and His will.

(2) The revelation of God is historical since knowledge of God is associated with real events that happened in human life. The individual words of the Old Testament, however, are essential only in a general way, that is, insofar as they communicate the meaning or understanding of the revelatory events experienced by the believing community. God's self-disclosure through His mighty acts and the prophetic testimony to these acts makes possible an encounter with God Himself rather than an encounter with words about Him.

(3) The revelation of God in the Old Testament is teleological and not just progressive. The events recorded in the Old Testament aim at their final goal

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[66]Rolston, pp. 12-13.

and share in the nature of that goal although modified by their respective place in history. The events of the Old Testament period, therefore, should be regarded as preliminary manifestations of the final goal and prefigurative of the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ.

(4) The "event" approach like the "word" approach regards Jesus Christ as the center of all revelation. However, the "event" approach emphasizes that God's self-disclosure achieves consummation in Jesus Christ who is Himself (and not just words about Him) a more complete and full revelation of God than that which went before. Old Testament events are themselves preliminary manifestations of Christ. The grace of God in Jesus Christ, therefore, is already present in a preliminary way in the Old Testament. God's ancient people were saved by this preliminary grace and not by explicit belief in the atoning sacrifice of Christ which was to come.

(5) The Old Testament is also the Word of God in the sense that in the recorded response of God's ancient people to His mighty acts one can find examples of how to glorify God and serve others. The Old Testament, however, does not reveal the explicit, verbal will of God as a standard for man's conduct. Again, it reveals God Himself and man's response to encounters with God in His mighty acts.

(6) Historical-critical methods are essential for a correct understanding of the word of God and the word of men in the Old Testament.

Word As Law And Promise

At the beginning of this chapter it was mentioned that the study would, at this point, attempt to present a Reformation understanding of the Old Testament as Word of God and see where this understanding should be placed along the "word" to "event" continuum, if at all. What constitutes a Reformation understanding of the Old Testament, however, should be made explicit.

According to this study, such an understanding derives from two basic sources: Luther and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. While this understanding could then be more narrowly identified as "Lutheran," this study proposes to avoid the latter term since a "Lutheran" understanding of the Old Testament might justifiably derive also from doctrinal and hermeneutical developments in Lutheran circles since the Reformation. The study, therefore, will proceed with the term "Reformation" understanding of the Old Testament, meaning what Luther and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church taught regarding the Old Testament as Word of God.

This section begins with a review of Luther's understanding of the Old Testament and concludes with a presentation of the position of the Lutheran Symbols regarding this testament. Such a procedure is undertaken with the awareness of the unique role the Symbols play in the life of the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Symbols express basic teachings on which there was concord or agreement among sixteenth-century Lutherans. Moreover, Lutherans today subscribe to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and to all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.[67] Lutherans, however, do not necessarily agree with everything Luther himself wrote.

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[67]Handbook of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1969.

Luther was first and foremost a doctor of the Scriptures. His scholarly legacy is the work he did in the interpretation of Scripture, interpretative work which focused in larger measure on the Old Testament than on the New.[68]

Nevertheless for Luther the Word of God was ultimately the Gospel or promise (promissio), God's personal word of forgiveness and redemption in Jesus Christ. The entire Bible, therefore, has only one content--Christ, the incarnate Word of God. "For this much is beyond question, that all the Scriptures point to Christ alone. Indeed, in John 5, Christ says: 'Moses wrote of Me.'"[69]

This, however, does not imply that Scripture contains exclusively the promises of God. Luther believed that

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Edition (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1970), p. 15.

[68]Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther and the Old Testament, translated by Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch and edited by Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. vii.

[69]Martin Luther, "Avoiding the Doctrines of Men," Luther's Works, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), XXXV, 132. See also Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, translated by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 74. Also Heinrich Bornkamm, The Heart of Reformation Faith, translated by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 41: "what the Holy Scripture is becomes apparent only from the vantage point of the Gospel, only from the viewpoint of the Word and the Person of Christ and of faith in Him. The fundamental Evangelical rule, 'Scripture alone,' of which we are speaking here, will be rightly understood only if we see in it merely another side of the other rule we spoke of previously, namely, 'Christ alone'."

Scripture contained both law and promise, but that when Scripture presents law, it drives men toward Christ. In this sense, then, Christ remains the sole content of Scripture.[70] All passages of Scripture must serve God's promise or they are not Word of God.

Luther, therefore, saw a consistency and unity in the divine Word in that law and promise were contained in both the Old and the New Testaments. He admitted that in the Old Testament were "heaps" of laws and in the New Testament "heaps" of promises. On the other hand, he pointed out that it is incorrect to describe the Old Testament as exclusively law and the New Testament as exclusively promise. "The striking feature of Luther's view," says Bornkamm,

> is not the separation of the two books, but the assertion that Moses and the prophets also contained Gospel, and that one must differentiate within the testaments rather than between the testaments.[71]

"How Christians Should Regard Moses," a sermon Luther preached in 1525, is especially instructive concerning law and promise. The reformer argues that there have been only two "public" sermons from heaven, one recorded in Exodus 19 and 20, the other in Acts 2.[72] The first sermon,

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[70]Bornkamm, Heart, p. 41.

[71]Bornkamm, Luther, pp. 86-87.

[72]Martin Luther, "How Christians Should Regard Moses," Luther's Works, XXXV, 161.

delivered at Mt. Sinai, is "the law of God" while the second sermon, delivered at Jerusalem on Pentecost, is "the Gospel."[73] Luther then adds:

> These two sermons are not the same. Therefore we must have a good grasp of the matter in order to know how to differentiate between them. We must know what the law is, and what the Gospel is. The law commands and requires us to do certain things. The law is thus directed solely to our behavior and consists in making requirements. For God speaks through the law, saying, "Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you." The Gospel, however, does not preach what we are to do or to avoid. It sets up no requirements but reverses the approach of the law, does the very opposite, and says, "This is what God has done for you; He has let His Son be made flesh for you, has let Him be put to death for your works, those of God and those of men. Just as we and God are separated from one another, so also these two doctrines are widely separated from one another. For the Gospel teaches exclusively what has been given us by God, and not as in the case of the law--what we are to do and give to God.[74]

Regarding God's sermon on Mt. Sinai, Luther concludes that it was addressed to the ancient Israelites and is, therefore, not binding on pagans or Gentiles. It is true, he acknowledges, that Jews and Gentiles have certain laws in common: there is one God, one should not commit adultery, murder, or theft, and others. These, he says, are natural laws "written . . . into their hearts."[75] Even the Ten Commandments are to be accepted only insofar as they agree

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[73] Ibid., XXXV, 162.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., XXXV, 164.

with these natural laws. But the letter of the Mosaic law in its entirety does not apply to the Christian as some of the enthusiasts ("factious spirits") held. On the contrary:

> Moses was an intermediary solely for the Jewish people. It was to them that he gave the law. We must therefore silence the mouths of those factious spirits who say, "Thus says Moses," etc. Here you simply reply: Moses has nothing to do with us. If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses. Thus the consequences would be that if I accept Moses as master, then I must have myself circumcised, wash my clothes in the Jewish way, eat and drink and dress thus and so, and observe all that stuff. So, then, we will neither observe nor accept Moses. Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service.[76]

There is, however, a more important aspect to the Mosaic legislation and to the entire Old Testament. This more important aspect is the promises of God about Christ which are hidden within Moses.

> This is the best thing. It is something that is not written naturally into the heart, but comes from heaven. God has promised, for example, that His Son should be born in the flesh. This is what the Gospel proclaims. It is not commandments. And it is the most important thing in Moses which pertains to us. I read Moses because such excellent and comforting promises are there recorded, by which I can find strength for my weak faith. For things take place

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[76] Ibid., XXXV, 164-165. See also Bornkamm, Heart, p. 41: "The New Testament itself unequivocally declares that 'Christ is the end of the law'; the Old Testament understanding of the relationship between God and man has been irrevocably abolished through the coming of Jesus Christ."

> in the kingdom of Christ just as I read in Moses that they will; therein I find also my sure foundation.[77]

Finally, Moses should be read:

> for the beautiful examples of faith, of love, and of the cross, as shown in the fathers, Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the rest. From them we should learn to trust in God and love Him.[78]

At the same time, the Old Testament offers examples of godlessness and how God does not pardon unfaith; "how He can punish Cain, Ishmael, Esau, the whole world in the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc."[79]

The Christian, Luther believed, should regard the Old Testament as Word of God understood in terms of the law and the promises. As far as the law is concerned, not every conceivable detail and application of it should be called God's Word, but only the law as it addresses itself specifically to contemporary man, as it reflects the natural law written in man's heart, as it contains within it the promises of God, and as it provides examples of faith that lead to personal trust and love of God.[80]

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[77]Luther, "How Christians," XXXV, 169. See also Bornkamm, Luther, pp. 149-164 for Luther's ideas on "Moses the Christian."

[78]Luther, "How Christians," XXXV, 173.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid., XXXV, 174: "They (many great and outstanding people) do not know how to preach Moses, nor how properly to regard his books. They are absurd as they rage and fume, chattering to people 'God's word, God's word!' All the while they mislead the poor people and drive them to destruction."

For Luther, then, the Old Testament can be called Word of God. But how one interprets the Old Testament is of great significance in understanding and hearing that Old Testament Word. Bornkamm calls Luther's method of interpretation "Christocentric" and distinguishes it from "Christological prophecy."[81] Whatever the case, Luther believed the Old Testament should be read and interpreted in the light of its end. Christ is the end of the Old Testament.[82] More than this, however, He is the end of the law. On the basis of Luther's "How Christians Should Regard Moses," it is clear that the law of which Christ is the end is the natural law since the other kinds of law in

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[81]Bornkamm, Luther, p. 263: "The methodological difference lies in the fact that the Christological-prophetic interpretation is forced to carry the concepts of the New Testament revelation into the Old Testament and put them in the mouths of the patriarchs and writers. A Christocentric understanding must strongly beware of doing this; it may only induce the exegete to use the view of the Christian, enlightened through the New Testament, to illumine the situation of man and his encounter with God on the manifold Old Testament levels. If the Old Testament is understood in the light which falls back on it from its end, then true historical understanding is not contradicted. For no historical epoch can be understood through itself; rather, in a different and deeper sense, it can only be understood from the goal at which it arrives."

[82]Delbert R. Hillers, Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 188, concludes his study with a reference to Christ as the end of the Old Testament: "For Christians, the coming of the substance made shadows out of a rich array of Old Testament events, persons, and ideas, among them covenant. Figuram res exterminat; the reality brings the image to an end." See also James Samuel Preus, From Shadow to Promise (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1969), pp. 267-271.

Moses are said not to obligate pagans and Gentiles. Moreover, in his lectures on Galatians, Luther pointed out:

> But the Gentiles were never under the curse of the Ceremonial Law. Therefore all the redeemed were under the curse of the Law. For, as I have also said before, Christ would have achieved too little if He had freed us from circumcision, Sabbaths, clothing, foods, and washings, and not to a far greater extent from the more grievous sins against the Law--lust, greed, wrath, godlessness. Then He would really not have been a Savior of souls; He would have been a Savior of bodies, because all these things had to do with the body. Accordingly, the work of any law whatever is really sin and a curse if it is done outside faith, that is, outside purity of heart, innocence, and righteousness.[83]

According to Luther's understanding, however, the law nevertheless has abiding validity for both the unregenerate and the regenerate man. He believed men should continue to know the law's severity and the wrath of God expressed through the law. Christ is the end of the law as far as the law concerns man's salvation or justification. Yet, as far as man's struggle with sin is concerned, the law remains valid until the end of time. The law's purpose is to serve the promise by making man aware of his sin and his need of Jesus Christ.[84]

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[83]Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians--1519," Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), XXVII, 257.

[84]Althaus, pp. 95-96, comments: "The Old Testament law and way of life must therefore be seen in two ways. On the one hand, it is a model which points far beyond itself to Christ; at the same time, however, it is set aside in Christ and is no longer binding for Christians." In a footnote, Althaus offers this quote from D. Martin Luthers Werke,

In his "Prefaces to the Old Testament, Luther describes his interpretation of the Old Testament as "spiritual."[85] What he means by "spiritual" is made clear in the following sentence: "If you would interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you, for He is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it."[86] Luther continues by taking the high priest Aaron as an example and showing how Aaron should be made "to be nobody but Christ alone."[87] He refers to "all the figures of Moses" which call for spiritual interpretation.[88] And when he calls for the spiritual or figurative meaning of Old Testament personalities or texts, he feels he is doing nothing else than what the Lord and the apostles did in their use of Scripture.[89]

Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: n.p., 1883), XII, 275: "For this reason the figures are now set aside; for they served the promises which are now completed, established, and fulfilled."

[85]Martin Luther, "Prefaces to the Old Testament," Luther's Works, XXXV, 247: "In conclusion I ought also to indicate the spiritual meaning (Geistliche Deutung) presented to us by the Levitical law and priesthood of Moses."

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Martin Luther, "A Brief Instruction On What To Look For And Expect In The Gospels," Luther's Works, XXXV, 122: "It is there (the Old Testament) that people like us should read and study, drill ourselves, and see what Christ is, for what purpose He has been given, how He was promised, and how all Scripture tends toward Him. For He Himself says in John 5, 'If you believed Moses, you would also believe Me, for he

In all of this, however, Luther apparently wanted to remain faithful to the literal, historical sense of the Old Testament in contrast to the medieval allegorical method of interpretation which often went far beyond the literal meaning of the text.[90] His insistence upon the literal, historical sense of the Old Testament, however, has led to the claim on the part of fundamentalists and evangelicals that Luther supports their point of view.[91] On the other hand, Luther has been pictured as the first scientific biblical critic who ushered in a breath of fresh air that eventually gave rise to the liberal movement. Luther did express a few critical judgments regarding various

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wrote of Me.' Again, 'Search and look up the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to Me.'"

[90]See Althaus, Theology, p. 96: "Allegorical interpretation is not concerned with what actually took place in the historical situation described by the text. Luther's spiritual interpretation is, however, particularly concerned with the meaning of the words; for the history which they describe is prophecy. Luther can thus place the original literal meaning and the spiritual interpretation beside each other and bring them into a vital relationship to each other through his concept of 'sign' or 'type.'"

[91]See Herman Sasse, "Luther and the Word of God," Accents in Luther's Theology, edited by Heino O. Kadai (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 82: "The difference between Luther's understanding of the Scriptures and that of the Fundamentalists is clear. Luther teaches that belief in the Scriptures is belief in Christ. For the Fundamentalists belief in Christ is belief in the Bible. Every Fundamentalist would of course deny that. He knows that the New Testament answer to the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' is not 'believe in the Bible' but 'believe in the Lord Jesus' (Acts 16:30ff.). But this does not alter the fact that not

parts of Scripture.[92] Nevertheless the conviction of this study is that neither the literalist nor the biblical critic can lay exclusive claim to Luther.[93]

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only in the theological theory but even in the reality of the Christian life a change has taken place, a shift of emphasis from Christ to the Bible. This becomes clear when one studies the writings of the Fundamentalists and the conservative Lutherans in America who have been influenced by them. For this has happened in the literature of the Lutheran Church (e.g., Missouri Synod)." See also Milton L. Rudnick, Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 91-113.

[92]See Bornkamm, Luther, pp. 190-191, for illustrations of Luther's non-literalistic yet "high view" of the Old Testament: "Even though Luther respected the bounds of the canon of Scripture, he did express quite a few noteworthy critical judgments about individual passages of the Bible. His faith in God's Word did not need the crutch of the dogma of inspiration. But one must have a somewhat clearer view of the criteria for this critique than is usually the case. Miracles and unexplainable assertions do not fall into this category. Even if Luther made astonishing observations about amazingly high numbers and inconsistencies in Old and New Testament accounts, these nevertheless only heightened his admiration for the authority of the Bible. For he doubted these assertions as little as he doubted Jonah's tay in the stomach of the whale. 'And who would believe it and not consider it a lie and fairy tale, if it were not written in Scripture.' He did, when possible, attempt an explanation, even though he reconciled himself to inconceivable numerical assertions such as the ages of the patriarchs. The high number of those killed, according to the accounts of battles, were not to be taken literally: they signify the extermination of the whole might of the conquered nation."

[93]See Sasse, p. 49: "It seems to be almost impossible to discuss it (Luther and the Word of God) objectively because we are all inclined to read our preconceived ideas into the Reformer. The defenders of the classical orthodox doctrine of the inspiration and inerracy of Holy Writ will collect and concentrate on all the passages in which Luther confesses the traditional view, which was the common possession of Christendom at the eve of the Reformation. The defenders of modern historical criticism of the Bible will collect and

Perhaps the clearest summary of Luther's view of the Old Testament can be found in the prefaces where he uses the frequently quoted analogy of Christ in the manger to describe the Old Testament.

> Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.[94]

Two ideas concerning Luther's view of the Old Testament emerge after examining the above quotation. First, Scripture and, in this case, the Old Testament, are to be understood as swaddling cloths and a manger, both of which contain Christ, the Word of God. That is, the words of the Old Testament should be regarded no more highly than what they are--swaddling cloths and a manger. Secondly, Luther's analogy of the swaddling cloths and manger makes clear that the "event" of Jesus Christ is to be understood as the central content of all Scripture. In view of this central content, Jaroslav Pelikan has offered a strict definition

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concentrate on the passages where Luther 'comes close to historical criticism,' when he tries to gauge the greatness of the miracle of the Exodus by calculating how many days the passage of 600,000 people through the Red Sea would normally require instead of the two hours mentioned in the Biblical report."

[94]Luther, "Prefaces to Old Testament," XXXV, 236.

of Word of God in Luther as "a deed through which God chose to act redemptively."[95] Pelikan admits that Luther thought God sometimes acted redemptively apart from these special deeds. Nevertheless "a deed was the Word of God if through it God conferred the forgiveness of sins."[96]

Luther believed that the unity of the testaments consisted in the fact that the new covenant which had existed secretly since the time of man's expulsion from paradise was already recognized by believers and prophets of the Old Testament period.

> Although the new covenant was insolubly bound to the once-for-all historical appearance of Jesus Christ, it was efficacious wherever someone trusted in faith solely in the grace of God in view of the coming Christ.[97]

The old covenant of law, therefore, was not the predecessor of the new covenant in time or content, but the "exclusive antithesis" to the new covenant.[98]

Moreover, according to Luther the Old Testament is not just revelation in the sense that it discloses supernatural knowledge of God, or that it narrates history and supplies ethical directives. Rather, the Old Testament is the direct personal address of God to man under law and promise through

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[95]Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther The Expositor," Luther's Works, Companion Volume (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 55.

[96]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[97]Bornkamm, Luther, p. 255.

[98]Ibid.

which God intends to establish fellowship with the believer. The Old and New Testaments constitute "the medium by which God establishes communion with man."[99] This understanding of Scripture, he said, is impossible without the enlightenment of the Spirit.

E. Theodore Bachmann summarizes Luther's view of Word of God as follows:

> According to Luther's understanding, the Word of God is not simply to be equated with the written text of the Scriptures, for it goes much deeper than historical description or moral precept. Rather, it is a uniquely life-imparting power, a message communicated by men in whom the Scriptures had become alive.[100]

The foregoing material demonstrates how Luther's understanding of the Old Testament maintains a basic soteriological concern. Everything in the Old Testament must ultimately serve the promise of God, God's personal word of forgiveness and redemption in Jesus Christ. For Luther, the "truth" of the Old Testament is not just the fact that the Old Testament reveals lex and promissio. The "truth" of the Old Testament depends on God's living up to His promises. And this God did in an unexpected way in the coming of Jesus Christ, His incarnation in history. Therefore Luther asks:

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[99]Warren A. Quanbeck, "The Authority and Power of the Word of God," Luther Today (Decorah, Ia.: Luther College Press, 1957), p. 85. See also p. 88 where Quanbeck notes: "Interpretation of the Bible as a merely historical document neglects its instrumental function and is a fundamental perversion of exegesis."

[100]E. Theodore Bachmann, "Introduction to Word and

> And what is the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ?[101]

The purpose of God's personal address to man under law and promise, Luther said, is to establish fellowship or communion with man. On the human level this involves faith. But faith "comes only through God's Word or Gospel which preaches Christ, saying that He is God's Son and a man, and has died and risen again for our sakes . . ." Besides, "faith alone makes a person righteous and fulfills the law."[102] In fact, if Abraham had not believed the promise of God, he would never have amounted to anything."[103]

The faith-emphasis in Luther is picked up, elaborated, and presented in the Lutheran Symbols as "the chief article in the Christian life."[104] For "the conscience cannot come to rest and peace through works, but only through faith, that is, when it is assured and knows that for Christ's sake it has a gracious God . . ."[105]

Sacrament," Luther's Works, XXXV, xi.

[101]Luther, "Prefaces to Old Testament," XXXV, 236.

[102]Martin Luther, "Prefaces to the New Testament," Luther's Works, XXXV, 368.

[103]Martin Luther, "A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, The Holy Mass," Luther's Works, XXXV, 89.

[104]The Augsburg Confession, Article XX, 8. Hereafter The Augsburg Confession will be designated "AC" All references to the Lutheran Symbols are from Theodore G. Tappert,

Article IV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession deals with justification by faith and presents the gracious righteousness of God as the key that unlocks the meaning of both the Old and New Testaments. The "opponents" of the subscribers to the Apology are said to have selected the law by which to "seek forgiveness of sins and justification."[106] The Apology therefore asks: "If we merit the forgiveness of sins by these elicited acts of ours, of what use is Christ? If we can be justified by reason and its works, what need is there of Christ or of regeneration?"[107]

The above again indicates that the basic thrust of the Reformation understanding of Scripture is soteriological. The Word of God in the Old and New Testaments is law and promise. All Scripture, therefore, needs to be divided into these two chief doctrines. For in some places the Scripture presents the law and in other places the promise of Christ. And,

> this it does either when it promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life for His sake, or when, in the New Testament, the Christ who came promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life.[108]

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editor, The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959). The Roman and Arabic numerals in the citations indicate the article and paragraph number in Tappert respectively.

[105] AC, XX, 15.

[106] Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, 7.

[107] Apology, IV, 12.

[108] Apology, IV, 5.

The purpose served by law and promise is bringing men to the righteousness of faith. The Symbols cite Old Testament passages, for example, Habakkuk 2:4 and Isaiah 53:11, in support of this purpose.

> Here the writer says first that men are righteous by the faith which gelieves that God is propitious; and he adds that this same faith quickens because it brings forth peace, joy, and eternal life in the heart.[109]

The soteriological concern and faith remain dominant in the Symbols' understanding of the Old Testament. The commentary on Isaiah 53:11, "by His knowledge He shall justify many," explains:

> But what is the knowledge of Christ except to know Christ's blessings, the promises which by the Gospel He has spread throughout the world? And to know these blessings is rightly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that God will certainly accomplish what He has promised for Christ's sake.[110]

The key that unlocks the Scriptures, then, according to the Lutheran Symbols, is the promise of God. But the promise of God would be superfluous were not the reality of the law and wrath of God also admitted. "For the law works wrath, it only accuses; it only terrifies consciences."[111] The law "always accuses the conscience, which does not satisfy the law and therefore flees in terror before

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[109]Apology IV, 100.

[110]Apology IV, 101.

[111]Apology IV, 257.

the judgment and punishment of the law . . ."[112] If the reality of the law is not admitted and preached, the Symbols continue, "what need would there be of Christ, what need of the Gospel?"[113] And again, "if the preaching of the law were enough by itself, why would Christ and the Gospel be necessary?"[114]

But the law is not sufficient. It does not bring peace to the heart. Therefore the Symbols maintain that it is necessary "to add the Gospel promise, that for Christ's sake sins are forgiven and that by faith in Christ we obtain the forgiveness of sins."[115] What matters is not the revelation of God as such or ideas about God, man, and the world, but hearing "the voice of God, clearly promising the forgiveness of sins."[116]

The Symbols indicate that "the voice of God," both the voice of the law and the promise, can be heard in the Old Testament. With reference to Isaiah 1:16-18, the Apology says: "Thus the prophet urges penitence and adds a promise . . . . he commands . . . works as necessary to the new life. At the same time he wants the forgiveness of sins to be received by faith, and so he adds a promise."[117] Similarly

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[112]Apology IV, 270.

[113]Apology IV, 260.

[114]Apology IV, 257.

[115]Ibid.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Apology IV, 258.

in Daniel 3 the Apology finds law and the terror of sin, but also "a very definite Word of God" that reveals "God's will, namely, that He is no longer angry."[118] The Gospel, as the Symbols understand it, is God with a new word.

Based on what the Lutheran Symbols claim regarding law and promise, it can be concluded that they understand the Old Testament not just in terms of revealing Christ, but also in terms of needing Christ. There are many promises in the Old Testament--promises about inheriting the land, promises about the kingship, the son of man, and the people's righteousness, to mention only a few. However, if God had not finally kept His promise in Jesus Christ, all of these other promises would have been untrue. The Old Testament promises, therefore, were piecemeal and "shadows." Nevertheless the patriarchs believed the promise that God would forgive sins in Christ, and received mercy and forgiveness.

> Even though the law does not teach the free forgiveness of sins, the patriarchs knew the promise of the Christ, that for His sake God intended to forgive sins. As they understood that the Christ would be the price for our sins, they knew that our works could not pay so high a price. Therefore they received free mercy and the forgiveness of sins by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament.[119]

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[118] Apology IV, 262.

[119] Apology IV, 57.

If the promise of God is the key to understanding the Old Testament, it follows that one cannot separate biblical interpretation from biblical soteriology.[120] When interpreting the Old Testament, then, it is necessary to always be asking how men are to be saved. For "unless you start from Scripture's promissio, you wind up with a legalistic mishmash which is neither promissio nor lex."[121] Only in Christ is the law given its due and yet subdued by the Gospel. Biblical history, therefore, is "the history of God's promissio--not only His revealing of it but His making the promise and keeping it, historically . . ."[122] In fact, biblical history is nothing if it is not promissory. Edward Schroeder comments:

> What is striking about this Lutheran hermeneutics is that it is not first of all based on intellectual principles--like scientific admonitions to be open-minded and unprejudiced, to look at the grammar, syntax, forms of literature, Weltanschauung in which the message is couched, etc., but is based on theological principles and convictions, namely, that the ultimate Word of God is Promise and therefore must be present in the written Word.[123]

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[120]Robert W. Bertram, "The Hermeneutical Significance of Apology IV," A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, edited by Richard Jungkuntz (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1969), p. 124.

[121]Ibid., p. 125.

[122]Ibid., p. 126.

[123]Edward H. Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," The Lively Function of the Gospel, edited by Robert W. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 95.

The Old Testament, according to the Reformation view, ought to be valued for reasons beyond itself, that is, because of its witness to the promise, to Christ, to the Word, or to the gracious righteousness of God. As Schroeder has pointed out: "We have no access to the Word of God (him) except the Word of Got (it), the witness of the apostles and prophets."[124]

The direct antithesis of law and promise is sharply drawn by Walter R. Bouman in an article on "The Gospel and the Smalcald Articles."[125] Bouman notes that the reformers saw the law as operative legislatively and judgmentally within a universal structure. He explains that "the nomological structure reveals God as the destructive enemy of sinners," but that "Christ is God with a new word."[126] Sin is man's attempt to justify himself against God's destructive word in the law. Redemption is abandoning this self-justifying effort under the acceptance of the promise. Yet man is always simul justus et peccator.[127] Within this

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[124] Ibid., p. 86.

[125] Walter R. Bouman, "The Gospel and the Smalcald Articles," Concordia Theological Monthly, XL (June, July-August, 1969), 407-418.

[126] Ibid., XL, 417.

[127] See Ernest B. Koenker, "Man: simul justus et peccator," Accents in Luther's Theology, pp. 98-123.

[128] Bouman, XL, 418. See also Werner Elert, Law and Gospel, translated by Edward H. Schroeder (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 48.

struggle, however, "faith clings to the certainty that the Gospel is the final word, and not the law."[128]

The Reformation understanding of Word of God in the Old Testament, therefore, is God's personal address to man under law and promise. This does not imply that only certain parts of the Old Testament are Word of God. On the contrary, the Reformation view argues that all Scripture is God's Word understood as law and promise. Edmund Schlink explains:

> Since God "regards a single prophet as an inestimable treasure" (Ap. XII, 66), even a single Bible passage is of decisive significance. But the value of a single quotation rests, in the final analysis, on the fact that it is not an isolated quotation but represents the oft-attested teaching of Scripture. This "strong testimony of all the holy prophets may duly be called a decree of the catholic Christian church" (Ap. XX, 2).[129]

Nevertheless the intent of "the voice of God" in the Old Testament is always soteriological, not epistemological. For "the prophets . . . taught the righteousness of faith."[130] Elsewhere the Apology says:

> These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to justify and quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout Scripture. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of grace granted in Christ. The promise is repeated continually throughout

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[129]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 2.

[130]Apology IV, 395.

> Scripture; first it was given to Adam, later to the patriarchs, then illumined by the prophets, and finally proclaimed and revealed by Christ among the Jews, and spread by the apostles throughout the world. For all the saints were justified by faith in this promise, not by their own attrition or contrition.[131]

And "love does follow faith."[132]

At this point, then, it can be seen that the Reformation view of the Old Testament differs rather sharply from the "word" and "event" views. "Word" and "event" theologians ultimately combine the epistemological and soteriological questions. The Reformation view, however, maintains a soteriological concern throughout. Therefore the Reformation view, at least according to this study, does not fit at any one point along the "word" to "event" revelation continuum. For the Reformation view is not concerned primarily with revealed information or "theoretical propositions," as Ratschow has pointed out, but law and Gospel as "something that actually challenges, summons, and rouses us . . ."[133]

A summary of the Reformation view of the Old Testament as Word of God now follows. Here, too, an attempt will be made to correlate the summary with the six points

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[131]Apology XII, 53-54.

[132]Apology IV, 77.

[133]Ratschow, III, 2052.

listed at the end of the discussion of the literal-biblicistic approach and the six points listed at the end of the discussion of the "event" approach. The major differences and similarities between the Reformation view and the two poles on the continuum will be pointed out.

(1) Unlike both the "word" and "event" approaches, the Reformation view of the Old Testament as Word of God does not accentuate the revelatory character of the Old Testament record. It is not so much a matter of disclosing what was hidden or of uncovering supernatural knowledge as it is a matter of God doing something. The Reformation view maintains that the Old Testament should be understood as witnessing to what God does through law and to what God does through promise. The Old Testament, then, is God's direct and personal address (Word) to man in law (wrath) and promise (mercy), the promise always remaining dominant and the law serving it. The Old Testament and all of Scripture can be regarded as the written Word of God because man has no access to Him (Christ, the Word, the promise) except through it.

(2) The Old Testament record should be understood in both the proper literal and historical senses. "Word" and "event" are equally important in presenting to man the ultimate Word of God, that is, the gracious righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. The Word of God in the Old Testament, however, reaches beyond historical description and moral precept, beyond both "word" and "event," to the point where it becomes a life-imparting power that conforms the forgiveness of sins and is communicated by men in whom the Scriptures have become alive.

(3) The Old Testament is not to be understood as a progressive revelation of God moving from the more simple knowledge of God to the more sophisticated. Nor is it to be understood teleologically in the sense that Old Testament events are only preliminary manifestations of the final goal of history, Jesus Christ. According to the Reformation view, Christ is already fully present as God's gracious Word in the Old Testament period, although admittedly in a

shadowy or hidden way. The unity of the testaments is to be found in Christ, not in the things or thoughts expressed in the Old Testament. Moreover, the Old Testament cannot be understood progressively or teleologically because the promise was fulfilled in a completely different way than originally indicated or understood in its shadowy form. Christ is God with a new word.

(4) Like the "word" and "event" approaches, the Reformation view regards Christ as the focal point of both testaments. The Reformation view, in fact, may be described as Christocentric. Unlike either the "word" or "event" approaches, however, the reformers taught that the new covenant or the promise existed secretly from the times of man's expulsion from paradise and stood in a direct antithetical relationship to the covenant of law. The new covenant, although bound to the once-and-for-all historical appearance of Jesus Christ, was efficacious in the Old Testament wherever someone trusted in the grace of God in view of the coming Christ. The Old Testament is the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ is laid and should be understood from the goal at which it arrives.

(5) The Word of God in the Old Testament is redemptive deed and not demands or codes of conduct or even personal examples one must follow. Sin is man's attempt to justify himself against God's destructive word (law, wrath) and redemption is abandonment of self-justification under the acceptance of the promise. The promise is the final word, not the law. The Old Testament communicates God's direct personal address to man under law and promise through which God intends to establish fellowship with the believer. The Old Testament, therefore, does not just narrate history or present ethical directives. It has an instrumental function, that is, to establish communion between God and man.

(6) The Reformation view cannot be understood as either condemning or espousing historical-critical exegesis. Nevertheless, the Reformation view of the Old Testament is open and free enough to use any methodological approach that enhances the promise.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND LUTHERAN CURRICULA

The preceding discussion of Word as word, Word as event, and Word as law and promise provided a number of criteria on the basis of which an evaluation of specific Lutheran curriculum materials now becomes possible. The criteria fall into the six general categories used to summarize the "word," "event," and Reformation understandings of the Old Testament: revelation, Scripture, the unity of the testaments, salvation, morality, and historical-critical exegesis.

This chapter will analyze six high school level courses, two each from the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (LCMS). The courses will be grouped as follows: one course from each of the bodies that treats the Old Testament incidentally or as part of a topical rather than a strictly biblical presentation, and one course from each of the bodies that qualifies as a biblical as opposed to topical study. Each of the courses will be analyzed in terms of the six categories already mentioned and according to the distinctions in each of these categories as noted in the previous chapter.

Since this study deals with the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula, the analytical procedures

of this chapter should reveal how the three major Lutheran bodies in America actually use the Old Testament. An underlying assumption of the study is that the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula will occasionally reflect the "word" or "event" poles on the continuum, thereby compromising the Reformation understanding of Word. It is assumed, too, that Lutheran curricula should normally remain closer to the Reformation view than to either the "word" or "event" understandings.

Topical Studies

The three topical courses to be analyzed in this section are "What Is A Christian?" (ALC),[1] "Defending My Faith" (LCA),[2] and "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" (LCMS).[3] The titles indicate that the three courses roughly parallel one another as far as general content is concerned. All three courses attempt to make plain what Christianity is, and occasionally use the Old Testament to serve their purposes.

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[1]Glenn E. Wegmeyer, What Is A Christian?, teachers guide and students book (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967). Hereafter the course will be designated WIC. TG will be added to the course designations to indicate "teachers guide," and SB to indicate "students book."

[2]John R. Brokhoff, Defending My Faith, teachers guide and students book (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1966). Hereafter the course will be designated DMF.

[3]Dale E. Griffin, Conflicts in Christian Beliefs, teachers guide and students book (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

1. "What Is A Christian?" (ALC)

The ALC course begins by pointing to a survey conducted by Lutheran Youth Research in 1957 which reported that a majority of teenage Lutherans "have some confusion regarding God's grace and their response to it."[4] Elsewhere it is noted in the course that:

> three out of four of the nearly 2,000 youth tested said, "The way to be justified before God is to try sincerely to live a good life."[5]

The course, then, declares that all of this amounts to a denial of the fundamental biblical and Lutheran teaching that man is justified alone through the gracious righteousness of God in Christ.

Accordingly the course sets out to correct this confusion, to help teenagers know and experience God's gracious activity in Christ, and to explore the multifaceted dimensions of Christian discipleship. Occasionally the Bible and, for the purposes of this study, the Old Testament are brought to bear upon these objectives. The objective message of the Bible and the church, however, is always related to the subjective personal experience of the student.[6]

1968). Hereafter the course will be designated CCB.

[4]WIC (TG), p. 3.

[5]Ibid., p. 40.

[6]Ibid., p. 3.

Relatively little Old Testament content appears in the course. Several psalms are offered as possibilities for devotional reading. In a section dealing with "death," the course proposes a Bible study that includes passages from Ecclesiastes, Genesis, and Job.[7] These passages are, of course, somewhat fragmentary and do not suggest a great deal regarding the course's view of the Old Testament as Word of God. Part 8 of the course does not involve the biblical account of the Exodus, but it does include a strong statement regarding that event.[8] Part 9 includes passages from Genesis and Psalms when treating the topic of "sin."[9] The course's concluding section offers a brief synopsis of Old Testament history as a means of helping the students "see the unity of God's purpose from the beginning of history."[10] All of these Old Testament references taken with statements on Scripture in general and statements on Christ, the Gospel, faith, and discipleship should result in some idea of how the course understands the Old Testament.

In keeping with the six categories developed in the previous chapter, it should be noted first that the course

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[7] Ibid., p. 37. The passages are Eccl. 3:1,2; Gen. 3:19; Job 21:23,26.

[8] Ibid., p. 66.

[9] Ibid., pp. 71-72. The passages are Gen. 3:8-13; Ps. 32:3-4.

[10] Ibid., p. 95.

does not emphasize the concept of revelation. The emphasis, rather, is upon God doing something, "God acting in ordinary people and events."[11] Such an emphasis includes also man's response to God's acts. a response that is not the mere acquisition of intellectual knowledge or theoretical insights, but a relationship of trust and confidence in God.[12] Accordingly the purpose of the entire course is explained as experiencing the Gospel. Moreover,

> the Gospel is not primarily something that needs to be defined or explained. It is an event that happens to people. It is having something new break in and change one's life.[13]

The idea of revelation is thus subordinated to the action of God upon, in, and through people and events and man's response of trust and confidence. All of this seems reflective of the Reformation view.

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[11] Ibid., p. 32. For purposes of clarification it may be worth noting at this point that: "The revelation concept as such has only little intrinsic affinity with Luther's theology because it is closely connected with the intellectual, cognitive phase of faith whereas Lutheranism emphasizes that faith is primarily trust and confidence in God. Such dynamic terms as the 'Word of God' or "Law and Gospel' denote Luther's theological attitude much more exactly than the idea of revelation ever could. There is a clear distinction here from Calvin who strongly stressed the knowledge-element of faith. Calvin understood the message of the Bible basically as information transmitted to us and therefore accorded to revelation much more significance than did Luther and Melanchthon. During the Age of Enlightenment, however, the concept of revelation gained prominence also in Lutheran theology." Carl-Heinz Ratschow, "Revelation," The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), III, 2051.

[12] WIC (TG), passim.

[13] Ibid., p. 5.

Secondly, the course contains several explicit statements on Scripture or the Bible. "Scripture is a record of God's actions among people and a witness to their response."[14] This statement is followed immediately by encouragement not to let the biblical record stand alone as history, but to "study the Bible in such a way that God addresses us and gives us the chance to answer Him"[15] According to these statements the actions of God recorded in the Old Testament together with the response of the believer constitute the Word of God. Standing on their own these statements reflect the "event" pole in contrast to the "word" pole on the continuum since they regard the actions of God in history as primary and the written witness to these actions as necessary but not equal to the actions themselves. Moreover, on their own these statements fail to reflect the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament. To do this they would have had to say more, that is, to assert that God in His acts always confronts man in terms of law and promise.

Nevertheless scattered throughout the course are allusions to the Word as law and promise. But the law does not seem to be used according to the Reformation view. The course focuses on sin as something that man does instead

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[14] Ibid., p. 17.

[15] Ibid.

of the law as something that God does, and the wrath of God as it is directed toward the sinner. Still, with reference to Genesis 3, the course asserts that "disobedience creates guilt . . . . and excuse making."[16] With reference to Psalm 32 the course declares that "King David experienced the destructive power of guilt," which might otherwise be called the wrath of God. In addition, the course explains that legalism "binds men to codes rather than frees them for service" and "makes life with God a thing to be earned rather than a gift in Jesus Christ."[17] In spite of these statements, however, it would have helped distinguish the course from the "event" approach and to have identified it more closely with the Reformation view were it to have dealt with sin as man's attempt to justify himself against God's destructive word in the law. Guilt, fear, deception, and preoccupation with excuse making seem to be regarded as man's primary enemies. If the course used law according to the Reformation view, however, it would explain why and how God can be the enemy of sinners and why and how, at the same time, He can become the friend of sinners.[18]

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[16] Ibid., p. 71.

[17] Ibid., p. 48.

[18] See Walter R. Bouman, "The Gospel and the Smalcald Articles," Concordia Theological Monthly, XL(June, July-August 1969), 417: "If the nomological structure reveals God

A third category deals with the unity of the testaments. Here it will be necessary to reproduce a rather lengthy comment from the final section of the course:

> Ephesians 1:9,10 should take on personal meaning for the class. "For He has made known to us . . . His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." To unite all things that are broken--the relationship between man and God, between man and his neighbor, husband and wife, parents and children, friend and enemy--this is the purpose of God. To accomplish this, He established a community, a fellowship in which He was in their midst, renewing His covenant and freeing them for service. See Leviticus 26:9-13 and Jeremiah 30:22. The Exodus from Egypt, which they came to celebrate with the Passover meal, gave these people the clearest picture of God's grace. Here God took a band of slaves and gave them a mission and destiny which would affect the whole world and reach beyond time into eternity. They who were once "no people" became God's people. They were to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
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> See Exodus 19:5-8. The people promised to be faithful to the Lord, but Biblical history shows they did not keep their promise. In Isaiah 5, the prophet portrays Israel as a vineyard and God as the owner. He planted it carefully and cared for it lovingly, but it yielded wild grapes. It did not bear good fruit. Compare John 15:1-11.
>
> One thing should be made clear: The people did not become irreligious. Religion flourished in the midst of their downfall. The magnificent temple was built during this time and people kept their religion as part of their heritage. But it was empty religion, devoid of mission, and turned in on itself. It was lip service and rote obedience to commandments of men.

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as the destructive enemy of sinners, then God alone can become the friend of sinners."

> In the midst of all this God remained faithful to His promise. He would again do marvelous things, namely reconcile the world through the cross of Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 29:13,14 and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.[19]

Some notion of law and promise is, of course, evident in the above quotation. Yet the focus is on the uniting of "all things that are broken" through the instrumentality of the covenant community. The Old Testament people as the covenant community were to be a kind of "means of grace" to the entire world. Because they failed in this their mission, the faithful God raised up Jesus Christ as the Reconciler of the world as He had promised.

Implied in all of this is the fact that Jesus Christ would have been unnecessary had the Old Testament people come through in their faithfulness to the Lord and His plan for them. Such an implication is opposed to the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament which recognizes the full presence of Christ as God's gracious Word already in those times, to the antithetical relationship of law and promise, and to the reference from Ephesians with which the quotation begins. Moreover, the Reformation view is Christocentric and regards the entire Bible as one great proclamation of Christ. The above quotation is not explicit in designating Christ as the One who constitutes the unity of Scripture. Rather, the unity of God's Word, will, and

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[19] WIC (TG), p. 95.

purpose is to be found in the history of God's covenant people which culminates in Jesus Christ and the cross. The quotation, therefore, shows the influence of the "event" pole on the continuum more than the Reformation view. For according to the Reformation view, Christ is not the culmination of historical events, but God with a new word. Christ interrupts the succession of events; He does not just complete them.

To advance the analysis of the ALC course it must now be asked how Old Testament men are to be saved. It has already been noted that the course intends to help teenagers know and experience the gracious righteousness of God in Christ. That, in capsule form, is the soteriology that permeates the course. The need for the grace of God in Christ, however, is not clearly and unambiguously presented. In fact, the course does not present Old Testament soteriology as "redemptive deed" in the sense that the deed confers the forgiveness of sins. Instead there are statements like: "The Old Testament people of God looked back to what God had done in the Exodus. He had made free people out of a band of slaves."[20] Such a statement is more reflective of the "event" approach than of the Reformation view. As it stands, the statement simply narrates what happened in the Exodus event and only hints

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[20] Ibid., p. 66.

at its theological significance. The Reformation view is more radical and compels the event to render up Christ. For according to the Reformation view, the Old Testament--all of it--must be understood in the light of its end, Christ. The Exodus, therefore, is the Word of God because in this event "God acted redemptively, and through the Exodus God spoke that Word of revelation which made all His other deeds meaningful."[21]

Throughout the course it is evident that morality is not understood as obedience to a biblical code of ethics. The instrumental function of the Old Testament is implied in the assertion that "the Scriptures have been given to us so that we may search them and come to faith."[22] The Old Testament as well as the New is God's personal summons to faith in Him and His Word. For this reason "being a Christian is not a matter of being 'good' but of being united with Christ."[23] The stories of Biblical people are

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[21]Jaroslav Pelikan, Luther's Works, Companion Volume (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 59. The WIC (TG) course also seems to reflect the "event" pole when in the paradigm on p. 62 it says that Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Gideon "never heard of Christ" and indicates that they were saved by believing in "God and His mercy." The Reformation view would say that believing in "God and His mercy" is believing in Christ. The reformers believed that wherever God turned His face toward men, it was the face of Christ.

[22]WIC (TG), p. 29.

[23]Ibid., p. 33.

not to be understood as standards men must follow or examples they must imitate. On the contrary,

> studying about people who have encountered Christ should make it easier for similar encounters to take place right in the classroom.[24]

In addition, relationship to Christ is more important than imitation of Him.[25]

Finally, there is no evidence in the course to conclude that it operates with historical-critical presuppositions. Nevertheless there are two sentences in the course that reflect what the present study has suggested as a Reformation attitude toward the historical-critical exegesis of Scripture. Rather than avoiding this type of exegesis, it has been suggested that the reformers might have welcomed it as long as it enhanced the promise. The course, therefore, says:

> The Bible is reliable and will withstand any questions a person wants to raise. So there is no need to fear questions if we allow them to drive us to search for the truth.[26]

2. "Defending My Faith" (LCA)

The LCA course proposes to help the teenager as he works through secular and religious ideas that run counter

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[24] Ibid., p. 17.

[25] Ibid., p. 62.

[26] Ibid., p. 29.

to the Lutheran faith, to assist him in his search for "the right answers," and to lead him to the point where he "will be more ready to stand up for a faith founded in the Word of God and in the confessions of the church."[27] The course, therefore, makes use of ample amounts of Scripture (including many Old Testament references) as well as a few confessional statements of the church. Indeed, one hears at the very outset that "throughout the course an emphasis is placed upon the Bible as the source of religious truth."[28] Elsewhere the course quotes favorably Article II, Section Three, of the LCA official constitution: "This church acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as the norm for the faith and life of the church."[29] On the basis of these statements, it appears that the course will provide sufficient data to arrive at significant conclusions regarding how the course understands the Old Testament.

One of the first items that surfaces after analysis of the course is the heavy emphasis on revelation. Recalling the conclusions reached in the previous chapter, one is therefore alerted to the possibility that the course might express close affinities to either the "word" or "event" poles on the continuum. The question either "word"

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[27] DMF (TG), p. 8.

[28] Ibid., p. 6.

[29] Ibid., p. 38.

or "event," however, is immediately laid to rest when one reads the following remark:

> An evangelical Christ-centered understanding of the Bible will . . . equip students to defend the proper use of the Bible against fundamentalist attacks . . .[30]

According to the course, the proper use of the Bible hinges on one's idea of revelation. Revelation is God taking the initiative to disclose Himself and to reveal particular truth to man. Although God may speak to man through the Bible, He first reveals Himself through history, through Christ, and through men of God. "The Bible is a record of this revelation."[31] Elsewhere the course repeats that "God is known only to the extent that He reveals Himself. The Bible is the record of this self-disclosure."[32] God is both the object and the subject of revelation. For:

> we know God as a living Person by faith through His self-revelation as recorded in the Bible--especially His self-revelation in Christ.[33]

The Old Testament and all Scripture, therefore, can be understood as authoritative revelation which can properly

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[30] Ibid., p. 35.

[31] DMF (SB), p. 37.

[32] Ibid., p. 102.

[33] DMF (TG), p. 79.

be called Word of God. For not only did God reveal Himself through historical events, He also "inspired men, who in their way then expressed His will and truth."[34] God is the most important author of the Bible. Through the Bible He communicates with man.

> In this sense the Bible is the Word of God--not a frozen, static record, consisting of paper and print, but a living, active, dynamic power. God's Word may come in oral form, such as through preaching, teaching, or witnessing. In the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Word is "visible" as an enacted Word. The Bible is a record of God's Word to man.[35]

Nevertheless the written record in the Bible is secondary and the events or truth to which the Bible testifies is primary. The students book, for example, records a rather lengthy discussion of two teenage couples regarding some of the Old Testament miracles. One of the four individuals involved happens to be a fundamentalist. A brief explanation of fundamentalism follows the discussion. The book explains that fundamentalism believes each word of the Bible is inspired, and "each word must be taken literally, regardless of historical, scientific, and literary facts and background." In addition, the following four weaknesses of the fundamentalist position are noted: (1) it denies the human element in the Bible's authorship; (2) it ignores the

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[34] Ibid., p. 37.

[35] DMF (SB), p. 37.

historical situation in which a particular book of the Bible was written; (3) it lacks depth in its understanding of the Bible; and (4) it abuses the Bible by making it a source of "proof texts."[36] All of this obviously separates the course from the "word" pole on the continuum. In fact, the students book argues that "the Bible in all its parts does not have to be taken literally." Rather, "it is the truth portrayed that is important."[37]

The truth portrayed in the Old and New Testament writings is ultimately Jesus Christ. "The Bible is God's Word," says the teachers guide, "to the extent that it reveals and exalts Christ."[38] Elsewhere the guide encourages the teacher to "be sure that the class recognizes that the highest revelation of God is in Christ." In Christ "we literally see God in the flesh."[39] Implicit in all of these statements is the idea espoused by those who hold to the "event" pole on the continuum, that Christ is the culmination of a series of revelatory acts or events reaching back into the Old Testament. Revelation is therefore teleological, moving toward Christ, its goal. Thus the students book explains:

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[36] Ibid., p. 36.

[37] Ibid., p. 39.

[38] DMF (TG), p. 37.

[39] Ibid., p. 82.

> Christ is the ultimate revealer of God. Other religious leaders have been inspired and have had insights into the nature of God. However, Jesus brought to the world the most complete revelation of God. Other men have uncovered pieces of truth about God, man, and the world, but Jesus put the whole picture together. Others spoke promises of what God would do and be, but Jesus fulfilled all the promises in Himself. Before Jesus, the truth was presented in words, but Jesus brought to the world the truth in a Person.[40]

The above quotation focuses on Christ as the revealer of God, as One who uncovers knowledge or information about God, man, and the world. This emphasis again places the course closer to the "event" pole than to the Reformation view of the Old Testament. The reformers like the "event" adherents found the unity of Scripture in Christ, but Christ as God's redemptive deed and not simply the Revealer of truth about God, man, and the world. Admittedly, the quotation does speak of Christ as the fulfillment of the promises. This would be a Reformation emphasis. Nevertheless the burden of the quotation is on the revelatory value of Christ and epistemological-theological unity in Him. What is interesting is the possible throwback to fundamentalism and the self-contradiction in the reference to the verbal (not "person" or "event") presentation of "truth" in the Old Testament. Noted earlier was the course emphasis on God's self-revelation also "through history . . . and

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[40] DMF (SB), p. 21.

through men of God" and the weakness of fundamentalism in its insistence upon verbal inspiration and literal interpretation of Scripture.[41]

The course, however, does not understand God's revelation recorded in the Old Testament on a flat level. Nor does it advocate a progressive view of revelation moving from the simple to the more sophisticated. Nevertheless the course admits to "varying ideas about God" in the Bible, but argues that God did not reveal Himself "little by little." The course proposes that there are "degrees of revelation" in the Bible, a proposal that seems to be offered as a way to maintain the idea of God's immutability. God is always the same. His self-revelation, therefore, must always be the same. The difficulty encountered is man's inability to grasp the fulness of God's self-disclosure. Thus there are degrees of revelation in the Old Testament where:

> we find God as a mountain God (Exodus 19:18), a tribal war God (Exodus 23:22), a manlike God (Genesis 32:24-30), and a destroyer of children.[42]

It seems that the Reformation view might avoid if not contradict the "degrees of revelation" proposal. According to the reformers, what is revealed about God is only incidental. More important is the redemptive deed of God through

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[41] Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[42] Ibid., p. 102.

which He confers the forgiveness of sins. Through His redemptive deeds, however, God also intends to reveal Himself as Lord and Savior.[43] Moreover, it is doubtful that the reformers would agree that God's self-revelation must always be the same. His self-revelation through redemptive deed, after all, stands in direct antithesis to the revelation of His wrath. In fact, the Reformation view claims Christ is God with a new word. Christ is God's final keeping of His promise--God's new Word that makes the Old Testament true. That new word is already present in all the other words of God in the Old Testament, but in a hidden way.

At this point it is necessary to once again ask the soteriological question: How does the course believe that the Old Testament individual is saved? According to the present study there are three possibilities: faith in the sacrificial atonement of Christ which is already explicit

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[43]See Pelikan, pp. 56-57: "The 'Word of God' was a deed, but it still remained a word. Therefore its redemptive purpose was also to reveal God as Lord and Savior. Because man was finite, he could not grasp God; because man was sinful, he could not face God. Therefore God remained the hidden God, and no amount of investigation from man's side would extort His secret from Him. It was necessary for Him to give up that secret Himself. But because a man could not lookupon the Almighty and live, God gave this secret in the mask of a Word of God. When Moses asked to see the face of God in Ex. 33, God forbade it; but He did permit Moses to see His back after He had passed by. So, said Luther in his comments on this story,man could not look at the glory of God; but God did permit man to see His deeds after He had passed by. These special deeds of divine revelation and redemption were the Word of God."

in the Old Testament (Word as word), faith in the preliminary figurations of God's grace in the Old Testament (Word as event), and faith in the promises of God which are hidden in the Old Testament as a whole and which are kept in Christ (Word as law and promise).

Both the teachers guide and the students book refer to man as a sinner.[44] Man inherits a nature that leads him to act contrary to God's will. The students book adds that God is the Holy One who must destroy sin and who causes sinful man to fear and tremble in His presence. The law and wrath of God, therefore, is what prompted Luther to ask: "Where can I find a merciful God?"[45] Elsewhere it is pointed out that man cannot satisfy divine justice no matter how good he might be, and that "Luther helped the church to rediscover the truth of salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ."[46]

Without Christ, therefore, the Old Testament religion is insufficient.[47] The entire Bible and all that is in it needs to be evaluated and interpreted in the light of Christ. For:

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[44] DMF (TG), pp. 89-90; DMF (SB), p. 101.

[45] DMF (SB), p. 101.

[46] Ibid., p. 27.

[47] DMF (TG), pp. 28-29.

> The Bible as a whole "makes sense" when Christ is placed at the center and heart of it. The Old Testament looks toward a savior and a new covenant. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is the good news that the Savior has come and that a new covenant has been offered.[48]

The capitalization in the above quotation is significant and deliberate. The Old Testament people looked toward a sevior (small "s"), a shadowy and hidden kind of savior. The New Testament announces that the Savior (capital "S") has come and a new covenant offered. Christ is God with a new word. The course, therefore, holds to a Reformation understanding of Old Testament soteriology.

As far as morality is concerned, the course expresses the view that the Gospel should not be understood as a set of rules but as a relationship between the believer and God that is based:

> on the response of faith and love devoid of coercion. The old covenant was based on law; the new is based on loyalty and love.[49]

At another point, however, the course indicates that love is not only a response to the Gospel, but a standard of conduct. Insofar as you are not loving," the course says, "laws are necessary. The Ten Commandments are a good basic set."[50]

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[48] DMF (SB), p. 39.

[49] DMF (TG), p. 46.

[50] DMF (SB), p. 142.

Apparently the course author is bothered by what he calls "relativism." He says:

> Too many people believe you can never say that anything is wrong. Right and wrong are matters of personal opinion. According to this philosophy, each person may do as he pleases. Everyone lives according to his own scale of values. The result is as inevitable as tomorrow. In the days when judges ruled Israel (1200 B.C.), the Bible says there was moral chaos and corruption in the land. The reason? "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). Maybe relativism isn't as modern as we think![51]

For the above reason the course sets forth love as a concrete moral standard. Otherwise the course reflects a strictly Reformation view when it talks of the law making us "realize we are sinners and in need of a savior" and as that which "leads us to Christ."[52] Yet the teachers guide tends to move beyond the Reformation view when it asserts that:

> Christians will use the law as a guide. The law in a way shows us that we are imperfect and thereby points us to Christ for forgiveness and a better guide to right living.[53]

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 53.

[53] DMF (TG), p. 47. See also Walter R. Bouman, "Bible As God's Word," The Encyclopedia of The Lutheran Church, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), I, 235, where he talks about the confusion of the law with ethical admonitions and exhortations. "Lutherans have insisted that the ethic of the Gospel is neither produced nor informed by the Law (Formula of Concord VI). Good works are 'fruits of the Holy Spirit' who effects them through the Gospel alone."

The latter statement may be closer to both "word" and "event" poles than to the Reformation view.

With its concern over relativism and with its conception of the law as a guide, it should come as no surprise that the course tends toward a moralistic use of the Old Testament. Two examples should suffice, one each from the teachers guide and students book. The teachers guide suggests a discussion of the dangers of exclusivism in church bodies based on the Book of Jonah. From the story of Jonah, the guide says, it can be seen that "Pride, bigotry, and feelings of superiority should be recognized as unchristian."[54] The students book offers an even clearer illustration of the point. Citing the reference Esther 5:9-12; 7:9-10, the book says:

> There's a moral here: The gallows you build for another you will hang on yourself. Haman reached a position next to the king. He was proud of it, too. But he overreached himself.[55]

It should be obvious that both of these examples move the course closer to the "word" and "event" poles than to the Reformation view of the Old Testament.

Finally, it is necessary to analyze the course's attitude toward historical-critical exegesis of the Old

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[54] DMF (TG), p. 62.

[55] DMF (SB), p. 107.

Testament. The preceding reference to the date of the judges (1200 B.C.) may provide a clue. Beyond this, the course argues time and again that the Bible's authority has to do with "religious truth," not scientific or historical truth.[56] Moreover, the Bible is both the word of God and the word of man. "The revelation is God's; the recording is man's."[57] Therefore:

> since men--who all make errors--had a hand in writing the Bible, errors, contradictions, and differences in point of view can be found in the record.[58]

The teachers guide puzzles over how God's truth could ever be reduced to a language and declares that "the errors [in the Bible--Old Testament] are not of God's truth, but human errors (mistakes of dates, places, events, understanding)."[59] All of this clearly places the course at either the "event" pole on the continuum or possibly within the Reformation view. It clearly does not correspond to the fundamentalist approach which considers historical-critical exegesis subversive of biblical truth.

The course says:

> Science can give religion a method. Science brings man down to earth, makes him consider

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[56] DMF (TG), pp. 37-38.

[57] DMF (SB), p. 38.

[58] Ibid.

[59] DMF (TG), p. 37.

> facts and confront reality. It uses the "scientific method" to question, probe, gather facts, investigate, catalog, and experiment. We cannot apply such techniques to measuring faith, but we can and do use them in the Biblical and archaeological studies so important to every Christian.[60]

Again, the approval of historical-critical exegesis places the course within either the "event" or Reformation approaches to the Old Testament. The course, however, explicitly prefers identification with the latter. In fact, the course portrays Luther as a practitioner of historical criticism by citing his low opinion of the Book of James. Luther said James did not emphasize Christ's saving role in God's plan of salvation. The course suggests, therefore, that the teacher:

> stress the fact that Christ, the truth, is what matters in all of our Bible-reading. It is not so important whether a story is literally true or historically correct.[61]

3. "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" (LCMS)

According to the editor, this course intends to strengthen the teenager's relationship with Jesus Christ, provide a clearer understanding of the Biblical message, and help the teenager solve problems that are produced by

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[60] DMF (SB), p. 96.

[61] DMF (TG), pp.37-38.

conflicts in beliefs.[62] The objective of "clearer understanding of the biblical message" indicates that there will be considerable biblical material in the course, including Old Testament material. This should make possible an analysis of how the course uses or understands the Old Testament.

The course contains only a few references to the idea of revelation. These references, however, are sufficient to indicate that the course does not follow the "event" pole on the continuum. None of the references emphasize revelation through the mighty acts of God. On the other hand, the reference to Jesus Christ as the "Revealer of God"[63] does not pick up the Reformation view of the Word (in this case, Christ) as "redemptive deed." What is left, therefore, is the "word" pole on the continuum. The course, while not totally given to that pole, nevertheless tends toward it in its ideas of revelation.

Several examples should suffice. The teachers guide indicates that some young people may feel, presumably because of the influence of secularism and scientism, that the Bible contains "serious errors and [is] entirely untrustworthy." Consequently "they need to be strengthened in their belief

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[62] CCB (SB), p. 4.

[63] CCB (TG), p. 17.

in Scripture as the Word of God which reveals the only way to salvation."[64] In this case, at least, the role of Scripture is portrayed as revelation, the uncovering of knowledge about the way of salvation.

Earlier the same guide had spoken of the Old Testament prophets as "the inspired instruments of God's revelation." The Holy Spirit enabled the prophets to write and ponder "about God's grace which was revealed fully in Jesus Christ . . ."[65] In other words, the Old Testament too has a revelatory function, that is, like all Scripture it presents knowledge or information about Christ and salvation in Him. "Old Testament Scripture was respected in Paul's day, as it should be today," the students book asserts,

> as the inspired record of God's revelation of Himself. Therefore Paul appealed to the testimony of Old Testament Scripture regarding man's ability to save himself.[66]

In addition, the movement of the course toward the "word" pole on the continuum can be demonstrated by its literalistic interpretations of the fall narratives in Genesis 3. For example:

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[64] Ibid., p. 26.

[65] Ibid., p. 25.

[66] CCB (SB), pp. 26-27.

> Satan spoke through the serpent to tempt man. Satan, like all the angels, probably was created on the sixth day. He too originally was a "good angel," but in pride rebelled against God and His authority (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; 1 Tim. 3:6; Jude 6). Satan tempted Eve because she probably had heard God's command indirectly through Adam and because she, by nature not being as strong as Adam, would be more easily misled (1 Tim. 2:14).[67]

The results of the fall, as derived from the literalistic understanding of Genesis 3, are:

> First, women shall experience pain in bearing children, a reminder of man's sinful condition from his very conception and birth. Second, women who acted independently of man in rebelling against God will find a continual attraction for and dependence on man (Leupold). Third, man shall rule over woman. Woman sought to control man by taking control into her own hands (1 Tim. 2:14); as a result woman shall be the one who is controlled.[68]

Finally, the movement of the course toward the "word" pole on the continuum can be seen in the pedagogical approach employed in the students book. There the student is repeatedly pressed for cognitive information based on a literalistic reading of various Scripture references. Some questions involving Old Testament references are: What hint does Genesis 3:4,5 give that the sin of Adam and Eve was more than breaking a rule God gave? What did Satan lead Eve to doubt (Genesis 3:1)? What alluring possibility did Satan hold before Eve (Genesis 3:5)? How did Adam and Eve demonstrate their feeling that they had been responsible for

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[67] CCB (TG), p. 4.

[68] Ibid., p. 6.

their sin (Genesis 3:7,8)? Who influenced Adam to sin (Genesis 3:6)? How is man's separation from God described in Genesis 3:8-11? How does Genesis 3:12 indicate man's separation from his fellowmen? How does Genesis 3:16-24 describe man's separation from his true self as God intended him to be? What mark of God's goodness is suggested in Genesis 3:21? In what way was the event described in Genesis 3:22-24 evidence of God's mercy? What supreme revelation of God's mercy is recorded in Genesis 3:15? How does Adam's action in naming woman Eve (life) indicate his trust in God's promise of the Savior (Genesis 3:20)?[69] All of these questions presume answers derived from a literalistic and cognitive-revelational approach to the Old Testament.

What has been presented under the category of revelation applies equally to the course's view of Scripture or the Bible. The course regards Scripture as inspired by God and as the authoritative Word of God. With reference specifically to the Old Testament, the students book asks its users to:

> In the space below write the words in the Scripture reference which indicate that the

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[69] CCB (SB), pp. 7-9.

> Old Testament is the Word of God and therefore of value for New Testament Christians.[70]

Like the "word" and "event poles on the continuum and the Reformation view, the course finds the unity of the Bible in Christ. The teachers guide asserts that "all Old Testament prophecy pointed to Christ."[71] Elsewhere the guide develops the relation between the testaments as follows:

> The prophets received the answer to their own questions by the Holy Spirit through their writings. The longing for the Messiah runs throughout the entire Old Testament. In writing of the coming Messiah the prophets served the Christians of the entire New Testament era. God's grace in Christ as prophesied in the Old Testament is for all generations. The apostles used the Old Testament writings to proclaim the Savior; the Christians gained a better understanding of and a firmer faith in Jesus as the Savior through their study also of Old Testament Scripture.[72]

It is important to note the reference to "God's grace in Christ" in the above quotation. Here it is explained that "all generations" had that grace, even the generations of the Old Testament period. This accent, then, separates the course from both the "word" and "event" poles. The "word" pole presents the idea of progressive

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[70] Ibid., p. 21. Underlining the author's. The Scripture references to which the student must respond in this case are: 1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21; 3:2.

[71] CCB (TG), p. 29.

[72] Ibid., p. 25.

revelation while the "event" pole presents the idea of a teleological revelation. The course, on the other hand, holds to the Reformation view which argues the gracious righteousness of God in Christ as the unifying element in all Scripture.

> Thus the Spirit of God has revealed God's salvation in both Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. The central theme of the entire Bible is God's grace revealed in Jesus the Messiah.[73]

Out of this understanding of biblical unity, it is not surprising that the CCB course demonstrates considerable interest in the soteriological question. In fact, expressing affinity with the Reformation view, the CCB course occasionally compels certain Old Testament texts to render up Christ. An example of the latter is the reference to God's clothing of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21-24 as evidence "of God's mercy and love . . . for fallen man."[74] In addition, the course claims that God acted graciously by banishing man from the Garden of Eden "so he would not partake of the tree of life and live forever in his sin-torn and sin-defaced body."[75] The latter statement, however, seems to indicate affinity also with the literalistic approach

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., p. 6.

[75] Ibid.

to the Old Testament. Finally, the course explains that:

> In naming woman Eve (life), Adam expressed his faith in God's promise concerning the Savior, through whom man would be delivered from death and receive eternal life.[76]

Throughout the course, the soteriological question is answered with a basic consistency: "The Old Testament people of God were saved through faith in the gracious promises of God concerning the coming Messiah."[77] Genesis 3:15 is understood as Gospel, to which the course adds Luther's comment: "This text embraces and comprehends within itself everything noble and glorious that is to be found anywhere in the Scriptures."[78] Referring to Numbers 21:4-9, the course explains that "the people appropriated for themselves God's deliverance by trusting in His promise and looking upon the brass serpent."[79]

What seems to be weak in the course at this point, making complete identification with the Reformation view difficult, is the understanding of law. The course calls law "preparatory" for the gracious righteousness of God in Christ. The terribleness of law and the wrath of God tend to be minimized. Instead the course explains that "the law

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[76] Ibid., p. 6.

[77] Ibid., p. 35.

[78] Ibid., p. 6.

[79] Ibid., p. 21.

revealed God's will and thus man's sinful and lost condition."[80] Implied is the possibility that the law's accusatory function ended with the coming of Christ. Moreover, the course maintains that "the entire period from Abraham to Moses was a time of grace, not one of righteousness by the law."[81] Not that the statement is incorrect, but if not properly understood it can weaken the law's terribleness and the understanding of Christ as God with a new word. At the same time, however, the course sets forth an explicit statement on the law which can clearly be identified with the Reformation view. The teachers guide explains:

> The purpose of the whole Mosaic law, which functioned between Moses and Christ, was to stand guard over the Old Testament people, constantly declaring the whole world guilty and subject to God's judgment.[82]

When the course is analyzed for its views on moral responsibility, it again seems to identify with the "word" pole on the continuum. Instead of setting forth Old Testament personalities as moral examples or relationship to Christ as that which informs one's morality, the course appeals to the Old Testament words for moral direction. This is indicated once more in the pedagogical approach of the students book which contains questions such as:

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[80] Ibid., p. 19.

[81] Ibid., p. 32.

[82] Ibid.

How long during your life are you to respect your parents (Proverbs 23:22)? Why does the Christian not "please his neighbor" when the neighbor seeks that which is contrary to God's will (Genesis 39:9)? What action should the child of God take toward social injustice (Micah 4:3-5; 6:8; Psalm 82:2-4)? These and similar questions indicate an understanding of the Old Testament as Word of God in the sense that it reveals the verbal will of God and provides explicit moral direction regarding right and wrong kinds of conduct.

The course, finally, does not directly oppose the use of historical-critical exegesis. The interpretations of specific Old Testament references in the teachers guide, however, indicate that historical criticism is not a presupposition with which the author operates. Nevertheless the biblical materials in the course, the author claims, are "used both in respect to their context and in harmony with the rule of faith or the total biblical message."[83] The "human aspect" and "divine aspect" of Scripture, therefore, are presented as follows:

> The Scriptures have a human aspect; Bible study is more fruitful when such factors as the situation surrounding the writing of each book is considered. But the Scriptures also have a divine aspect; God speaks through the witness of the Biblical writers. Therefore the Scriptures reveal God to man.[84]

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[83] Ibid., p. 2.

[84] Ibid., p. 24.

On the basis of the above statements, it is difficult to determine whether the course opposes or favors historical-critical exegesis. Although virtually arguing from silence, perhaps one can tentatively suggest that the course's attitude toward historical criticism is possibly closer to the Reformation view than to the "word" or "event" poles on the continuum.

Biblical Studies

The three biblical courses to be analyzed in this section are "Getting the Bible's Message" (ALC),[85] "Spokesmen For God" (LCA),[86] and "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" (LCMS).[87] The three courses once again roughly parallel one another in general content. This is especially true of the LCA and LCMS courses which treat the Old Testament prophets. The ALC course is a survey of the main themes of both testaments and, in the process of the survey, it supplies material that is somewhat parallel to the other two courses.

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[85]Vernon Bittner and Milo Brekke, Getting The Bible's Message, teachers guide and students book (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964). Hereafter the course will be designated GBM.

[86]Robert E. Bornemann, Spokesmen For God, teachers guide and students book (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1966). Hereafter the course will be designated SFG.

[87]Burton L. Everist, Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past, teachers guide and students book (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968). Hereafter the course will be designated TVAP.

1. "Getting The Bible's Message" (ALC)

The course begins by explaining that the church "wants her youth to read the Bible, and to be able to do so with understanding and skill."[88] But teenagers are frequently overwhelmed by scientific methods and theories to the extent that they experience serious doubts about the Bible's message. Therefore the course aims "to help teenagers meet the very vital question, 'What is the Bible's message? Is it for me? Today?'"[89]

To understand the Bible's message is an immense undertaking. One course cannot complete the task, nor can it presume to have examined in toto what the Bible says. The use of the Bible in the course, therefore, has been limited to selected blocks of material from the Old and New Testaments that illustrate and communicate the key accents of the biblical Word. Four rules for getting the Bible's message or for studying the specific blocks of material are provided: (1) let Scripture interpret Scripture--the clear, the unclear; (2) try to discover how every passage relates to Jesus; (3) look for whom, to whom, when, and why; and (4) do not try to understand the Bible

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[88] GBM (TG), p. 5.

[89] Ibid.

without obeying it.[90] At this point it can already be seen that the course begins with a Reformation approach to understanding Scripture.

There is no single section of the course devoted to a discussion of revelation. A definite concept of revelation, however, can be pieced together after examining the teachers guide and the students book. In one sense, it appears that the course views revelation according to the "event" pole on the continuum. The reader is told repeatedly that "the Bible's message is primarily about persons and events."[91] In addition, the students book quotes (apparently favorably) from the ALC's Bible: Book of Faith to the effect that the Old and New Testaments "center their message in the saving acts of God in human history." The same quotation adds that German scholars call this salvation story "Heilsgeschichte, which means both 'saving history' and 'history of salvation.'"[92]

As mentioned earlier the concept of revelation whether it be through words or events or both is closely connected with cognitive and intellectual aspects of faith whereas Lutheranism emphasizes faith as trust and confidence. For this reason Lutheranism has employed such dynamic terms as "Word of God" and "Law and Gospel" to denote the content of

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[90] Ibid., p. 25.

[91] Ibid., p. 27.

[92] GBM (SB), pp. 106-107.

the Scriptures. God speaks His Word to man in Scripture under the forms of law and promise. The course is not quite clear on this point. Although a revelation concept is present throughout, such terms as Word of God and law and Gospel also appear. But the emphasis on the mighty acts of God together with strong cognitive concerns[93] seem to indicate a periodic shift from the Reformation view to the "event" pole on the continuum.

While there may be in one sense an "event" approach recognizable in the course, this is not the intent of the authors. At the outset it is asserted that "God has revealed Himself in redemptive acts in history and in the inspired writings of the human authors of the Bible."[94] In other words, the authors of the Old Testament, for example, record what Luther would have called "redemptive deeds" which happen also to be divine revelation. But the stress is always on the redemptive deeds and not on revelation. Thus the course proposes to help teenagers "learn that the Bible is not information about a distant God, but it is God speaking to each individual" and that "the message of the Bible can be summed up in one word--

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[93]See Ibid., p. 8, where students take a quiz on "What I Already Know." The course's use of "message" sometimes indicates strong cognitive and intellectual concerns.

[94]GBM (TG), p. 5.

redemption."[95] Beyond this the authors express the hope that teacher and students "will experience the message of the Bible rather than just grasping it as an idea."[96]

When it comes to the course's understanding of Scripture, it can be demonstrated that this understanding has little in common with the "word" pole on the continuum. What is important are not the words of Scripture as much as the "message" it conveys. Indeed, the entire course centers in how to get that message.[97] Moreover, "the message of the Bible involves coming face to face with a person, Jesus Christ, as well as a study of words."[98] As Word of God, the Scriptures contain both law and Gospel.[99] The Scriptures have an instrumental function:

> The Bible was written in faith for faith. It tells of the great revealing and redeeming acts of God. Some people responded in faith, others in disbelief. It was written by men who responded in faith and through it God speaks to us and invites our response in faith.[100]

In some sections, the course portrays the unity of the Old and New Testament Word as the gracious righteousness

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 18.

[98] Ibid., p. 25.

[99] Ibid., p. 55.

[100] Ibid., p. 61.

of God in Christ. Again quoting from the ALC Bible: Book of Faith, the students book presents the Exodus and Christ's life, death, and resurrection as roughly parallel acts of deliverance. The quotation goes on to explain that "the deliverance was the free act of God, whose initiative in grace is the same throughout the Scriptures."[101] Old and New Testaments, therefore, come together in God's initiative in grace which is always the same. Thus the teachers guide can say: "The central figure in the whole Bible is God, or more specifically, God as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ."[102] Already mentioned is the guide's proposal of one of the four key rules for studying and interpreting the Bible, that is, to seek its purpose and meaning in Jesus Christ. The unity of Scripture is in Christ through whom God acts in grace and deliverance. "That to which the Old Testament pointed has become actual in the person and work of Jesus."[103]

How were people of the Old Testament saved? The course answers: By trusting God's promises. In fact, the main "message" of Numbers 21:2-9 is presented as follows: "God saves. He wants to save us all. He can and does give life to all who believe His promises and act on them."[104] Thus

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[101] GBM (SB), p. 119.

[102] GBM (TG), p. 24.

[103] GBM (SB), p. 119.

[104] GBM (TG), p. 23.

the saving "message" of Numbers 21:2-9 is as valid today as it was when it was first presented. It should be noted how the teachers guide here and elsewhere presses beyond literalism to the "message" or proclamation or personal Word of God to man, and how the guide consistently directs its understanding of the Old Testament toward Christ.

Several additional examples should suffice as answers to the soteriological question. After discussing the contexts that frame the creedal statements in Deuteronomy 26:5-10 and Joshua 24:2-13, the course asks how these statements relate to Jesus. In answer it admits that there is no direct reference in either to Jesus. Nevertheless it explains that "what is characteristically significant about Jesus is that He saves, or delivers, or sets free," and implies that these characteristically significant aspects can be found in the Deuteronomy and Joshua passages. Thus these passages can and should be related to Christ. He is ultimately their "message."[105] Similarly, referring to the acts of sealing a covenant in Genesis 15:7-21, Genesis 24:1-9, and Joshua 24:26-28, the teachers guide says: "God sealed His promises to us with an act that no Christian can forget. He allowed His only Son to die for us."[106] Note that God sealed "His promises" and not "His covenant" to us.

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[105] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[106] Ibid., p. 124.

Christ's death is not a covenant. It is a saving event that is totally new and unique. Christ is God with a new word. Trust and confidence in the promises of God concerning Christ was the salvation of the Old Testament people. For "Christ is . . . the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation."[107]

When asking the soteriological question, one must also ask from what the Old Testament people were saved. Already mentioned was the fact that the course deals with both law and Gospel. Its concept of law should therefore indicate why the question of salvation should even be asked.

The teachers guide explains that the ancestors of the Israelites found themselves trapped and helpless and in cruel slavery to the Egyptians.[108] They needed deliverance (rescue, salvation) from that bad situation. After the liberating act of God in the Exodus, Israel disobeyed and rebelled against God. In specific references to 1 Samuel 12:19-25 and Isaiah 1:1-20, the guide pinpoints Israel's rejection of and rebellion against God.[109] Although the guide does not here refer to the law, elsewhere it describes law as that word of God which is like "a finger pointing at you."[110] The law is "an authoritative voice . . . telling

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[107]GBM (SB), p. 121.

[108]GBM (TG), p. 37.

[109]Ibid., p. 69.

[110]Ibid., p. 55.

you what you ought to be, what you should not have done."[111] In spite of these statements, however, there is a tendency in the course to dilute the terribleness of the law, wrath, and judgment of God by combining these with statements like: "Nevertheless, God stood ready to forgive and cleanse all who would repent and humble themselves to obey the Lord and walk in His ways."[112]

It is in the course's use of law, then, that it shifts once again away from the Reformation view and toward the "event" pole on the continuum. It appears that the course plays down or avoids discussion of God's terrible wrath as portrayed in the Old Testament. Nor does the course seem to deal with God's verdict on man's existence and man's attempts to justify himself against this destructive verdict. All of this moves the course closer to the "event" pole which regards the Old Testament as a recital of God's saving acts while tending to ignore God's destructive work in the law. The Reformation view understands the Old Testament as both law and promise, the law making clear the contradiction in which man finds himself: "You have not fulfilled, nor are you able to do so. Nevertheless you should."[113]

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., p. 69.

[113] Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), I, 38.

In fairness to the course, however, it needs to be said that the paradigm on pages 78 and 79 of the teachers guide presents a Reformation view of the Word as law and promise. Unfortunately this is a presentation that relates only to law and promise in the New Testament. Therefore the previous analysis of the course's understanding of Word in the Old Testament stands. The New Testament paradigm should have been applied also to the Old Testament, for the paradigm asks the following six questions of each New Testament passage listed: What's the problem? Whose is it? Who solves it? How? For whom? Why? A paradigm using Old Testament passages appears on pages 58 and 59 of the guide. But the Old Testament passages are presented only as recitals of God's saving acts.

The relationship of the Word to moral conduct is not a central concern of the course. Yet there are certain statements that reflect a general view of ethics based on the Old Testament Word. Before looking at several of these statements it is necessary to be reminded that the Reformation view sets forth the Gospel as the end of the law. Moreover, the goal of the Gospel and that toward which it pushes man is freedom. Elert points out that the law was security. But trust in the promise cuts away this security and thrusts man into the insecurity and risk of freedom.[114]

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[114]Werner Elert, The Christian Ethos, translated by Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 240.

All of which means that as he trusts in the promises of God man will act or conduct himself in such a way that he rests "his conscious decision in the forgiving presence of His Lord."[115]

Even though the course is not an ethics course, it is vitally interested in experiences of law and promise, sin and grace, and judgment and forgiveness that result in obedience to the Bible's "message." "Do not expect to understand the Bible apart from obeying it," is one of the four key rules it offers for biblical study and interpretation.[116] But it is only when students "have learned to know, respect, and trust Jesus Christ enough to believe His promise and gratefully do whatever He desires (that they) have . . . really gotten the Bible's message."[117]

The course, however, does not seem able to understand the promises of the Old Testament as leading toward freedom. Instead it occasionally veers in the direction of the "event" understanding of the Old Testament and toward a Gospel-law sequence. God acts first in grace after which He makes demands or gives commandments. Having set His people free in the Exodus, "God gave Israel instructions how to remain

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[115]Stephen A. Schmidt, "Law-Gospel: Toward a Model of Moral Education," Religious Education, LXV (November-December 1970), 478.

[116]GBM (TG), p. 5.

[117]Ibid., p. 90.

free and happy."[118] In a broader context the course asserts that:

> since . . . the Bible's message includes promises and commands, to know the person who stands behind the promises and commands will allow a person to 'get' the Bible's message.[119]

Notice the sequence: promises and commands. Moral conduct, therefore, seems to be based not solely on the freedom engendered by trust in God's promises, but also upon obedience to God's commands. The main "message" of Joshua 15:13,14 is: "If you trust God completely enough even to obey the most unreasonable of His commands, you will find you can do the impossible!"[120] Obedience to God's commands growing out of trust in God's promises seems to be the Old Testament ethic the course has found. Such an ethic seems somewhat removed from the idea of ethics as an escape into the freedom of the Gospel. Instead the course comes close to substituting the security of morality maintained under the strictures of the law.[121]

Toward the end of the course the question of ethics and morality is brought back to a position more closely akin to the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament.

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[118] Ibid., p. 60.

[119] Ibid., p. 101.

[120] Ibid., p. 22.

[121] See Ibid., p. 7, where the course seems to hold up Jesus as a moral precept.

The teachers guide proposes a wall chart that lists Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Micah 7:18-20. Both passages talk about forgiveness. The sequence suggested for the chart is: Since this is true (the passages about forgiveness), then I can . . . and I can expect God to . . ."[122] The students are to fill in the gaps on the basis of their own experiences of forgiveness. There are no legal strictures here to provide security. Rather, students are faced with what has been termed "the creative anxiety of the risk of freedom."[123]

There are several indications in the course concerning its view of historical-critical exegesis. The entire thrust of the course toward getting the Bible's "message" already indicates some kind of sympathy with historical-critical presuppositions. At one point the course identifies several "creedal" statements in the Old Testament and explains that they are "statements of conviction or belief about a person--God, that have been formed as a result of reflection upon events and experiences."[124] The human and possibly fallible character of the Old Testament is thus acknowledged. In addition, the course holds out for "the literary principle" when dealing

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[122] Ibid., p. 118.

[123] Schmidt, LXV, 478.

[124] GBM (TG), p. 31.

with Old Testament creedal statements, that is, that "normal laws of literary interpretation apply to the Bible as well as to other literature."[125] Because of the course's overall kinship with the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament, it is probable that its favorable attitude toward historical-critical exegesis or literary interpretation also comes within that understanding.

Finally, special note should be taken of the course's goal of having students experience law and promise in classroom relationships. This goal reflects the Reformation view that the Word of God is not to be equated simply with the written text. It goes beyond the written text to become "a message communicated by men in whom the Scriptures (have) become alive."[126]

2. "Spokesmen For God" (LCA)

This is a course on the Old Testament prophets. Its purpose is to provide high school students with:

> a view of Old Testament prophecy as a whole . . . [and] the Biblical framework within which to understand what God has done in Christ and also to see how he himself is involved in God's saving activity.[127]

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[125] Ibid., p. 37.

[126] E. Theodore Bachmann, "Introduction to Word and Sacrament," Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), XXXV, xi.

[127] SFG (TG), p. 5.

Five specific course objectives are presented, four of which propose to help the student "understand" or "see" and one of which proposes to help him "learn" a skill.[128] The objectives suggest that the course tends toward a cognitive and intellectual understanding of Old Testament prophecy.

The course operates with an underlying concept of revelation that frequently parallels the "event" pole on the continuum. The prophets are described as specially chosen individuals who, in various ways, received revelations concerning God's will and ways.[129] The public proclamation of the content of these revelations is regarded as the Word of God. But both the revelations and the Word of God are tied to specific historical events. As the teachers guide explains, "Israel's faith was based on historical events."[130] Thus the function of the Old Testament prophets was "making clear the action of God in that particular moment."[131] God acted in history to reveal Himself. God "works through His revelation of Himself to His people."[132] So that men might know the truth, "God

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[128] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[129] SFG (SB), pp. 23-26.

[130] SFG (TG), p. 23.

[131] Ibid., p. 50.

[132] SFG (SB), p. 12.

reveals Himself and presses His people to confess His lordship."[133] God's revelation of Himself through His saving acts together with man's response to these saving acts, therefore, constitutes the Word of God.

The Word of God is never equated with Scripture in the course. There is, in fact, no discernible reference or allusion to the fact that the prophets' messages were committed to writing. Yet the course is based on the written record of the prophets in the Old Testament, and the course presumably regards this record as reliable. It is clear, however, that the course does not want to operate with a concept of the Bible or Scripture as Word of God. In fact, on the basis of what the Old Testament presents as prophecy and on the basis of God's use of "spokesmen" to make His way and will known in every period of history, the students book explains:

> Indeed, this very continuity of prophecy is one reason for believing that, even in the present age, the prophet of God speaks. God's voice is never stilled, but sounds through the voices of those whom He chooses. This is, of course, a testimony of faith, that prophecy does not die out. But it is also a desire to understand the meaning of prophecy today, a desire to know the genuine prophet of God and say yes to him.[134]

The Word of God, therefore, is God making known His way and His will in every period of history. He accomplishes

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., p. 148.

this through the use of "spokesmen."

When the question then arises about how to tell whether these "spokesmen" present truth or falsehood, the course opts for the principles of harmony with the basic faith of the community and a personal, existential faith-relationship with God. "A prophet's words," the students book says, "if they are true, must be in harmony with the basic faith of Israel." The book argues that God's saving purpose is always the same so that "even if He does something entirely new and unexpected, He does not act in contradiction to His purpose." To determine the truth or falsehood of God's prophets, one must therefore ask whether the prophet's word "is in harmony with the revelation of God's will and purpose."[135]

Ultimately, however, the course admits that there is no sure way to prove what a prophet says is true or false. Since:

> the faith of Israel is basically a relationship between God and the people He chose for His own . . . it was only by faith in God that the Israelite could hear the voice of God in the words of the prophet.[136]

This explanation implies that the Word of God cannot be portrayed as pure objective truth as the "word" theologians do. Rather, the Word of God is possible for man only within

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[135] Ibid., p. 26.

[136] SFG (TG), p. 20.

a relationship of faith, both communal and personal faith. The task of the faithful community and the faithful person is to seek out and hear the Word of God revealed in historical events. Referring to the prophets' conviction that they spoke the very Word of God, the teachers guide says that for the Christian the authority of God's Word "is not a matter of external force, but of internal, personal commitment and confession."[137] This understanding of Word in the Old Testament seems to fit either the "event" pole on the continuum or the Reformation view.

Although the course evidences reluctance to equate Scripture and the Word of God, the course does make certain explicit statements about the unity of the Old and New Testaments. In general, it sees this unity arising out of the interaction of promise and fulfillment. Throughout the course one is told to let the Old Testament speak for itself. But the course recognizes that "Christian tradition has rightly seen Christ to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament."[138] The course explains that this tradition has often resulted in meanings ascribed to Old Testament texts that they cannot legitimately bear. Resulting from the predictive view of Old Testament prophecy, for example, has been a misunderstanding of the biblical text

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[137] SFG (TG), p. 27.

[138] Ibid., p. 17.

and a tendency "to miss much of what is really significant in the Old Testament."[139]

An example of allowing the Old Testament to make its witness on its own terms is as follows:

> Surprising as it may seem, Isaiah 40 has nothing to do with the hope of a coming messiah. The passage deals with God's coming to establish His kingdom. The voice that cries out to prepare a way in the wilderness does not refer to a messiah, but to God Himself. When the New Testament connects this passage with John the Baptist, it is not to say that the Messiah--that is, Christ--has come, but that in Jesus of Nazareth God Himself has come to establish His kingdom. This gives a whole new dimension to our understanding of the New Testament witness to Jesus and also to the significance of Isaiah 40 for the Christian. It is no longer merely a matter of prediction and fulfillment; it is a witness to the saving activity of God, revealed in Jesus of Nazareth and continued in the living proclamation of the Word.[140]

The distinction between "prediction" and "witness to God's saving activity" is maintained in the section of the course devoted to Hosea. The teacher is informed that:

> in Hosea we come as close as in any part of the Old Testament to the most profound statement of God's love: 'By this we know love, that he (Christ) laid down His life for us . . .

Then the teacher receives encouragement to help the students see the relation between the message of Hosea and the death of Christ in that "Christ's coming is a concrete indication of God's desire to draw His people unto Himself."[141] The

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid., p. 18.

[141] Ibid., p. 40.

unity of Old and New Testaments, therefore, can be found in God's desire to draw people unto Himself.

Promise and fulfillment are seen as the primary interacting elements involved in the unity of the testaments. For this reason the teachers guide notes that the Old Testament always points beyond itself to the fulfillment of God's purpose: "All themes and hopes of the Old Testament witness to God's purpose which converges in Jesus," the guide explains, and "in Christ we participate in this fulfillment."[142] Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and it is He who brings the testaments together.

But the course keeps the Old Testament witness to Christ at a minimum. The hopes of the Old Testament, it argues, are fulfilled through the sole action of God Himself working through His people Israel. The course acknowledges that the "servant of Yahweh" (which it expressly identifies with Israel) and the "messiah" are two concepts associated with the hope of fulfillment. But the course suggests that the messiah theme plays only a small part in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament does not picture fulfillment as achieved by the messiah. Instead:

> it is always the action of God alone that establishes the kingdom and, when the victory is won, God sets up His king (messiah) to rule it.[143]

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[142] Ibid., p. 63.

[143] Ibid., p. 50.

God's sovereignty and grace, therefore, are accented again and again in the course. For fulfillment arises out of the sovereign and gracious acts of God. All of which again leads to the conclusion that the course reflects principally an "event" approach to the Old Testament.

A summary of the course's view of the unity of Old and New Testaments is expressed in the following quotation:

> The relation between the two testaments . . . is not to be understood in terms of prediction of events which, wondrously, did come to pass. The prophets bore witness to God's purpose in their own day. In Jesus, this purpose was fulfilled, and the New Testament, in bearing witness to Jesus, also bears witness to this same purpose. The unity of the Bible is to be seen in terms of the purpose of God. We cannot speak of any exact coherence and correspondence between the two testaments. They are historical witnesses to the purpose of God, one expressing in vivid poetic images the certainty that God would fulfill His purpose, the other affirming that now He has fulfilled it in Jesus of Nazareth.[144]

In the previous chapter it was pointed out how the "word" pole on the continuum sometimes uses exact coherence or correspondence (typology) to establish the relationship between the testaments. It was also pointed out how the "event" theologians were said to understand the saving acts of God in the Old Testament as preliminary manifestations of grace. The Reformation view, it was noted, understands the Old Testament as a witness to Christ who is fully present and active in a preexistent state. The "event" view seems to

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[144] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

be the position taken by the course. The course, for example, interprets the coal on the altar in Isaiah 6 as a means or sign of grace which may be compared to the elements in Holy Communion. Implied is the fact that the coal on the altar is only a preliminary means of grace and undeserving of a more extensive comparison with the grace of God offered in the Holy Communion. At any rate, the course falls short of the Christocentric radicalness advanced by the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament. The course prefers "the purpose of God" to the fact of Jesus Christ in explaining the unity of the testaments. Yet the course explains that all of this is not a denial of what the church believes about Jesus Christ, but simply the assertion "that we cannot prove our Christology by Old Testament quotations."[145] The Old Testament must be read on its own terms, although perhaps teleologically. The prophecies are full of promise and "the promise has been summed up in . . . Jesus Christ."[146]

The course has relatively little to say about the soteriology of the Old Testament except that God's purpose is to save.[147] With respect to the soteriological question the course again tries to let the Old Testament speak for itself. Thus in describing Hosea's hopes for reconciliation when God would turn His anger into healing, the course says:

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[145] Ibid., p. 58.

[146] SFG (SB), p. 146.

[147] Ibid., p. 26.

> He could not describe precisely how this healing would be accomplished, but in faith he anticipated that God would indeed act to draw His people back to Himself. So, even though Hosea knew not the name of Jesus or the way God's Son would enter the world, he still proclaimed God's desire to reconcile the world until Himself. And though he knew nothing of Good Friday, the cross, and the tomb, he still ventured to speak of the suffering God who in love comes down to redeem His people. Hosea may have been unable to resolve the tensions between love, judgment, and suffering; but he did highlight these themes, he explained them as best he could through his own experience, and he waited faithfully for a resolution which God would provide in His own good time--which we as Christians say is the time of His Son.[148]

The emphasis in the above quotation is clearly upon the promises of God. Hosea believed without knowing all the details that God would come through on His promise to reconcile and redeem His people. What the course does not bother to discuss, however, is why this reconciliation and redemption was really necessary. To be sure, there are references to sin, law, and the wrath of God. In discussing Isaiah the course notes that "God's holiness not only judges, but forgives . . ."[149] The promises of God, therefore, stand over against God's judgment. Yet both belong to God's holiness and both are words and works of God.

The course moves toward the "event" pole because it seems to play down sin and the terribleness of God's law and wrath. There are indications that the course sees the Old

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid., p. 80.

Testament almost exclusively as a record of God's saving acts and not a record of God's destructive word in the law. For example, the students book interprets the message of the prophets as a "proclamation of God's sovereignty and grace."[150] And the teachers guide explains that the Old Testament laws were really consonant with and not opposed to God's saving will. "They (the laws) attempted to spell out concretely what righteousness meant; they were an expression of God's will that righteousness, and so peace and salvation, fill the whole earth."[151] Law and promise, therefore, seem to have the same purpose if not the same function. The antithetical relationship between law and promise seems to dissolve at this point into one Word of God and one Word only--salvation. Christ therefore becomes God with the same old word; He is not God with a new word.

The course tends to remain with the Reformation view in its understanding of Old Testament morality and regards godly conduct as growing out of God's faithfulness to His people.

> As God is faithful to His people, so His people are called to be faithful to Him. . . . For, after all, it was God who taught them how to walk as free people.[152]

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[150] Ibid., p. 27.

[151] SFG (TG), p. 34.

[152] SFG (SB), p. 104.

Even the laws of the Old Testament are to be understood as beginning always "with God's demand for exclusive faithfulness to Himself," and not just to some code or legal standard.[153] "Our faithfulness is a response to God, who acts in love toward us."[154] When we are unfaithful to God, according to the Old Testament "our hope is in God who is faithful in His relationship, who keeps His promises, whose love is steadfast and loyal."[155] Moral conduct, therefore, is man's response to God's saving and loving acts.

Finally, the course does not offer explicit arguments for the use of historical-critical techniques. Nevertheless it is clear that historical criticism is a live option for the course and one that it utilizes to interpret the Old Testament. For example, the course proposes a study of prophecy in relation to the common tradition of prophecy in the ancient Near East. That the Old Testament prophets were "part of this common tradition" is acknowledged. But:

> what distinguished them from all other prophets was that they worshipped Yahweh, the God of Israel, and were concerned only with proclaiming His will and purpose.[156]

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[153] Ibid., p. 12.

[154] SFG (TG), p. 47.

[155] Ibid.

[156] SFG (SB), p. 23.

The natural and human elements of prophecy receive particular stress.

Two examples drawn from discussions on the Book of Isaiah also indicate the course's attitude toward historical criticism. Commenting on Isaiah 7 and the sign of the child Emmanuel, the students book notes that:

> the prophetic name (Emmanuel) . . . did not refer to the child, but to the prophetic promise of deliverance. The name simply underlined the call to trust in God . . ."[157]

Elsewhere the students book argues for a Second Isaiah by pointing out that the Book of Isaiah:

> is really a whole prophetic library. It includes the words of two important prophets, Isaiah and an unknown prophet whom scholars call Second (or Deutero-) Isaiah, as well as many additions from many different ages.[158]

Based on the above references in the course, it is difficult to decide whether the course remains here with the Reformation view or goes over to the "event" pole. Since the "event" affinity of relatively large segments of the course has been demonstrated, the course's use of historical-critical techniques is probably closer to the "event" pole than to the Reformation view.

In general, the course does not seem to reflect an understanding of the Old Testament in terms of God's personal address and encounter of man under law and promise.

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[157] Ibid., p. 88.

[158] Ibid., p. 72.

Instead the course offers descriptions of cognitive and intellectual facts God, through His mighty acts, revealed about Himself, His will, and His way. The course, therefore, tends more toward the "event" pole on the continuum.

3. "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" (LCMS)

The course is a study of the minor prophets. The teachers guide explains that five primary outcomes for the students underlie the study: (1) a better understanding of the cause of evil in the world; (2) a firmer trust in the steadfast love of God; (3) a better understanding of why students still experience difficulties as God's children; (4) a clearer understanding that the basic remedy for man's rebellious situation is God's love and work of reconciliation; and (5) a greater eagerness to help correct the social ills of our day.[159] The course examines each of the 12 books that constitute the minor prophets in an attempt to relate these "voices" to current issues in such a way that "students discover the meaning and purpose of their life as they must live it in modern society."[160]

From the various course and unit objectives it seems that the course will emphasize principally the acquisition of factual data about the prophets. Words like "understand" and "recognize" appear repeatedly in those sections where objectives

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[159] TVAP (TG), p. 3.

[160] Ibid., p. 5.

have been framed.[161] If "to understand" and "to recognize" are overriding objectives, then one can anticipate a close link with the "word" and "event" poles on the continuum and an emphasis on the revelation of cognitive and intellectual aspects of faith.

After analyzing the course, however, it is surprising to discover that no real concept of revelation is proposed. In fact, the course scarcely mentions the term or its derivatives. Since an author and editor are listed on the course's title page, the possibility suggests itself that the editor wrote the objectives for the course after it had been prepared by the author. The author's intention seems to be less cognitive and more dynamic, attitudinal, experiential, and action-oriented than the objectives would permit.

Whatever the case, it can be demonstrated that the course generally proceeds with a Reformation view of Word of God in contrast to the revelational emphases of the "word" and "event" approaches. Referring to Isaiah 55:10-11, the teachers guide asserts that "the Word of the Lord acts and does things." The Word is not just the verbal and propositional revelation of divine truth. Nor is it simply personal encounter with the Deity as proposed by "event"

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[161] See Ibid., pp. 8,13,24,29,39,49,54,59,68, where such objectives as "recognize that the relationship of the prophets to the people was not self-evident" appear.

centered theologians. Rather, the Word of the Lord is action: "God's Word was dynamic--and still is!"[162]

The course recognizes the Bible as Word of God, but hastily adds that "His Word can be found outside of Scripture" as, for example, in the original spoken messages of the prophets before they were committed to writing. There are many different forms the Word of God takes: sermons, hymns, and other sources. But "the Word of God found outside of Scripture must be in agreement with Scripture; otherwise it is not the Word of God."[163] Elsewhere the teachers guide adds to what is already an open and dynamic concept of the Word by asserting: "The Word is not a ready-made decision-maker but the power of God to free the person so he can choose rightly."[164] The Word of God, therefore, cannot be limited to either words or events (although these can be God's Word too), but must be understood in an active and dynamic sense as the power of God. This is the emphasis of the course as over against the "word" or "event" concept of revelation.

Already mentioned is the fact that the course regards the Bible as Word of God. Scripture is the "written Word."[165] But it is only one of many forms the Word takes. In its strictest sense, the Word of God is Jesus Christ or "the

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[162] Ibid., p. 11.

[163] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[164] Ibid., p. 25.

[165] Ibid., p. 11.

message of the forgiveness of sins."[166] "The Word of the Lord is God's message of judgment and encouragement, primarily and most fully seen in Jesus Christ."[167] "Judgment" and "encouragement" can be understood as synonyms for law and promise. The course remains with the Reformation view of the Old Testament. It is necessary, too, to keep in mind that the course derives all of the above ideas of Word from the minor prophets.

The unity of Old and New Testaments is understood in terms of promise and fulfillment. The Old Testament contains the proclamation and history of the promise which is fulfilled in the New Testament. The course, therefore, might concur with Westermann who explains that "promise and fulfillment constitute an integral event which is reported in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible."[168] Therefore the course can suggest that the original Passover Lamb in the Old Testament period "was the prefigurement of that fuller Passover in the death of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ."[169] Moreover, Zephaniah's promise of Judah's return home where the full expression of God's truth would be

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[166] Ibid., pp. 25,33,46.

[167] Ibid., p. 52.

[168] Claus Westermann, The Old Testament and Jesus Christ, translated by Omar Kaste (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), p. 78.

[169] TVAP (TG), p. 21.

revealed receives the following comment: "This promise was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus, born at Bethlehem of Judah."[170] At this point it may seem that the course shows also an affinity with the "event" pole as well as the Reformation view. But earlier in the course Christ's preexistence had been affirmed, a Reformation view which sees Christ already active in the Old Testament whenever God turned His face toward men. The course says that "before He became man in the person of Jesus, the Son of God was active from eternity . . ."[171] The unity of the testaments does not consist of progressive or teleological revelation, but it finds its center in Christ who is the Word of God from eternity.

The soteriological question permeates the course. That this is the case is understandable when one recalls the judgment-grace or law-promise theme that runs through all the prophetic literature. As had already been noted, the soteriological question always involves the question: Why? Why is salvation necessary? What is the existing condition that prompts the soteriological question in the first place?

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[170] Ibid., p. 23. See also pp. 56-57 for the Word in the Book of Jonah and its relation to Christ.

[171] Ibid., p. 11.

The Reformation understanding of life-under-law as man's refusal to be sinner and as man's attempt to justify himself in the face of God's destructive word appears at various points in the course. With reference to the prophet Hosea, the teachers guide explains:

> We do not want to be corrected, to hear advice, to receive the Word of God which tells us that we are sinners, that we have gone astray, that we are rebelling against God by going after other gods.[172]

In that part of the course dealing with the message of Habakkuk, two distinct references to the existing condition that makes salvation necessary appear. First, the reader is told that "all human beings and institutions are under God's judgment" and that students "need more understanding of the foibles and failures of men and a greater appreciation of God's love and mercy."[173] Secondly, with reference to Habakkuk's prayer for quick judgment on the Chaldeans, the course comments: "The prayer . . . indicates we do not really see that we are sinners--self-centered--who live only because of the longsuffering mercy of God."[174] Law and the wrath of God are also sharply drawn in the commentary on Zephaniah where the reader hears that "God

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[172] Ibid., p. 14.

[173] Ibid., p. 29.

[174] Ibid., p. 31.

raised up the worthless shepherd because the people had rejected the good shepherd (7:7-17)."[175] And in the section of the course dealing with Nahum, God is portrayed as "jealous, furious, wrathful."[176] Man's sin and rebellion against God and the consequent law and wrath of the Almighty constitute the condition that makes the soteriological question necessary. The students book then asks the pertinent question: "Is destruction God's final word with respect to us?"[177]

According to the course,destruction or law is not God's final word. The course, however, gives God's destructive word in the law its place and thus retains the distinctive emphases of the prophets as well as the Reformation view. Yet "the Triune God is always (always was, always will be) acting to deliver man."[178] Elsewhere the teacher is told to press toward the point of salvation, which is:

> restoration to life; it is to be made whole . . . . Salvation is being related again to God and to other people--as Adam and Eve were before the Fall into sin.[179]

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[175] Ibid., p. 36.

[176] Ibid., p. 55.

[177] TVAP (SB), p. 36.

[178] TVAP (TG), p. 55

[179] Ibid., p. 41.

Commenting on Hosea 6:4-6, the teachers guide explains: "Yahweh makes it clear that the gift He wishes to give His people is nothing less than Himself."[180] In the section on Zephaniah, the guide adds that "God is active in day-by-day life, keeping His threats and His promises . . ."[181]

In the Old Testament, therefore, salvation has to do with God's gift of Himself to man, with the promises of God, and (as the paragraph below points out) with the forgiveness of sins--all of these appropriated by faith. Thus the teachers guide:

> Saving faith is not merely to know as a fact the forgiveness of sins, merely to believe that God forgives for Jesus' sake. The mere knowledge of the lordship of God as an important bit of information is insufficient; unless we trust this God entirely we have missed the life He offers to us.[182]

Although the course frequently mentions Christ, it does not attempt to draw a clear relationship between His life, death, and resurrection and the message of the minor prophets. It is true, as in the section on Habakkuk, that the course refers to "God's double word" and that the course clearly indicates there that those who are just before God become so "only through faith in God's grace in Christ."[183]

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[180] Ibid., p. 16.

[181] Ibid., p. 25.

[182] Ibid., p. 16.

[183] Ibid., p. 31.

Nevertheless there is no attempt here to portray God's gift of Himself, His promise, or His forgiveness as "the face of Christ." At this point the course demonstrates timidity regarding the preexistent work of Christ in the Old Testament period in contrast to its affirmation of Christ's preexistence elsewhere. Here the course shows a closer kinship with the "event" pole on the continuum than with the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament.

Two references in the teachers guide indicate that the course operates with a Reformation view of ethics and morality, that is, that man's conduct grows freely out of his relationship to God. In a comment on Zephaniah 1:6, the guide explains how the Word is "not a magical formula that provides precise advice for specific situations" but "the power of God to free the person so he can choose rightly."[184] With reference to Micah 6:8, the guide again stresses relationship to God or communion with Him as that which shapes man's conduct. The guide says:

> An indication that the believer is on God's side, living in close communion with Him, is that the believer will in his life demonstrate his faith (1) by being just and fair in all of his dealings with his fellowmen; (2) by living in love and kindness with others; and (3) by walking humbly before God, aware of one's sinfulness and unworthiness and trusting totally in God's grace and mercy.[185]

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[184] Ibid., p. 25.

[185] Ibid., p. 21.

Finally, the course has little to say about historical-critical exegesis. Therefore it is difficult to draw significant conclusions regarding its views over against the exegetical approach. The editor's preface to the teachers guide dates the minor prophets between 889 B.C. and 424 B.C. Most modern scholars, however, would probably argue for a somewhat later dating than the fifth century for the Book of Joel. The course suggests that Joel may have been written as early as 830 B.C., although it admits that some scholars believe the book comes from the period 400-350 B.C. No date at all is suggested for the Book of Jonah, a possible indication that the course does not want to take a stand on the isagogical and exegetical problems involved in that book. In the introduction to the Book of Malachi the course acknowledges that some scholars believe "Malachi" or "my messenger" refers to the thought of 3:1, not to a definite person. The course, however, moves toward the traditional view "that Malachi was a prophet and a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah."[186]

Some regard for historical-critical exegesis may be found in the discussion of Nahum 1:9-11. The course here explains that Old Testament anthropomorphisms sometimes portray God as capricious, petty, and even capable of having His feelings hurt. The course then adds that "these are

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[186] Ibid., p. 43.

human pictorializations, not unlike parables, and they cannot be pressed for every detail."[187] Such a comment may be understood to acknowledge the technique of literary criticism.

In the main, the course avoids the positions taken by modern biblical scholarship and historical-critical exegesis. The course, therefore, shows closer affinity with the "word" pole on this point.

Other than the course's occasional timidity regarding the preexistent work of Christ and historical-critical exegesis, it reflects a Reformation understanding of the Old Testament. The following is a summary of the view that directs and shapes the entire course:

> The purpose of our study of the Old Testament is not just to gather information about the past; it is to observe God's dealings with His ancient people in judgment and rescue, and then to apply God's word of judgment and grace to ourselves.[188]

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[187] Ibid., p. 56.

[188] Ibid., p. 65.

CHAPTER V

CONSENSUS AND DIVERGENCE

This study has now carried out its principal purpose, that is, analyzing selected curriculum materials of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (LCMS), in terms of "word," "event," and Reformation understandings of the Old Testament. What the study still needs to provide is a summary of the consensus and divergence of ideas on the Old Testament exhibited by the course materials.

To begin, it should be noted that all of the courses evidence a high regard for the Old Testament and its continuing relevance for the Christian man. There is no indication that Lutheran curricula in the 1960s questioned the value, importance, or authority of the Old Testament.[1] The Old Testament has authority because it is the Word of God. However, it is in the courses' understandings of how

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[1]See James Barr, "The Old Testament and the New Crisis of Biblical Authority," Interpretation, XXV (January 1971), 24-40. The author laments what he sees as "a renewed questioning of the value, importance, or authority of the Old Testament" today. Prof. Barr feels that the erosion of the authority of the Old Testament derives from a general distrust of authority. He says "it is not unlikely that the Old Testament will take a smaller place in the theological curriculum than has been traditional." This development, if it occurs, will likely effect also the content of future Christian education materials. Lutheran curricula of the 1960s, however, do not seem to question the value of the Old Testament.

the Old Testament is Word of God that certain divergences of opinion can be detected.

Attached at the end of this chapter is a chart that summarizes the major points of consensus and/or divergence between the various courses. The courses are identified by initial in the upper horizontal column of the diagram. The six general categories used to analyze the courses are then listed in the left-hand vertical column along with certain phrases or statements that register the particular emphases of a given course. Checkmarks in the various spaces mean that the course supports the phrase or statement. It should be noted that some courses occasionally support more than one phrase or statement under each category.

Of the six courses analyzed, only one tends to proceed with a concept of revelation and the Word of God that closely resembles the "word" pole on the continuum. This is the LCMS course entitled "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs." The course seems to suggest that God reveals Himself principally through divinely inspired and authoritative words, and therefore takes a rather literalistic approach in interpreting the Old Testament. The Word of God is, for all practical purposes, the written words of the Old Testament.

Three courses differ from the "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" understanding of revelation in the Old Testament. These courses (two LCA, "Defending My Faith" and "Spokesmen For God," and one ALC, "Getting the Bible's Message") move

toward the "event" pole on the continuum. Their emphasis is on God's revelation of Himself and His gracious attitude toward men through His mighty deeds. Through His deeds God rescues men from adverse situations. The deeds of rescue reveal who God is and what He is doing; the deeds therefore are Word of God. The Old Testament is Word of God as it records and witnesses to God's mighty deeds and man's response. Yet seldom if ever do these courses work with the reality of God's law and wrath in addition to His saving deeds. Rescue from an adverse political or social situation, for example, is understood as Gospel. The courses seem to overlook the issue of Old Testament Gospel as rescue in Christ from God's destructive word in the law. Or, to put it another way, the three courses do not make much of the forgiveness of sins.

The final two courses, "What is a Christian?" (ALC) and "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" (LCMS) do not deal with the concept of revelation. Instead they understand Word of God in the Old Testament as a record of what God says and does. In addition, they stress how the Old Testament takes on the form of a personal word of God to man under law and promise, although the "What is a Christian?" course sets forth a weakened concept of law. The "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" course uses the law theologically and emphasizes that the Old Testament Word is alive and powerful.

Although all of the courses analyzed evidence a high regard for the Old Testament, most of them do not limit their concept of Word to the written record of the Old and New Testaments. Five of the courses indicate that the Word of God can and does exist outside the Bible. Only one of the courses, the LCMS "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs," tends to limit the Word of God to the Bible and to imply that the important truth of the Old Testament is to be found in its factual inerrancy. The other courses understand truth in the Old Testament in a more general and spiritual way.[2] They regard the message of the Old Testament or its theology to be of greatest value. The view reflected in these five courses may be summarized in the words of John Bright:

> The normative element in the Old Testament, and its abiding authority as the Word of God, rests not in its laws and customs, its institutions and ancient patterns of thinking, nor yet in the characters and events of which its history tells, but in that structure of theology which undergirds each of its texts and which is caught up in the New Testament and announced as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[3]

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[2]Reginald W. Deitz, What The Bible Can Mean For You (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1962), p. 47, discusses how the Bible is understood in Protestantism today. He says: "Now there is truth in the Bible in the objective, historic sense. The research of the scholars has verified this in countless specific instances. Yet the important truth of the Bible is not to be found, as Fundamentalism implies, in factual inerrancy. It conveys supremely a truth which is not of the test-tube, scientific, documentary sort."

[3]John Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament

Besides the "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" course, one of the five remaining courses breaks the general pattern of regarding the Old Testament's message or theology as Word of God. This other course is the LCA's "Spokesmen For God." This course evidences a reluctance to identify or equate the Old Testament with the Word of God at all. It does not deny this identification or equation. But it seems to prefer an understanding of Word of God that will allow a kind of continuing revelation, a continuing voice of God in the present, or prophecy today. This is reminiscent of Sara Little's explanation of the Protestant's relationship to the Old Testament in the early 1960s, that is the struggle "to find within the record meaning which can become a medium for continuing revelation."[4] At any rate, the "Spokesmen For God" course, somewhat uniquely, displays a reluctance to equate the Old Testament and the Word of God.

The six courses analyzed demonstrate a variety of ways of explaining the unity of the testaments. One of the courses,

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(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 155-156. It would be interesting to relate Bruner's emphasis on "structure" to Bright's understanding of the Old Testament. See Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 7: "Grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully. To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related."

[4]Sara Little, The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education (Richmond, Va." John Knox Press, 1961), p. 153.

"Defending My Faith" (LCA), clearly indicates that it finds that unity in a series of historical events culminating in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The historical events are revelatory events since they make plain who God is and what He is doing. They are not events that constitute a mere chronicle of the past. Rather, they form a meaningful pattern which, in turn, reveals the true significance of the events themselves. These historical and revelatory events reported in the Old Testament make up what Eric Rust calls "history as remembered and significant past."[5] The Old and New Testaments, therefore, express their unity in that together they are confessional recitals regarding the meaning of God's action in history.[6] God's action in history, according to this view, moves in a straight line from creation to the new creation, with Christ cutting into the line at its mid-point and becoming the center of all history.

While the "Defending My Faith" course is most explicit regarding this understanding of the Old Testament and biblical unity, the other LCA and both ALC courses tend to reflect a similar understanding. When the three additional courses,[7]

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[5]Eric C. Rust, Salvation History (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1962), pp. 12-13.

[6]See G. Ernest Wright, "Theology as Recital," Old Testament Issues, edited by Samuel Sandmel (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 11-38.

[7]"Spokesmen For God," "What Is a Christian?," and "Getting the Bible's Message."

for example, see the unity of the testaments in God's desire to save His people, they are simply affirming in different words what the "Defending My Faith" course has made explicit. To say that the unity of the testaments is found in God's desire to save is, for all practical purposes, saying that God's saving acts constitute the unity of the testaments. The difference between the "Defending My Faith" course and the others is mostly semantic and a difference of degree rather than of kind. The "Defending My Faith" course is merely more explicit than the others about the unifying and saving activity of God which culminates in Jesus Christ.

There are two notable exceptions to the above view. The first is the LCMS "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" course. This course stresses how the Old Testament writings point ahead to God's grace in Christ and how the Old Testament contains many prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. When it does this, it stands in direct contrast to the "Spokesmen For God" course which argues against "any exact coherence and correspondence between the two testaments" and which regards the messiah theme as only minor in the Old Testament. The "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" course is generally Christocentric while the others are theocentric, emphasizing principally God's (not Christ's) saving activity in the Old and New Testaments.

The other exception is the LCMS "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" course. At one point this course affirms the preexistent activity of Jesus, the Son of God, in the Old Testament period. The unity of the testaments, it therefore suggests, can be found in Christ who is already at work in Old Testament times judging and rescuing men from God's destructive word in the law. The preexistent work of Christ comes through only in the "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" course. The other five do not deal with this concept which is integral to the Reformation view. It is worth repeating, however, that the "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" course elsewhere expresses a certain timidity about carrying through on Christ's preexistence which it otherwise affirms at one place in the course.

All of the courses operate under the rubric of promise and fulfillment as descriptive of the unity of the testaments. It should be acknowledged, however, that this is a quite general rubric which allows for a great variety of interpretations. Indeed, Claus Westermann has pointed out that:

> it is not possible to sum up everything in the relation of the Old Testament to Christ under the simple idea of promise and fulfillment. In fact, it is not possible to equate this relationship with any one idea, for it is essentially a historical relationship. God accompanied His people on a journey which led from Abraham and to the exodus from Egypt to Christ. What happened along the way is a diverse, many-sided, changing process.

> In the same way, the relation of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ is diverse, many-sided, and changing (Hebrews 1:1).[8]

Reflecting a principal teaching of the Reformation, all of the courses with the exception of "Spokesmen For God" affirm God's gracious righteousness in Christ as the answer to the soteriological question. In the Old Testament as in the New, the Gospel is understood as the self-giving presence of God whose ultimate actualization is in Christ, the new Israel. The "Spokesmen For God" course, on the other hand, does not discuss Christ and the Old Testament since it aims at letting the Old Testament speak for itself. The course suggests that any reference to Christ in the Old Testament undercuts what the prophets are trying to say and forces upon their message an essentially New Testament Christology.

Only two of the courses, "Defending My Faith" and "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past," discuss the soteriological question in terms of the forgiveness of sins. Because of this, these courses evidence a greater depth concerning Old Testament soteriology. The "Defending My Faith" course, for example, points to man's futile attempts to satisfy divine justice as he stands in fear and trembling

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[8]Claus Westermann, The Old Testament and Jesus Christ, translated by Omar Kaste (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), pp. 78-79.

before the Holy God. Without Christ, the "Defending Thy Faith" course concludes that the Old Testament religion is insufficient.

The "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" course is even more radical in stressing man's need for forgiveness and salvation. Man is portrayed as living under law and rebelling against God by refusing to receive God's indictment upon him as a sinner. Moreover, the course recognizes the antithetical relationship between the two works of God, His strange work in the law and His proper work in the promise. God does not only engage in saving acts, but is also jealous, furious, and wrathful toward men. He keeps both His threats and His promises. In their soteriology, then, the "Defending Thy Faith" and "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past" courses interpret the Old Testament in terms of law and promise more than the other courses.

The remaining four courses,[9] in fact, operate with weaker concepts of the law. The law is not interpreted as radically and severely as the reformers interpreted it. Rather, these four courses seem to understand God's work as an almost exclusively saving and rescuing kind of work. They do not stress how apart from the promises, God becomes man's enemy and man becomes the object of God's wrath. By

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[9]"What Is A Christian?," "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs," "Getting the Bible's Message," and "Spokesmen For God."

weakening or distorting the reality of God's wrath and enmity, they tend to distort the decisive character of the promises. In this way, these courses do not sufficiently reflect the Reformation view of law and promise which is their original heritage. They tend to confuse, dilute, and weaken the antithetical relationship of law and promise which was sharply drawn by the reformers and which shaped their interpretation of Old and New Testaments. Both law and promise should receive proper emphasis; otherwise, as George Forell has pointed out,

> the denial of the law . . . results eventually in the denial of the Gospel. For the message of liberation cannot be taken seriously if either the slavery to sin and law is not understood radically enough or if the proclamation of this slavery usurps the place of the proclamation of the liberation. The Gospel is not Gospel if the law does not exist. But neither is the Gospel good news if it cannot free us from the bondage of sin; if its proclamation makes absolutely no difference.[10]

The courses divide evenly on the issue of morality. One each from the ALC, LCA, and LCMS[11] see morality in the Old Testament as the outgrowth of an individual's faith-relationship to God. Morality is not a matter of obedience to some divine code or standard. Instead, as

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[10]George W. Forell, "Law and Gospel," Marburg Revisited, edited by Paul E. Empie and James I. McCord (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 139.

[11]"What Is A Christian?," "Spokesmen For God," and "Twelve Voices from the Ancient Past."

the "Spokesman For God" course points out, morality is man's response to God's faithfulness to His people. The various laws and commands of the Old Testament are not regarded as ways of salvation, but as ways in which God's chosen and redeemed people might want to serve and praise Him.[12]

On the other hand, the three remaining courses[13] understand the so-called "moral law" in the Old Testament as a guide to proper conduct. The impulse for moral conduct, therefore, is not solely the promises of God but the revealed law of God as well. Even though these courses try to reach behind the revealed law to the Law-Giver, they still end with obedience to a certain standard or code of conduct. There is something that always stands between God and man--a code which can be transgressed and for which transgression there must be punishment.[14]

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[12]Westermann, p. 52, explains the Old Testament laws and commandments as follows: "It is incorrect to say of the commandments and laws, as they were called in the Old Testament, that they were given as a way of salvation, that is, as a way by which salvation could be attained. Rather, they belong in the context of the people's response to God's saving activity, a response which consists of praise and service. The commandments showed the people how they could serve their God."

[13]"Defending My Faith," "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs," and "Getting the Bible's Message."

[14]Stephen A. Schmidt, "Law-Gospel: Toward a Model of Moral Education," Religious Education, LXV (November-December 1970), 474-475. Schmidt presents this "legalism" as the underlying pedagogy of the Missouri-Synod. He

The present study, then, shows that the weakening or distortion of law in the Old Testament is a phenomenon in all three Lutheran bodies. Because of this, all three run the risk of a moralistic approach to the Old Testament, an approach James Smart has described as "one of the chief sicknesses of education in the church."[15] According to the analysis in the previous chapter, the "Defending My Faith" and "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" courses give concrete evidence of moralism. For example, the former uses the books of Jonah and Esther to teach one how to be good. Similarly the "Conflicts in Christian Beliefs" course suggests a pedagogical use of selected Old Testament passages that lead to moralistic conclusions.

In all of this it would be well to remember that the Reformation view of Old and New Testaments is promise-centered. Anything in the relations between God and men that is not promise is law. Regin Prenter explains that the law may beautifully describe the kind of life God's people want to live. But the law cannot impel that life, for "the description does not have within itself the power

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believes, though, that this understanding is more Calvinistic than Lutheran and suggests that law ought to instead be understood "as the verdict of God toward men, a word of God about man's existence as sinner, a word of God as judge."

[15]James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 21-22.

to realize that which is described."[16] Only the promises of God have that power. For this reason Edward Schroeder cautions:

> If we succeed in getting a message out of a Biblical text and in doing so avoid hearing or saying something about the one target of all Scripture, God's gracious righteousness in Christ, then we have performed an un-Lutheran exegesis, which in itself is not so bad if it were not for the fact that it is an unbiblical one besides.[17]

At this point, then, the main weakness of the courses analyzed in this study can be identified. A look at the summary chart under the categories of "salvation" and "morality" will show that five out of the six courses analyzed do not function with a Reformation understanding of law. Because this is the case, the courses' concepts of promise or Gospel is also weakened and distorted. For biblical interpretation that weakens the reality of God's destructive word in the law, weakens and distorts also the decisive character of the Gospel. According to the reformers, the Word of God is always law and promise (Gospel), and not one at the expense of the other. Nevertheless it is true the reformers taught that in Christ, God's verdict

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[16]Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator, translated by John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1953), p. 58.

[17]Edward H. Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," The Lively Function of the Gospel, edited by Robert W. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 87.

regarding man is changed from judgment to forgiveness. But the law continues to accuse, to judge, and to condemn man insofar as he remains a sinner; and, at the same time, the promise bestows on the sinner the gracious righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

Finally, courses from the ALC and LCA churches seem to welcome the use of modern interpretative techniques like historical criticism as valuable aids to understanding the Old Testament. On the other hand, the two LCMS courses avoid these techniques and evidence some ambiguity and uncertainty regarding historical-critical exegesis. Perhaps James Smart's analysis of the Bible in Christian education curricula sheds some light also on the situation facing the LCMS. Dr. Smart writes:

> The most characteristic feature of the church school's handling of the Bible has been timidity. Producers of curriculum have, in general, followed a policy of great caution in dealing with critical questions because they have had in their constituencies both literalists and nonliteralists. They did not want to offend either. Therefore, they tried to strike a course somewhere in between that would at one and the same time avoid narrow literalism and yet bear none of the recognizable marks of the historical-critical approach. The effect, however, was to accentuate the timidity of the church school about the Bible and to perpetuate the idea that certain very obvious problems in the Scriptures are unmentionable.[18]

The courses analyzed in this study show signs of being written for literalist and nonliteralist constituencies. In fact, the hypothesis guiding this study has been

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[18]Smart, p. 142.

that Lutheran curricula may reflect the "word" (literalist) or "event" (nonliteralist) poles on a revelation continuum, thereby compromising the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament as law and promise. It is now possible to conclude that the hypothesis is supported by the findings of this study.

It would be helpful to attempt to determine just why Lutheran Old Testament curricula are not always Lutheran, that is, why they do not always follow the Reformation approach. But that kind of information cannot be derived from an analysis of specific curriculum materials. Instead, this study can simply take note of the fact that Lutheran curricula, in dealing with the Old Testament, do not always remain with the historic Reformation understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament.

In addition, it is worth noting that there is an identifiable tendency in the materials to move more toward the "event" pole on the continuum than toward the "word" pole, although there are some exceptions. In general, however, it can be said that Lutheran Old Testament curricula, high school level, tended in the 1960s to reflect the "event" centered understanding of revelation. The courses generally evidenced the influence of what Dr. Sara Little has described as the new synthesis or consensus on revelation, that is, the self-disclosure of God through His mighty acts (events) to which the Bible bears witness. At the same time, the

courses attempted to retain the antithesis between law and promise, judgment and mercy, and sin and grace. In the process, however, the Reformation understanding of law was weakened and diluted to make way for the saving acts of God which, according to the "event" theologians, crop up periodically in the Old and New Testaments.

SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

		WIC	DMF	CCB	GBM	SFG	TVAP
REVELATION	Through Words			✓			
	Through Deeds		✓		✓	✓	
	No Revelation Emphasis	✓					✓
BIBLE	Inspired Words			✓			
	Record of Word and Deeds	✓	✓		✓		✓
	God's Personal Address	✓	✓		✓		✓
	Power of God						✓
	Bible and Word Not Equated					✓	
	Word Outside Bible	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
UNITY	Christ As Culmination of Revelatory Events		✓				
	God's Desire to Save	✓			✓	✓	
	OT Points to God's Future Grace in Christ			✓	✓		
	Christ as Pre-existent Word						✓
SALVATION	God's Gracious Righteousness in Christ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Saving Acts of God	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Forgiveness of Sins		✓				✓
	Weak Concept of Law	✓		✓	✓	✓	
MORALITY	Gospel-Law Sequence				✓		
	Law as Guide		✓	✓	✓		
	Moralism		✓	✓			
	Faith-Relationship with God	✓				✓	✓
HISTORICAL	Favors		✓		✓	✓	
	Opposes						
CRITICISM	Avoids			✓			
	Neutral	✓					

CHAPTER VI

TOWARD A POINT OF VIEW

The role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curricula is highly complex. Producers of Lutheran curricula want to deal with the Old Testament, but encounter many problems in doing so. What authority should the Old Testament have? If the Old Testament is the authoritative Word of God, why is it? How should one understand the Old Testament? What is its message or its truth? Does the Old Testament have any continuing relevance for the contemporary Christian? These and other questions lay behind the various courses analyzed in this study.

All of the courses provide views of biblical history that presume to answer at least some of the above questions. The study has summarized these views according to "word," "event," and Reformation understandings of the Old Testament. If one were to diagram these various understandings, the following might result.

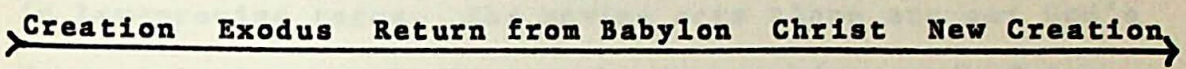
Old Testament As Word

Creation ——————————————— Christ

The diagram indicates that the Old Testament is simply background for the New. Nevertheless the Old Testament is

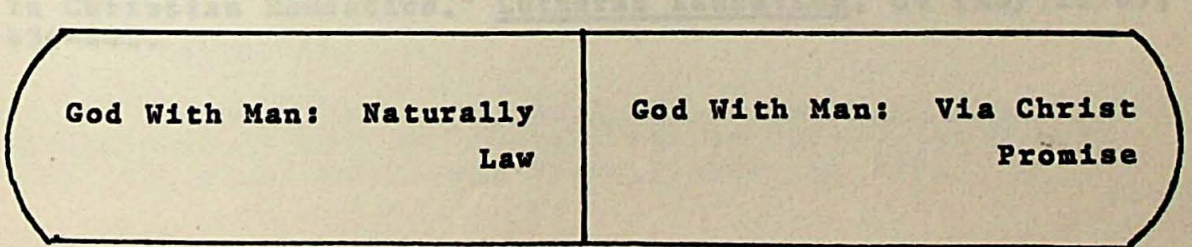
vitally important. Its words reveal all kinds of truths about God and His will to save. Typology abounds, and these truths become increasingly clear and more detailed the closer one comes to the New Testament period.

Old Testament as Event



This diagram indicates that God reveals Himself through His saving deeds. This view is similar to the "word" approach because of its emphasis on revelation and the fact that the fullest revelation of God comes in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is a record of incomplete preliminary revelations that occurred on various occasions like the Exodus and the release from Babylonian captivity. The truth revealed in all of these events is God's desire to rescue, deliver, and save man. Only those sections of the Old Testament that witness to God's saving acts are the Word of God. The rest of the Old Testament is incidental.

Old Testament As Law And Promise



The diagram[1] concentrates on the dialectic reality of God's Word. Old Testament history is, of course, still important. In fact, all (every word) of the Old Testament is important as long as it is understood as God's personal law-promise address or work in relation to man. The progress of history in the Old Testament should be understood in law-promise terms. The saving acts alone are not God's Word; God also speaks to man the destructive word of law. But Jesus Christ is God's final word. Wherever and whenever God speaks or acts, He speaks or acts under law and promise.

The point of view which this study argues is the last of these. Understanding the Old Testament as law and promise seems to be the way the Old Testament itself

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[1]The diagram is from Stephen A. Schmidt, "Law-Gospel: Toward a Model of Moral Education," Religious Education LXV (November-December 1970), 475. Schmidt labels the diagram theologia crucis. Theologia crucis applies wherever one finds himself in the ebb and flow of history. Schmidt says: "'Cross' theology always approaches the marks of God, hidden naturally, or hidden in Jesus Christ. Immanence-transcendence is not the essential category of thought; rather, theologia crucis concentrates on the dialectic reality of God's Word. The two sides of the diagram correspond to the law-gospel tension. . ." See also Paul W. F. Harms, "The Gospel in Christian Education," Lutheran Education, CV (May 1970), 434-442.

wants to be understood. At least the reformers and authors of the Lutheran Confessions read their Bibles that way. There is no mistaking their point of view: "All Scripture should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the law and the promises. In some places it presents the law. In others it presents the promise of Christ. . ."[2] Edmund Schlink explains that "man is addressed simultaneously by two different proclamations of God, the law and the Gospel, the commandment of obedience and the gracious word of justification."[3] The Bible is the rule and norm of these two proclamations. Yet Schlink says:

> God's Word is, strictly speaking, the Gospel. God's Word and Gospel are interchangeable terms . . . Either law and Gospel or the Gospel alone are mentioned as the content of Scripture. But God's Word and the law are never equated, and the law alone is never called the summary of Scripture. Over against the Gospel of God and the law is the Word in an improper sense. In the antithesis of law and Gospel the glory belongs to the Gospel, not to the law.[4]

If there is any one outstanding discovery in the analysis that comprises this study, it is that Lutheran curricula tend to be weak regarding the distinction between law and promise in the Old Testament. Instead, the courses

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[2]Apology IV, 5.

[3]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 129.

[4]Ibid., p. 139.

for the most part go the route of revelational theology where the law and promise motif is either confused or scarcely identifiable. Revelation as "word" seems to dwell principally on a law orientation to the Old Testament.[5] On the other hand, revelation as "event" seems to accent almost exclusively the saving acts of God. In addition, both are closely connected with the intellectual, cognitive phase of faith. Therefore the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament is a corrective that needs to be applied to both "word" and "event" poles. For as Schlink has pointed out, "If . . . we attempt to resolve the distinctiveness (law and promise) and to proclaim only one word instead of these two, we hear and say neither of the two."[6]

This does not imply that in the Reformation understanding of the Old Testament knowledge of the words and events witnessed to are not significant. On the contrary, the reformers were in a sense literalists as well as "event"

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[5]To understand "law," it may be necessary to note the distinction Regin Prenter makes in Spiritus Creator, translated by John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. 115: "The law is verbum dilatum et imperfectum, that is, the content of all Scripture understood as a demand (thus also the New Testament and even the Gospels!). The Gospel is verbum abbreviatum et consummatum, that is, all of Scripture understood as that which gives us Christ (also the Old Testament and even Moses!)."

[6]Schlink, p. 129.

centered theologians who emphasized the importance of the cognitive and intellectual grasp of the Old Testament. But cognition was not an end in itself. The reformers believed that God spoke through words and actions, and that both word and deed were to be taken seriously. But what God said and did could ultimately be reduced to the two works of God, law and promise, and to their counterparts on the human level, faith and unfaith. For Luther, then, law and promise was of decisive importance in his attitude toward Scripture; the distinction between the two, he said, runs through the whole of Scripture.[7]

Mowinckel suggests further:

> The development and clarification of this tension between "law" and "gospel" is history itself, is revelation, is the preparation of salvation in the Old Testament. It is revelation as sacred history truly lived and experienced. Thus from this central point the individual problems of the Old Testament find their theological clarification. This must be the critical principle for the theological study of the Old Testament.[8]

Understanding the Old Testament and assigning to it a proper role in Lutheran education programs and curriculum requires not only literary and historical principles, but a theological principle as well.[9] This seems to be the burden

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[7] Ibid., p. 102.

[8] Sigmund Mowinckel, The Old Testament As Word Of God, translated Reidar B. Bjornard (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 59.

[9] See Warren A. Quanbeck, "The Bible," Theology in the Life of the Church, edited by Robert W. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 36.

of John Bright's argument in The Authority of the Old Testament. Bright holds out for a "theological exegesis" that presses beyond the precise verbal meaning of a text to the theology that informs it. Not just what the ancient law required, but the theology expressed in that law is of primary significance. Not just the abuses Amos attacked, but the theology that prompted the attack needs to be examined. For:

> all Biblical texts are expressive of theology in that all are animated, if at times indirectly, by some theological concern. It is incumbent upon the interpreter to seek to discover what that theological concern is.[10]

The point of view of this study is that the theological concern will ultimately always be law and promise. For law and promise are enduring facts about God. They remain side by side, even for the believer.[11]

Ralph Bohlmann, however, questions the place of law and promise in biblical interpretation. Rather than overarching hermeneutical principles, he prefers to regard

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[10]John Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 170.

[11]See Edgar M. Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948), p. 72: "God confronts egocentric man as a God of wrath. He is unalterably opposed to his egocentricity, that is, to his central self. Wrath is not merely a preparatory stage through which man passes on his way to salvation. It is an enduring fact about God. As egocentric--and man never ceases to warrant such a description--even the believer stands under the judgment of God. It may be incongruous to reason that love and wrath should remain side by side, but not to faith. It is only as men come to know the completeness of God's love that they come to know the sternness of His wrath."

them as "vital presuppositions" to be used in interpreting Scripture. Law and promise, he says, constitute the central message of Scripture. "But they are not general hermeneutical principles for deriving the meaning of the text of Scripture."[12]

If one reads further in Bohlmann, he seems to be saying that the ideas of verbal, plenary inspiration and inerrancy might be lost if Scripture is reduced to law and promise. This reflects the "word" pole on the continuum and its emphasis on factual and propositional truth in Scripture. In other words, the Word of God is more than law and promise. Scripture may, for example, present scientific or historical truth in addition to theological truth.

The Reformation understanding of Scripture and the Old Testament, however, is more radical. All Scripture, the reformers said, should be divided into the law and the promises. That is a radical position to take because it means that every question about or interpretation of Scripture is ultimately a question about the Gospel. Indeed, as Edward Schroeder has pointed out, "Christ is the scopus generalis scripturae, the actual and eventual

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[12]Ralph A. Bohlmann, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 124.

target of everything in the Bible, Old Testament included."[13] Thus the role of the Old Testament in Lutheran education programs and curriculum should be freed from the preoccupation with inerrancy, propositional truth, or even "event" kind of truth. The Old Testament is not a uniform whole in which every word or event has equal importance. Taken with the New Testament, however, it can be seen to have a central meaning or target from which it can be viewed as a whole. And that central meaning is Christ and the Gospel.[14]

There is, of course, nothing in the Old Testament itself that would compel the reader to come to a Christological interpretation. The "Spokesmen For God" course illustrates this fact. In addition, a look at the flourishing biblical interpretation in contemporary Judaism shows how the Old Testament does not, of itself, lead to Christ.[15] Perceiving Christ in the Old Testament, then,

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[13]Edward H. Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," The Lively Function of the Gospel, edited by Robert W. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 87.

[14]Heinrich Bornkamm, The Heart of Reformation Faith, translated by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 41.

[15]Warren A. Quanbeck, "Gospel, Confession and Scripture," Marburg Revisited, edited by Paul C. Empie and James I. McCord (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 22.

can only be explained as a miracle of the Holy Spirit. He gives this understanding. He enables one to distinguish law and promise in the Old Testament. The proper distinction between law and promise in the Old Testament, then, does not come about through:

> formal theology but by experience alone, that is, through a believing appropriation. The distinction . . . is possible only in the act of accepting by faith the gifts which the Gospel promises.[16]

John Bright has noted the three classical solutions to the problem of the Old Testament: (1) remove the Old Testament from the Bible or deprive it of full canonical rank as did Marcion; (2) follow the church fathers and save the Old Testament by finding a Christian meaning in its texts; and (3) establish a normative principle which will enable the selection of those elements in the Old Testament that have abiding validity and those which no longer concern the Christian.[17] According to this study neither conservative nor liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics would accept the first solution. The second would probably be championed by those theologians and educators who adhere to the "word" pole on the continuum. The third, as Bright himself admits, is the way of much liberal Protestantism (or "event" oriented theologians and educators). This

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[16]Schlink, p. 136.

[17]Bright, p. 110.

study, however, proposes a fourth solution: distinguishing between law and promise in the Old Testament or understanding the content of all Scripture as Christ.

It has already been demonstrated how selected Lutheran curricula frequently fail to take seriously this fourth solution to the problem of the Old Testament. If this solution were taken seriously, it might bring to life the Old Testament among God's people. At the World Council of Christian Education meeting at Geneva, Switzerland in 1968, C. Ellis Nelson reported that:

> there is a great need for syllabi, especially at the secondary school level, that will show the role of the Bible and theology in human situations, and in relation to the writings that are used in literature classes.[18]

Distinguishing between law and promise opens up the possibility of relating the Old Testament to human situations and to contemporary literature which explicates these situations. For life without the promise is always life under the law, a common human experience described in many modern novels. And Christ is always the Gift and the Promise of a new way of life to be accepted in faith.[19]

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[18]Ellis Nelson, Issues Facing Christian Educators (Geneva: World Council of Christian Education, 1968), p. 22.

[19]Schmidt, LXV, 479, summarizes Granger Westberg's "Way of Salvation" approach to pastoral counseling: crisis-need; despair (identity crisis); helpfulness-therapy; new insight; and a new way of life. On the basis of this model Schmidt then develops a Lutheran teaching model (p. 480): approach (law) crisis; curriculum experience, Bible history, or other

Understanding the Old Testament in terms of law and promise also tends to overcome the depersonalizing process that daily confronts contemporary man. As has been pointed out, this understanding of Word in the Old Testament is extremely person; it is God's personal form of address to man. It is a Word that speaks to man's existential situation, a Word that can help explain and provide insight into his love and hate, his joy and fears, his failures and successes. More than this, however, the Word as law and promise in the Old Testament is self-authenticating. That is, it does what it says.[20] God's wrath and His love are encountered in the nation of Israel. Man expects God's wrath, but is continually surprised by the Father's love especially as it is ultimately spoken in Jesus Christ.

Law and promise in the Old Testament also have definite social implications. One need only recall the Ten Commandments or the oracles of the prophets to substantiate this. George Forell has summarized the social implications of law and promise as follows:

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experience; sharing (who am I?); sharing (Gospel) what God has done (group process--confession, absolution); and new ways to celebrate.

[20]Walter R. Bouman, "The Teaching of Religion: A Theological Analysis," The Teaching of Religion, edited by John S. Damm (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1965), p. 38. See also Carlson, p. 120: "one of the decisive features of Luther's theology is this intensely personal way in which he conceives of the relationship to God . . . the law applies to the person rather than to the act."

> The motivating force behind all Christian ethics is God's love. Man receives God's love in faith and passes it on to the neighbor. Faith is active in love toward the neighbor. Faith brings us to Christ and makes Him our own with all that He has; then love gives us to our neighbor with all that we have.[21]

The conclusion prompted by all of this is that Lutheran curricula are most faithful to their historic tradition when law and promise are considered basic to understanding the Old Testament. Moreover, if the various Lutheran bodies are ever to work together in producing curricula, it is necessary that they first establish a common understanding of Word within the law-promise structure. This understanding of Word will then free Lutherans to work together in speaking the Word to one another and to all men. It will free Lutherans to use new and creative means of communicating what Luther called the only two public sermons God ever preached--one at Mt. Sinai, the other on Pentecost; one the law, and the other the promise. It will also free Lutherans from biblicism either of the "word" or "event" kind. The Word of God will be understood as more than the Scriptures, although the Scriptures will continue as the rule and norm for all talk of God. And finally, Lutherans will be free to make courageous use

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[21]George W. Forell, Faith Active in Love (New York: The American Press, 1954), p. 187. See also Donald C. Ziemke, Love for the Neighbor in Luther's Theology (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), passim.

of all that enhances the promises of God, even biblical criticism, since the latter can never destroy faith in God's promises.[22]

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII, says:

> These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to justify and quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout Scripture. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of grace granted in Christ.[23]

This study has demonstrated how Lutheran Old Testament curricula in the 1960s did not clearly stress the distinction between law and promise. It would seem essential, however, that Lutheran curricula make this distinction clear. This would be teaching the "structure" of all theology and, in particular, Old Testament theology. It would consist of "learning initially not a skill but a general idea, which can then be used as a basis for recognizing subsequent problems as special cases of the idea originally mastered."[24] The result would be a "continual broadening and deepening of knowledge in terms of

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[22]See Roy A. Harrisville, His Hidden Grace (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965) for an able defense of biblical criticism.

[23]Apology XII, 53.

[24]Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 17.

basic and general ideas."[25] That is, the result would be a broadening and deepening of the two chief works of God, law and promise, in relation to Old Testament history and prophecy and in relation to the student's life in the here and now.

The relevance of this approach is illustrated in the following paragraphs by Alvin N. Rogness. Instead of law and promise, Rogness speaks of guilt and forgiveness.

> It is one of the strange phenomena of our time that just at the moment in history when the secular world, through its writers of fiction, its dramatists, and its psychiatrists, speaks more universally of the sense of guilt than ever before--that just at this moment the church speaks less of confession and forgiveness than before. We speak of the gap between man and man which needs to be bridged by reconciliation. We speak of the cleavage within man himself, which needs healing by the discovery of identity. We dart furtively here and there to find new and relevant forms by which to address modern man, while in the depths of his spirit he cries out for forgiveness and for the reconciliation and identity which only the forgiveness of God can provide. When through the all-inclusive forgiveness of God man is accepted by God, then he can accept himself (identity) and then he also can accept his brother (reconciliation).
>
> The message of God's forgiveness is the most profound word given to man. It takes man's plight with utter seriousness; it takes the incredible dimensions of God's love with utter seriousness. The orders of creation may indeed speak of a gracious God, but it is in the cross alone that God's love breaks through with unmistakable brilliance. Here He forgives the

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[25] Ibid.

> sinner and returns him to the brother, to himself, and to God. Alienation and estrangement are gone. Man is at one again, with God and with all creation.[26]

In summary, this study has shown how some forms of fundamentalism have equated Word of God with the Bible (Old Testament included) and how this equation occasionally appears also in Lutheran Old Testament curricula. On the other hand, this study has shown how some forms of neo-orthodoxy have found the Word of God here and there in the events recorded in the Bible, and how this view appears with even greater frequency in Lutheran Old Testament curriculum materials of the 1960s. The weakness of fundamentalism, it would appear, is its failure to understand Word of God as a larger term with many facets, the Bible or Old Testament being only one of these. Neo-orthodoxy seems to overlook the fact that the whole of Scripture speaks God's Word to men.

The point of view argued in this study is that Lutheran Old Testament curriculum materials should be more faithful than they are to the Reformation understanding of the Word of God. For in contrast to the other views,

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[26] Alvin N. Rogness, Forgiveness and Confession (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), pp. 51-52.

> Lutheranism recognizes that the Bible is not the only expression of the Word of God; but it also takes the whole Bible seriously as the Word of God.[27]

Ultimately, then, Lutheranism understands Word of God as "God's personal and effective encounter with men in terms of law and Gospel."[28] The role of the Old Testament in Lutheran curriculum materials, therefore, should reflect this understanding. For then the Old Testament is properly recognized for what it is--not a textbook nor a collection of words of God, but "a history of the going forth of God's Word."[29] Then, too, the Word of God in the Old Testament is seen in its soteriological dimensions, that is, as serving the purpose of bringing men to the righteousness of faith.

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[27]Walter R. Bouman, "Bible As God's Word," The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), I, 230.

[28]Ibid., I, 232.

[29]Claus Westermann, Our Controversial Bible, translated and edited by Darold H. Beekmann (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p. 65.

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