6-1-1961

The Theological Basis for Adult Bible Study and its Practical Aspects in the Adult Educational Program of the Church

Marvin Mueller

THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ADULT BIBLE STUDY; Mueller; S.T.M., 1961

THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ADULT BIBLE STUDY AND ITS PRACTICAL ASPECTS IN THE ADULT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

---

by

Marvin Frank Mueller

June 1961

Approved by: Henry A. Lomer
Advisor

Donald L. Deffner
Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

A BASIC APPROACH TO AN ADULT BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM IN THE CHURCH

The Problem

In recent years there has been a growing interest concerning the values of adult education, both secular and religious. The church especially has begun to realize its responsibilities toward the adult. The area of adult education is not a new field, but it is one which is yet to be fully explored.

Basic to a consideration of a program of adult education in the church is an understanding of the theological basis for such education. Some attempts have been made to develop a basic theology, but the results have varied from an emphasis upon the "redeeming fellowship" to an emphasis upon "group dynamics." It is the conviction of the writer of this thesis that if one is to develop a basic theology for Christian education of adults it is necessary to begin with the Word of God, for it is upon this Word that the theology of Christian education is based.

This thesis is concerned specifically with the theological basis of adult Bible study within the program of the church. This concern is valid in as much as the Word of God is basic for any program of adult Christian

education in the church. The Bible as the Word of God is the source and norm for the faith and life of all Christians who through Holy Baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit have been placed under this Word of God. It is the purpose of this thesis to show in what way man is brought under the Word of God and how this Word, therefore, is basic to any program of adult Bible study in the church.

Definition of Terms

The theology of adult Bible study is based upon the Word of God, God's plan for all of mankind, and God at work among men. The Word of God is God's redeeming activity among men in Jesus Christ His Son. The power of God active through His Word is basic to a theology of adult Bible study.

The adult ranges in age from the young adult just out of high school to the older adult including those over the age of sixty-five. The chief concern of an adult Bible study program in the church is with these people who are no longer confronted with the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures through the agencies of the parochial school, Sunday School, or Christian secondary education.

The objective is to bring to them the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, which is God's activity as it is revealed to man in a written word, that they may know and believe the Word of God to be the source and norm for their faith and

life. This objective is worked out within the context of the church; more specifically the congregation. The local congregation is the usual context in which a program of adult Bible study is established and carried out to the end that the adult Christian might grow in the grace and knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that he might develop Christian attitudes and insights into the Word of God and its meaning for his life as it equips him for service to God and to his fellowmen.

Limitations of the Study

The thesis is limited in its scope. Its emphasis is mainly upon the theological basis of adult Bible study. Its practical aspects apply the basic theology to the objectives of adult Bible study and a program of adult Bible study within the full program of the congregation. Although the Word of God is basic for the theology of all of Christian education, the specific purpose of this thesis is to show how it is basic to adult Bible study and how it determines the approach of the adult to the Bible.

There is no published work, known to the writer of this thesis at this time, which has formulated a theological basis of adult Bible study within the framework of the doctrine of the Word. It is the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to set up the theological basis of adult Bible study upon the Word of God and to show its practical

aspects in the adult educational program of the church.

Method of Procedure

The thesis begins with a brief study of the concept of the Word of God and the ways in which this Word comes to the individual who is alienated and cut off from God. Man is brought under the Word of God through the Word itself, and this is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism. Baptism is emphasized as the usual way in which man is brought under the Word. It is noted, however, that it is possible for an adult to be brought under the Word through the Holy Scriptures and in particular through the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it reaches out to the individual apart from the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

The baptized believer is constantly struggling with the "old Adam" which remains within him after Baptism. His old sinful nature remains and he sins. Man is in need of help which will enable him to overcome his flesh and walk in the Spirit. Such help is to be found in the Word of God. For the faith and life of the Christian the Word of God becomes the source and norm, the directive and power.

The Word of God is the essential element in the life of the Christian. Not only is the Word of God the redeeming activity of God in Jesus Christ, that which brings man salvation from sin, but it is also God's continuing

activity in the lives of Christians, the "power of God unto salvation" and all good works. The objectives of an adult Bible study program and the ways in which these objectives are fulfilled within the congregational life of the members are properly developed and carried out in the light of the basic understanding of what the Word of God is and with faith in its power in the life of God's people.

CHAPTER II

THE WORD OF GOD REACHES OUT TO MAN

How the Word of God Reaches Man

The term Word of God as it is used in the Bible always describes a situation or event in which God Himself is acting and speaking. It is God's activity in which He makes Himself known to men.[1] The term "word" usually refers to a signal or a sign by which one person communicates a certain meaning to another person. In the Bible, however, the term, in addition, refers to "fact" or "action." It means that God is making changes. He is acting and exerting power so that His will is carried out as it portrays and signals meaning to people. In Psalm 33 the two terms, "word" and "work," are used synonymously.

> Sing to him a new song, play skilfully on the strings, with loud shouts. For the word of the Lord is upright; and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth.[2]

This is also true of the references to the Word of God as

---

[1] Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960. Essay in the possession of R. R. Caemmerer, St. Louis, Missouri, nonpaginated.

[2] Psalm 33:3-6.

they are recorded in John 14:10 and in Psalm 106:12,13.

There are two major categories of emphasis which must be taken into account in any consideration of the use of the term "word" in Holy Scriptures. First of all, the term involves the idea of active purpose, the working out of a design and intention; thus the term is synonymous with force or activity. Second, the term involves the idea of communication; the forces, purpose and activity are being registered toward people. They are made apparent to them.[3]

The term "word," first of all, is used as active purpose, God's purpose in the Old Testament. It has been noted that the term "Word of God" does not refer to words as we use the term "words" in a sentence. The Word of God, however, is always God Himself speaking and acting in order to accomplish something. It is God in His Word acting. Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer in an article in the Concordia Theological Monthly states that the most frequent use of the term "Word of God," or "Word of the Lord" in the Old Testament "implies the active purpose and working out of design, for which a verbal description or spoken word, or an event, an act, is simply the surface signal and summary."[4] The following Old Testament quotations demonstrate, in

---

[3]Richard R. Caemmerer, "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (March, 1951), 171.

[4]Ibid., p. 172.

brief, some of the ways in which the term "Word of God" is used in the Old Testament.[5]

As was already noted, the Word of God is powerful as it performs actual events in history. It is equated with the work of God. In Psalm 147 the Word actually melts snow and ice. Here the term is used simply of God's power in action.

> He sends forth his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoar-frost like ashes. He casts forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold? he sends forth his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.[6]

God is a God who keeps His promises. His Word fulfills His plans as a continuing Word and action. Creation and preservation involve promises that come true. This is noted in Isaiah.

> For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar--the Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in your mouth, and hid you in the shadow of my hand, stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, "You are my people."[7]

The Word of God is also described as making impelling demands. An example again is found in Isaiah.

> Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All

---

[5] Ibid., pp. 172f.

[6] Psalm 147:15-19.

[7] Isaiah 51:15-16.

> these things my hand has made and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.[8]

In the Old Testament the term "Word of God" is also used as referring to a word actually spoken.

> Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.[9]

The Word of God, finally, is recorded in writing. A good example of this is found in 2 Chronicles where King Josiah is in the act of repairing the house of the Lord. Hilkiah the priest has found the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses.

> When the king heard the words of the law he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book.[10]

The New Testament words, ῥῆμα and λόγος, are used to denote an active working of God in the New

---

[8]Isaiah 66:1,2.

[9]Amos 8:11,12.

[10]2 Chronicles 34:21.

Testament.[11] The word, ῥῆμα, is used in Matthew 4:4, Luke 2:29, Luke 3:2 and John 3:34 denoting the active working of God. In the gospel of St. Matthew Jesus replied to the devil who was tempting Him with food, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."[12] Luke states that "the Word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness."[13] The word ῥῆμα is also used by Jesus of God being active in Him. There is an example of this in the gospel of John, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his work."[14] Finally, ῥῆμα is used to signify the power of God by which He sends forth preachers. "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."[15]

The word λόγος is used in a unique sense to describe God Himself made manifest in the incarnate Son of God and carrying out the designs of God in creation, redemption and

---

[11] Richard R. Caemmerer, "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (March, 1951), 179.

[12] Matthew 4:4.

[13] Luke 3:2.

[14] John 14:10.

[15] Romans 10:17.

the judgment of the world. Instances of such a use of the word λόγος are found in John 1, 1 John 1, and in Revelation 19. In John 1:1 there is the statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Also in John 1:14, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

The word λόγος is also used to describe the active energy and power of God at work.

> I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth.[16]

From this brief word study of the term "Word of God" it can be seen that the term does indeed refer to God Himself speaking and acting in order to get something accomplished. It is God acting in His Word. The term "Word of God," however, also involves the idea of communication. Some of the Old Testament terms which are translated "Word of God" accentuate communication. There is, first of all, אֵמֶר or אִמֶר, as it is used in Job 6:10, or מֵאֲמַר as it is used in Daniel 4,

> The sentence is by the decree of the watches, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets

---

[16]John 17:6,14,17.

over it the lowliest of men.[17]

There is also אִמְרָה as it is used in Psalm 119:11,50,103, 133,148, and finally, דָּבָר as it is used in Exodus 4, "and Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him, and all the signs which he had charged him to do."[18] This is also the usage in Exodus 20:1; 34:1, 27,28; Numbers 11:24; 15:31; Deuteronomy 6:6; 10:2.[19]

In the New Testament the two words ῥῆμα and λόγος refer to simple communication at certain times. Ῥῆμα seems to be used this way in John 8, "He that is of God heareth God's words."[20] In Acts 10:36, the "word which God sent," is the word of preaching. Λόγος in the sense of communication is used particularly in the plural, and in that form it does not refer specifically to words of God.[21]

From this word study of the term "Word," it can be seen that when the Bible speaks of the Word of God it is not merely talking about words that are true and godly,

---

[17]Daniel 4:17.

[18]Exodus 4:28.

[19]Richard R. Caemmerer, "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (March, 1951), 172.

[20]John 8:47.

[21]Richard R. Caemmerer, "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (March, 1951), 179.

but it is talking about God Himself, busy toward other people in order to accomplish His will. The Word of God is God acting with power. In addition, however, God acts with power for the sake of people. It is a word in which God is looking for something to happen in people.[22] Isaiah emphasizes this fact in man's reaction to the "Word."

> Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of rest? All these things my hand has made and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.[23]

In Psalm 119 there are a number of references to this concept of the Word. One instance is in verse 11, "I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," and again, "I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word" (v. 101), and finally, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path" (v. 105). The Word of God is not merely sayings of God but God Himself as He acts and as He reveals Himself and His actions to human beings.

The target of God and of God's Word is people. Very frequently when the Bible uses the term "Word of God" it is giving the account of God's people in the Old and New

---

[22]Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960, nonpaginated.

[23]Isaiah 66:1,2.

Testaments. It is not necessary for the purpose of this paper to develop a detailed study of the concept "Word of God," but it should be noted that in both the Old and New Testaments the Word of God does refer to God's dealings with His people.[24]

In the Old Testament there are numerous references to this Word as it comes down from God to His people. One such reference is found in Isaiah, "The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will light upon Israel."[25] Another reference is in 2 Chronicles, "The hand of God was also upon Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the Lord."[26] Finally, Isaiah wrote,

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.[27]

In the New Testament there are an equal number of

---

[24]Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960, nonpaginated.

[25]Isaiah 9:8.

[26]2 Chronicles 30:12

[27]Isaiah 2:2-5.

such references to the Word. There is in Acts 6 an account of the effect of God's Word, "and the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."[28] In Acts 12:24, 19:20, the Word of God is that which grows and prevails among God's people. In Acts 11 the Word of God is received by God's people, "now the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God."[29] Finally, such examples are also recorded in Acts 13:44 and Acts 46:49.

Whenever God's people rejected His word, they did more than not listen to His word, they actually opposed God's own plan and will for His people.[30] There are numerous examples of this in the Old Testament, such as 1 Samuel 15:26, 1 Kings 2:27; 16:7, 2 Chronicles 10:15, and many more. In the New Testament there is a reference to this in the book of Hebrews.

> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before

---

[28] Acts 6:7.

[29] Acts 11:1.

[30] Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960, nonpaginated.

him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.[31]

Why Man Needs the Word of God

Man is alienated from God due to his own spiritual ignorance. He is separated from God because by nature he is corrupt and sinful. He lives in spiritual darkness. In this sense he is dead. In Ephesians the Holy Spirit declares the unregenerate man to be just this, "dead in trespasses and sins."[32] He is totally corrupt and this corruption separates him from God. This corruption belongs to man by nature. David wrote, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."[33] Jesus calls natural man "flesh," that is, a being outside the Kingdom of God and in need of regeneration.[34] The Scriptures describe man as "having the understanding darkened," as being "alienated from the life of God because of the blindness of their heart,"[35] as being in a state of "darkness"[36] and as "dead."[37] Furthermore, the Holy Spirit

---

[31]Hebrews 4:12-14.

[32]Ephesians 2:1.

[33]Psalm 51:5.

[34]John 3:3,5.

[35]Ephesians 4:18.

[36]Ephesians 5:8.

[37]Ephesians 2:1.

expressly states, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[38]

Man has no desire to escape this darkness, because he knows no other, no better, way of life. Those who are in spiritual darkness are under the power of the devil. The Bible describes the understanding of natural man as being dark and blind in spiritual matters, unenlightened by the Spirit of God.[39] Man's natural intellect is blind, but it is more than blind. The Formula of Concord gives a perfect definition of man's natural intellect.

> Man's reason or natural intellect still has a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as well as of the teaching of the law (Rom. 1:19-21,28,32), nevertheless, it is so ignorant, blind, and perverse that when the most gifted and the most educated people on earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot by their own powers perceive this, comprehend it, understand it, or believe and accept it as the truth. On the contrary, the more zealously and diligently they want to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and until the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches them they consider it all mere foolishness and fables. It is as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:14, "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." Again,

---

[38] 1 Corinthians 2:14.

[39] Bernhardt F. Meschke, "The Significance of Baptism for the Christian's Faith and Life" (unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1943), p. 2.

> "since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through its wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of the Gospel that we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). The others, who are not reborn through God's Spirit, "walk in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Eph. 4:17,18). "Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 13:13,11). "No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:11-12). In this way Scripture calls the natural man simply "darkness" in spiritual and divine things (Eph. 5:8; Acts 26:18).[40]

Natural man is caught in his own darkness. It is in this darkness that he gropes, not even looking for a way out. Satisfied and content that this is the way of life, he steadily moves in the wrong direction.

The fruits of the works of natural man are evil. Since his very nature is corrupt, his thoughts, his deeds and his life are all evil. He does bear fruit, but these fruits are listed as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and the like.[41] The only fruit which he bears is evil fruit. It is not possible for him to please God.

---

[40]"Formula of Concord," The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), pp. 521, 522.

[41]Galatians 5:19-21.

Because of man's natural spiritual condition and sin which is the fruit of the works of natural man, he places himself under the wrath of God.

> For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.[42]

Man is under a curse, the curse of death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."[43]

Man's natural spiritual condition is one of total helplessness and corruption. He cannot even believe in Christ by his own power. If man is to have a saving faith and live in a God-pleasing manner, it is necessary that a spiritual rebirth or regeneration be wrought in him. Just as physical birth gives entrance into earthly life, so spiritual birth is necessary for spiritual life. This rebirth must of necessity be brought about by a power outside of man himself. This power is the Holy Spirit who brings man to faith. St. Paul gives reference to this in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says Jesus be cursed! and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."[44] In his epistle to the

---

[42]Galatians 3:10.

[43]Romans 6:23.

[44]1 Corinthians 12:3.

Ephesians St. Paul makes it clear that man's salvation is brought about by the saving grace of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast."[45] St. Paul plainly teaches that the sinner is saved by God's grace through faith, and that faith is a gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

---

[45] Ephesians 2:8,9.

CHAPTER III

THE WORD OF GOD BRINGS LIFE TO MAN

God's Word Works Regeneration in Man

Regeneration is brought about in man through the Word of God. This Word of God, God's active purpose directed towards the salvation of man, works in several ways to bring life to man who is alienated from God. The Word of God comes to man in the person of Jesus Christ. He is truly the first and the last Word of God. The Word of God also brings about regeneration in man through the Holy Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. The Holy Gospel brings man life and salvation through the Word. Finally, the Word of God comes to man through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Holy Spirit working through this Sacrament brings life to the smallest child and to the most mature and intelligent adult. Baptism is the ordinary means by which the individual adult is brought under the Word of God and this Word is brought to bear in his life. It is for this reason that this Sacrament is so basic to our understanding of a theological basis for adult Bible study.

God's Word is the Saving Activity of God in Christ

The Word of God brings life to man first of all in

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the first and last word of God's power to man. In the first chapter of the gospel of John the Word of God is God's own power in action.

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.[1]

By Jesus Christ the world was made and is sustained.

> But in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.[2]

By Jesus Christ the world shall be judged at the end of this age. "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son."[3] John again sums this up very well in his twelfth chapter.

> And Jesus cried out and said, He who believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in men may not remain in darkness. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak.[4]

---

[1] John 1:1-4.

[2] Hebrews 1:2,3.

[3] John 5:22.

[4] John 12:44-49.

Through Jesus Christ the forces of evil are overthrown and a new life is wrought among men. This is accomplished through the implanted Word, Jesus Christ. "Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."[5] The fact that it is this implanted Word which is the power which saves man is also attested to in the gospel of John.

> Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. They answered him, We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How is it that you say, you will be made free? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.[6]

God's Word Reaches Man Through κήρυγμα and διδαχή.

The Word of God which brings life to man is also the Gospel, the proclamation of the Holy Christian Church. This Gospel is more than just a message on the lips of speakers, for the Word is also the power which sends forth these speakers. They have a faithful witness and message of this Word, and they bring it forth to the whole world.[7]

---

[5]James 1:12.

[6]John 8:31-36.

[7]Romans 10:17.

In the Word of the Gospel there are two basic concepts and terms which must be considered in order to understand this Word of God in action among God's people. These two concepts are κήρυγμα and διδαχή. Κήρυγμα is the heralding of a great and important fact, completed but with continuing meaning to those who hear it. Διδαχή is the process by which the κήρυγμα is being brought to its target. Κήρυγμα proclaims that the intention of God to redeem the world has been carried out. Διδαχή applies that intention of God to its target.[8]

In the whole plan of God, Jesus Christ has carried out an act which is referred to as "the act of redemption." This act is proclaimed. The Cross itself proclaims this act, just as the resurrection of Christ from the dead proclaims it. This Word is entrusted to preachers and teachers who are to proclaim it, and the heralding of this great and important fact is what is referred to in the Holy Scriptures as κήρυγμα. It is a fact which is completed, but one which has continuing meaning to all who hear it. This message is the power of God "unto salvation."[9] It is effective for all situations of faith and life. It is to be proclaimed.

---

[8]Richard R. Caemmerer, "Kerygma and Didache in Christian Education," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (April, 1961), 198-202.

[9]Romans 1:16.

The κήρυγμα is not merely a statement of fact, but it is a tool to an end. The κήρυγμα is the intention of God to redeem the world which has been carried out in Jesus Christ. Διδαχή, on the other hand, applies that intention of God to its target. The redemptive activity of Jesus in God's full plan of redemption is meaningful for all who hear this Word, but the means by which this Word is brought to the hearer and the way in which this redemptive act is applied to its target is not an essential part of the κήρυγμα, but is included in the concept of the διδαχή.

The διδαχή applies the redemptive act of God to its target whether that target is a person outside the Kingdom of God, or whether it is a member, young or old, in the Holy Christian Church. The intention of God is not only to rescue His people from death, but to turn them to forgiveness again and again and to employ them for the activities of the rescued and rescuing people of God. Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer shows how this applies specifically to Christian education in this way.

> Christian education is the process of putting God's program of turning and nurturing men into operation. This program is not just a prescription by God but an act of God. According to a plan which he envisioned before He made the world and which He promised through His chosen people before Christ and which He made to come true in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, God now sends people to bring the story of God's act in Christ into human hearts in order to

bring about new life and to nurture it.[10]

The Word of God is the power of God which brings about regeneration in man. It is through this Word that salvation is wrought in that man who is alienated from God. This Word is a proclamation which is directed by various means to its target. It is in this way that God brings about new life in man. The terms κήρυγμα and διδαχή are never considered apart from each other in the New Testament. They are simply two processes which convey the same great message into the human heart. This is the message that God is Father through the Redeemer and that Christ is Lord by virtue of His cross and open tomb. The one process is proclamation, the other is the more patient and personal process of training, but actually the two are never to be separated from each other.[11]

God's Word makes possible Spiritual Rebirth in Holy Baptism

The Word of God which brings life to man is finally a visible word as it finds expression in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Word of God finds man as he is, alienated from God, dead in trespasses and sins. Man has no

---

[10] Richard R. Caemmerer, "Legalism, Revivalism, and the Gospel in Christian Education," Lutheran Education, XCVI (January, 1961), 215, 216.

[11] Ibid., p. 219.

desire to escape this darkness. He knows no better way of life. Due to this spiritual condition, natural man is under the wrath of God. The Word of God in Baptism conveys and seals to this man a new birth, a spiritual rebirth. It conveys and seals to man the forgiveness of his sins, and this forgiveness is brought to man through the almighty work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Through Baptism the old man, sin, is drowned and a new man comes forth. The individual is brought to faith and is thereby brought under the Word of God, under the Grace of God. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."[12]

Baptism brings forgiveness. The Holy Spirit, Who is the effective power in Baptism, offers and bestows God's grace. By Baptism the Holy Spirit starts Christian faith and life on its way. The Holy Spirit makes a new creature of this lost and condemned sinner. He accomplishes this by bringing to man the forgiveness of sins. The believer shares in Christ's death and in His redeeming work. St. Paul writes concerning this sharing in the sixth chapter of Romans.

> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of

---

[12]Galatians 3:27.

> life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.[13]

In Baptism the sinner dies with Christ, that is, man dies unto sin, and is raised again to a new life as Christ was raised. There is here in the mode of Baptism a drowning of sin and the birth of a new man, born in grace. Luther again sums it up in this way.

> The significance of Baptism is a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God, so that the old man, which is conceived and born in sin, is there drowned, and a new man, born in grace, comes forth and rises. Thus St. Paul in Titus 3, calls Baptism a "washing of regeneration," since in this washing man is born again and made new. As Christ also says in John 3, "Except ye be born of water and the spirit of grace, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." For just as a child is drawn out of its mother's womb and born, and through this fleshly birth is a sinful man and a child of wrath, so man is drawn out of Baptism and spiritually born, and through this spiritual birth is a child of grace and a justified man. Therefore sins are drowned in Baptism, and in place of sin, righteousness comes forth.[14]

It is in this way that man through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism receives the forgiveness of his sins. It is the water which is not simple water, but water connected with God's Word, that is God's redeeming activity in His Son, Jesus Christ. Through this water and this Word our

---

[13] Romans 6:3-6.

[14] Martin Luther, "Treatise on Baptism," Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company and the Castle Press, c.1915), I, 57.

sins are drowned, and a new man comes forth. Baptism "effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promises of God declare."[15]

Baptism offers forgiveness of sins and incorporates the individual into the body of Christ. Through Baptism, both the infant and the adult become members of the Kingdom of God. The simple fact is that through this means of grace, the Holy Spirit brings to the baptized individual the forgiveness of God in Christ Jesus his Savior. Through Baptism that individual is brought into fellowship with Christ and is made a member of His church.

God's Word Brings Man into a Covenant of Grace

Holy Baptism is a covenant which God makes with the infant or the adult. It is a covenant of grace which makes it a unique covenant. In Baptism God's Word comes to the individual and approaches him as he is, alienated from God. In Baptism God enters into a personal relationship with man and makes a promise of forgiveness, life and salvation. Man, through the working of the Holy Spirit, receives this promise and the gifts of Baptism, and in that way enters

---

[15]Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), pp. 348-349.

into the covenant relationship which has already been established for him by God. Man does nothing to bring about this agreement, but rather it is completely a covenant of grace which God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, makes with sinful man.[16]

The covenant is also unique in that it is a continuous covenant. God never breaks it. It never ceases, and it never needs to be renewed. The promises of God are never withdrawn. Baptism is an act which is complete in itself, and for this reason it is performed only once in the life of an individual. Even though man in his sinfulness will leave the covenant, he needs only to return to it to have its benefits anew, namely, the assurance of sins forgiven. Although man can reject Baptism and can refuse to believe it, this does not invalidate the covenant. Man did not make this covenant, and it cannot be broken by him.[17]

God's Word Bestows a new Spiritual Nature Alive unto God

An understanding of the covenant relationship in Holy Baptism is necessary for the consideration of the new man who is born in Holy Baptism. While a new man has been born, nevertheless, the Christian still retains his sinful

---

[16] Arthur Repp, "Strengthen Them," unpublished manual for Confirmation Instruction, pp. 117, 118.

[17] Ibid., p. 118.

nature, the old man, who is still under the rule of sin. It is necessary to remember that man by his sinfulness does not break the covenant, but merely places himself outside of the covenant. The covenant is continuous and is never broken.

The sanctification which is begun in Baptism is the putting on of the new man. The new man is the new creature brought to life in regeneration; it is the new spiritual life which the Holy Spirit brings into being by means of Baptism.[18] There is a new creature whose whole relationship with God is changed. Instead of remaining an enemy of God, the believer is made a child of God. This is what baptizing with water signifies,

> that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence.[19]

The close relationship between God and the baptized believer is expressed by St. Paul:

> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.[20]

---

[18] Bernhardt F. Meschke, "The Significance of Baptism for the Christian's Faith and Life" (unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1943), p. 32.

[19] Luther, "The Small Catechism," The Book of Concord, p. 349.

[20] Galatians 3:25-27.

In the immediate context of these verses the Apostle had been teaching that the sinner is saved by faith in Jesus Christ, rather than by doing the deeds of the law. The fact that the baptized individual is a child of God is emphasized when Paul says, "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," and especially when he says this just after he has stated that faith in Jesus Christ makes them God's sons. He is saying that through Baptism a new relationship is established between God and man, a new man comes forth, a child of God, dead to sin, but alive unto God.

If in Baptism sinners die with Christ and are buried with Him, then they also rise with Him. They do not rise to serve sin, but to serve God. They rise to live a new life. Baptism gives them the power and the motive to do this. When the sinner is regenerated in Holy Baptism, he becomes God's child, eager to live a godly life, a life which is in accord with God's will. He wants to learn God's will, and then do it. This service to God is part of his baptismal promise in which the devil and all his wicked works and ways are renounced. The baptized believer recognizes it as a duty and a privilege to live unto God.[21]

Although Baptism has made man righteous in Christ it is just as true that man is still sinful according to his

---

[21] Meschke, op. cit., p. 34.

own flesh. In this life the Christian still retains his sinful nature, the old man, who is still under the rule of sin. Luther explained this seeming contradiction in this way:

> When a man comes forth out of Baptism, he is pure and without sin, wholly guiltless. But there are many who do not rightly understand this, and think that sin is no more present, and so they become slothful and negligent in the killing of their sinful nature, even as some do when they have gone to Confession. For this reason, as I said above, it should be rightly understood, and it should be known that our flesh, so long as it lives here, is by nature wicked and sinful. To correct this wickedness God has devised the plan of making it altogether new. . . . This plan He begins in Baptism, which signifies death and the resurrection at the last Day, as has been said.[22]

The plan is begun in Baptism, but there remains in this life a constant tension of the two natures of the Christian as summed up in Luther's often quoted phrase, <u>simul justus et peccator</u>. The continuous struggle of these two natures in the Christian is signified by Holy Baptism in the drowning of the old man and in the coming forth of the new (Romans 6:3-14).

The significance of Baptism continues throughout life. While the Sacrament is never repeated and the covenant cannot be renewed, its significance for the Christian is continuous. The old Adam, the old evil nature with which the sinner is born, is to be put off. There can be no

---

[22]Luther, "Treatise on Baptism," <u>Works of Martin Luther</u>, p. 59.

compromising between the new man and the old. When the new nature is born through Holy Baptism the struggle begins. This struggle continues ceaselessly throughout the earthly life of the believer. The baptized believer still sins, but Baptism has the power to free him from slavery to sin. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith."[23] Sin is no longer the ruling principle in his life, but it is an evil which must be overcome and from which he must rid himself. As a Christian he does not want to sin, but because of the weakness of his flesh he falls again and again.

Luther saw such things as "fasting and all such exercises" as being directed toward holding down the old Adam, the sinful nature,

> and accustoming it to do without all that is pleasing for this life, and thus daily preparing it more and more for death, so that the work and purpose of Baptism may be fulfilled.[24]

Luther went on to show in his Large Catechism that the strength to do this, namely, to put down the old man, is found in Baptism.

> If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and promotes it. In

---

[23] 1 John 5:4.

[24] Luther, "Treatise on Baptism," Works of Martin Luther, p. 67.

> Baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new may come forth and grow strong.[25]

The way in which the Christian continues to put down the old man depends to a great extent upon the forgiveness which God offers to him in Baptism. Each time the believer falls into sin he becomes contrite and repentant. He seeks this forgiveness, and therefore, by daily contrition and repentance and returning to God's gracious baptismal promises, the old evil nature is more and more overcome.[26] In other words, even though Baptism is administered only once, it is to be used by a Christian throughout his entire life. Baptism involves the establishment of a covenant of grace between God and the person baptized. For this reason, the daily repentance of Christians is called a daily returning to Baptism, or to the covenant of Baptism. Luther again brings this out in his Large Catechism when he stresses that Baptism remains forever. "Even though we fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old man." Luther goes on to say, "repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and

---

[25]Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism," The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), pp. 445, 446.

[26]Meschke, op. cit., p. 31.

practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned."[27]

Baptism is for the Christian's comfort. Through Baptism he comes under the judgment of grace and mercy. Man is not condemned because of his sins, but they are driven out. Luther explained this.

> So long, now, as you keep your pledge to God, He, in turn, gives you grace, and pledges Himself not to count against you the sins which remain in your nature after Baptism, and not to regard them or to condemn you because of them.[28]

God is satisfied and well pleased if we are constantly striving and desiring to slay these sins and to be rid of them by death.

While the Sacrament is never repeated and the covenant cannot be renewed since it is never broken, its significance for the Christian is continuous, and in that sense Baptism is not accomplished until death. Luther mentions that man is altogether pure and guiltless, but "sacramentally," by which he means that man has the sign of God, Baptism, which shows that sins are all dead, and that man too dies in grace to rise again, pure, sinless, guiltless, to everlasting life. It is only because of this sacrament that man is without sin and guilt. However, since the Sacrament is not complete until death, man still lives in

---

[27]Luther, "The Large Catechism," The Book of Concord, p. 446.

[28]Luther, "Treatise on Baptism," Works of Martin Luther, p. 61.

sinful flesh. He is not without sin, but he has begun to grow into purity and innocence.

Martin Luther again sums this up very briefly and in a very striking manner in his treatise on Baptism.

> This significance of baptism, the dying or drowning of sins, is not fulfilled completely in this life, nay, not until man passes through bodily death also, and utterly decays to dust. The sacrament, or sign, of baptism is quickly over, as we plainly see. But the thing it signifies, viz., the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, lasts so long as we live and is completed only in death. Then it is that man is completely sunk in baptism, and that thing comes to pass which baptism signifies. Therefore this life is nothing else than a spiritual baptism which does not cease till death, and he who is baptised is condemned to die; as though the priest, when he baptises, were to say, "Lo, thou art sinful flesh; therefore I drown thee in God's Name, and in His Name condemn thee to thy death, that with thee all thy sins may die and be destroyed.[29]

God's Word Enables Spiritual Growth

The living Word which reaches into the life of man in the baptismal covenant touches that life again and again. Man is brought under the Word of God. He is regenerated by the Word of God, and as he continues throughout life, continually mindful of the covenant of Holy Baptism, this Word of God continues to strengthen him, causing him to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Word of God touches the life of the believer

---

[29] Ibid., p. 60.

again and again in the spoken and visible Word in preaching, teaching and the Sacraments.

The baptized believer, in and through Baptism, continues to grow in Christ Jesus. There is generally a twofold use of Baptism in sanctification. First of all, it is a motive and a power for sanctified living. Secondly, it is used for admonition, reminding us to renounce the devil and his evil ways. The Spirit, given in Baptism, leads the baptized person to walk in newness of life. As long as the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer He is at work making the Christian life function. He provides the strength, knowledge, patience and courage to fight sin and serve God. A daily remembering of our baptismal covenant also reminds one of God's grace and admonishes him to put off the old man and to use the powerful resource of the Holy Spirit to lead a truly sanctified life here on earth.

The Word of God in the Gospel continues to awaken and exercise faith. The Gospel, as God's redeeming activity here on earth among men, brings men to faith in Jesus Christ. Continued use of this Word, however, continues as a motivating power and force to bring about in the believer a strengthening of his faith and sanctified life here on earth. This is the work again of the Holy Spirit, and because the Holy Spirit works in this way, we as baptized believers are to come to this Word often, seeking from it the resource for our faith and life here on earth.

If Baptism is the Sacrament of initiation, then the Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of confirmation. The faith in a child is begun through Holy Baptism and the entering into the soul of the child by the Holy Spirit. The calling to mind of this Baptism is accomplished in many ways. One such way is through the Word of God as it comes to us in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Here again we have a "visible Word" which can be seen and touched. Through this body and blood the faith of the individual is strengthened, assuring him that by the grace of God, for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son, his sins are all forgiven, and that in this body and blood is the strength to live a holy life here on earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORD OF GOD SUSTAINS AND EQUIPS MAN

The Scriptures and the Word of God

The term "Word of God" as it is used in Holy Scripture refers to God in action. Sometimes this action works through words, and sometimes there are words which accompany certain actions, but the basic concept of the Word of God is always the same. The Word is always more than a thing to read or hear. The Word of God, particularly in Jesus Christ, very often has no actual words connected with it, as in a force of nature or the upholding of the world by Christ. However, there are times when this act of God or purpose of God is accompanied by the speaking of words which make the purpose clear. There are several examples of this from Holy Scripture.

> As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.[1]

And again in 1 Kings,

> and keep charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may

---

[1] 1 Samuel 9:27.

> establish his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, if your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel.[2]

Isaiah speaks to Hezekiah.

> Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, hear the word of the Lord: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And some of your own sons, who are born to you, shall be taken away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, the word of the Lord which you have spoken is good. For he thought, why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?[3]

The Bible seldom refers to itself as the Word of God. There appears to be only one instance where this occurs and here too the Word of God and saying of Scripture is not made identical.

> Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me? The Jews answered him, we stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God. Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming, because I said, I am the Son of God?[4]

In this instance the law is equated with the Word of God. Thus the written word is equated with the Word of God.

---

[2] 1 Kings 2:3,4.

[3] 2 Kings 20:16-19.

[4] John 10:32-36.

God's Word is always God's action. The Scriptures, therefore, not only set before us the record and the account of God's acting in the past, but this Word is a force moving in on life, particularly the life of human beings like ourselves.[5] It conveys this power to us. Just as God used words in the past to communicate with man and to bring His power to bear upon man, so He uses words to continue His action among men, and to bring His purpose into their lives. The Holy Scriptures are effective not because they are the words of God, but because of the action and purpose which surrounds these words and makes of them the Word of God.

The Bible conveys God's power. There should, however, be no alternative between Bible for power and Bible for information. The information should be for power; the power should drive to fuller information.[6] For the adult who begins to study God's Word this becomes more and more evident all the time. As one studies the Holy Scriptures, it is the power of God which becomes active and finds its goal in the life of the Christian leading him on to more and more study of this Word for training in righteousness

---

[5]Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960. Unpublished essay in the possession of R. R. Caemmerer, St. Louis, Missouri, nonpaginated.

[6]Ibid.

(2 Timothy 3:14-17) and hope (Romans 15:4).

The Bible is used not merely to learn certain "divine truths," but to bring God's active purpose and power to bear upon human life. It is used for the force which it conveys and not simply as a source book for information about God. The power in the Word is the power of God, and this Word is bearing upon man in the form of judgment of God upon sin, and in the form of God's rescue from unbelief and despair. The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God which is God's activity as it comes to bear upon the faith and the life of the Christian.

The law in the Bible condemns and judges man for sin. A concise definition of the law is given in article five of the Formula of Concord.

> The law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deed in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God, and threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment.[7]

In Hebrews 4 the Bible speaks the Word of God's judgment upon us, and fulfills this function of the Word. Here we read that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, "piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions

---

[7]"Formula of Concord," The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), p. 561.

of the heart."[8] No creature is hidden, but all our thoughts and actions are laid bare before God. In this way the Bible condemns and judges man for sin. It shows how man ought to live and it threatens those who break this will of God and transgress it with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment.

The Word of God to man in the Bible, however, is not merely a word of God's judgment and condemnation, but it is also an act of rescue in the person of Jesus Christ. This action of the Word of God is summed up in this way.

> God speaks and acts His Word of help; He sends His Son as His Word of help; the Son not only is that Word, but He speaks a Word which works powerfully in His disciples; also their word to their world becomes a powerful action of God on the hearts of men to turn them to God.[9]

God's act of saving is closely connected with His act of judgment and condemnation. The Gospel is the action of salvation in Jesus Christ as it comes to man and takes him out of the depth of despair and lifts him to everlasting glory. It is God's great act. This "Word" Jesus left His disciples in order that they might preach and proclaim His converting, changing and saving message of forgiveness to others.

---

[8]Hebrews 4:12,13.

[9]Richard H. Caemmerer, "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960, nonpaginated.

After Jesus had arisen he appeared to His disciples and showed them that He had arisen and that He had fulfilled the Holy Scriptures. The fact that the death and resurrection of Christ is the Word which is to be effective in the faith and life of the individual here on earth is seen in the words of Christ to His disciples.

> Then he said to them, these are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.[10]

In this way the Gospel sets forth in the Bible God's power for life. John says directly, "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."[11]

The Bible is a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit operates. God works in the hearts of men when they use His Word, and it is by means of the Scriptures, the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit calls them, enlightens them, sanctifies them and keeps them. This is the Word of God which is basic to an adult Bible study program in the church. Because the Bible is the Word of God it is the

---

[10] Luke 24:44-48.

[11] John 20:31.

one and only source and norm for the teaching of the church. It is the only standard and norm for Christian education which is designed to educate the Christian for Christian living. It is the resource for the norm of the faith and life of the Christian just as it is the power for this faith and life. It is the Word of God which sustains and equips men for service. The Christian who has been made a Christian through the effective work of the Word of God draws upon this same Word, the Holy Scriptures.

The Word of God is Active in the Christian's Life

The Christian is to read and diligently to study the written Word of God. This Word is the resource with which the Christian equips himself for Christian service. Through the study of God's Word the Christian continually grows and is filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

A Christian who is fully equipped is one who is fully equipped to serve God to the best of his ability. It is through the use of the Holy Scriptures that an individual is equipped in this way. St. Paul stresses this fact in his second epistle to Timothy where he encourages Timothy to continue in what he has learned and has believed, knowing from whom he has learned this and that from the time he was a child he has been acquainted with the sacred writings

which are able to instruct him for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.[12]

The Word of God in the Holy Scriptures brings about spiritual growth. St. Peter writes, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."[13] A better demonstration of this is found in the parable of the sower in Luke 8.[14] John recorded the words of Jesus, "if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[15] St. Paul wrote to the Colossians,

> let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.[16]

St. Paul again writes to Timothy, "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."[17]

In his preface to the Large Catechism Luther refers

---

[12] 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

[13] 2 Peter 3:18.

[14] Luke 8:4-15.

[15] John 8:31,32.

[16] Colossians 3:16.

[17] 2 Timothy 2:15.

to the Word of God as an effective power of God.

> Nothing is so effectual against the devil, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy oneself with the Word of God, talk about it, and meditate on it. Psalm 1 calls those blessed who "meditate on God's law day and night." You will never offer up any incense or other savor more potent against the devil than to occupy yourself with God's commandments and words and to speak, sing, and meditate on them. This, indeed, is the true holy water, the sign which routs the devil and puts him to flight. . . . Time and paper would fail me if I were to recount all the blessings that flow from God's Word. The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. What, then, shall we call God's Word, which routs and destroys this master of a thousand arts with all his wiles and might? It must, indeed, be master of more than a thousand arts.[18]

God's Word in the Bible certainly gives the Christian the resource and the power to serve God and his fellowman in every way possible, just as it also gives the people of God the power to witness. The command to go and to witness is found in Matthew 28,

> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.[19]

The strength to carry this out is found in the first chapter of the book of Acts.

> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end

---

[18]Martin Luther, "Large Catechism," The Book of Concord, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), pp. 359, 360.

[19]Matthew 28:19.

of the earth.[20]

John says it in this way,

> when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.[21]

Finally, Peter records, in his first epistle, those words which are so meaningful for the Christian's faith and life and the way he serves God and his fellowman.

> You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.[22]

The Word of God finds expression in the life of God's people. God speaks His Word to men so that men speak His Word to others. The Bible is not merely for the witness of Christians to their fellow-Christians, for the internal edification of the church, but also to the world in which they have been placed. In this way, the Word of God, as it comes to us in many ways and especially through the written Word, finds expression as it is related to others and as it is directed towards others in the Christian service which we render to them.

---

[20] Acts 1:8.

[21] John 16:13.

[22] 1 Peter 2:9,10.

The Christian's Use and Interpretation of Scripture

Having referred to the Holy Scriptures as God's Word, and the way in which the activity of God in Jesus Christ towards His people is connected with this written Word, and having taken note of the use which we as Christians are to make of this Word as the motivating power for Christian living in service to both God and man, and also in witnessing to the redeeming act of God in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we correctly understand the Holy Scriptures and correctly apply them. There are three basic principles which lead to a correct understanding of the Bible.

The first basic principle is that we study the Bible in the light of its central teaching; justification before God is by faith in Jesus Christ. This principle is that Jesus Christ is relevant to the entire Biblical account of God's dealings with His people, and the way in which God deals with us. It is the basic principle and norm of significance for the entire Bible; the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ is the center of the Biblical message. In the Bible that which is less than the full truth of Christ, or that which is peripheral to the truth of Christ, has to be interpreted in terms of the central meaning, Christ as the

Word of God.[23]

Secondly, the Bible must interpret itself, that is, the Bible must interpret the Bible. If a certain passage is unclear, instead of looking to some outside source to shed light on the passage, it is necessary to interpret this more obscure passage with a clearer passage. This is, of course, in terms of the Sola Scriptura principle of the Reformation. The Word is the unopposed and ultimate authority.

> We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, "Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed."[24]

Finally, the Holy Scriptures must be applied to the particular life situation. Unless the Word of God is directed to the hearer of this Word, it is of little value. But the Word does certainly have meaning as God's will for the life of the Christian and as His plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. This Word is directed to its goal in the life of the Christian through the act of teaching and through a diligent study of this Word.

---

[23] D. Campbell Wyckoff, The Task of Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959), p. 62.

[24] "Formula of Concord," The Book of Concord, pp. 464, 465.

As this Word is studied there are several ways in which it may be approached. Dr. Martin Franzmann, in a series of three essays printed in the Concordia Theological Monthly in 1948, sets forth three basic approaches to the study of the Bible. He refers to them as circles. The first is the circle of language. Here the interpreter must consider the language. First of all, he must consider the words themselves in isolation, and at this time he is concerned with usage and the etymology of the words themselves. Secondly, he is concerned with these words as they are used in relation to one another, and here the concern is with grammar, context and figurative language.[25]

From the circle of language the interpreter moves into the circle of history, and here "he seeks to master the world in which and for which the Scriptures were originally written."[26] This is the circle of history in its wider sense, that the interpreter take into consideration the general culture in which God revealed Himself to His people. The circle of history in its narrower sense would include the specific occasion that called forth a literary production, the circumstances under which it was written and received and the persons addressed. This would include

---

[25] Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics" (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1956), pp. 3-6. Reprinted from Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (August, September, October, 1948).

[26] Ibid., p. 7.

the materials commonly covered in courses in New Testament Introduction. These materials are derived from the texts themselves, from other Biblical sources, or from extra-Biblical tradition.[27]

Finally, there is the circle of Scripture.

> In the circle of Scripture we pass from skills and techniques to what is rather an attitude, a gift of God, a charisma to be prayed for. For we are not concerned with the fact that what was spoken by man in times past was uniquely spoken; that these men spoke as "men of God," as men "moved by the Holy Ghost." We are concerned with that aspect of the Bible which makes it different from all other texts, however much it may, linguistically and historically considered, have in common with them; upon the fact that it is the Word of God, not only the record of God's revelation of Himself, but the continuation of it; that here God not only spoke through men, but speaks.[28]

As a result, we are under, subject to, Scripture. God is King, and His Word is supreme; we are bound to it. God's Word is not a force that we can guide and control; it guides and controls us. This is the Word of God, His Holy Word, which is the center and the core of an adult Bible study program within the church.

---

[27] Ibid., pp. 7-13.

[28] Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH FOR ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Community in Jesus Christ

Learning always takes place within a particular context. In Christian education this context is the church. Christian learning takes place within the church which is made up of living persons under a living Lord, the church of Jesus Christ. It cannot be, if it is the church, anything else. "Its authority is derived from him; its life is dedicated to him; it is sustained at every point, to the extent that it is the church, by his Spirit and by his reality."[1]

The Christian's life is through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book entitled Life Together, describes this life as Christian community. Christian community consists in this, that we belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.

> It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.[2]

---

[1] D. Campbell Wyckoff, The Task of Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1955), p. 73.

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, translated from the fifth edition by John W. Doberstein (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1949), p. 11.

Christian community exists because the Word of God exists. A Christian is a man who is no longer looking for salvation in his own works. He has found salvation in Jesus Christ. "He lives wholly by God's Word pronounced upon him, whether that Word declares him guilty or innocent."[3] Man finds life only in the Word which comes to him, the Word of God. This Word is preached; it is proclaimed. It is a Word of God which, if it is to be effective, must be brought to the hearer. In this Word the hearer finds life. He is dependent upon this Word which God has put into the mouths of men in order that it may be communicated to other men. For this reason the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him, first of all, to bring him to faith, and then he needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged. He needs him as a bearer of the divine Word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ.

A Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. "Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man."[4] Christ made peace between God and man, for without Christ man would not know God, and in the same way, he would not know his fellowmen. The way has

---

[3] Ibid., p. 12.

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

been blocked by his own ego, and this same way has been opened by Christ to God and to one another. In Jesus Christ we are one, but only in Him are we bound together.

> We are in him. Where he is, there we are too, in the incarnation, on the Cross, and in his resurrection. We belong to him because we are in him. That is why the Scriptures call us the Body of Christ. But if, before we could know and wish it, we have been chosen and accepted with the whole Church in Jesus Christ, then we also belong to him in eternity with one another. We who live here in fellowship with him will one day be with him in eternal fellowship. He who looks upon his brother should know that he will be eternally united with him in Jesus Christ. On this presupposition rests everything that the Scriptures provide in the way of directions and precepts for the communal life of Christians.[5]

This is what is meant by the statement that a Christian's life is through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.

The community in Jesus Christ has function. It exists, first of all, in order that men may worship. It exists in order that the Christian may hear and learn the Word and that he may be motivated and guided by this Word. Within this community men assemble and put into practice the teachings of the Gospel in their lives within the world. It is within the church that men may come together for public worship.

> It is here that men are guided, trained, directed, and supported in private, individual, personal worship. It is here that men gather around the Table of our Lord and commune together and with him.[6]

---

[5] Ibid., p. 14.

[6] Wyckoff, op. cit., p. 75.

The church also exists in order that the Word may be preached and taught. The church exists in order that the proclamation of the Word of God may be brought to the hearer and become effective in his life. This Word is proclaimed because man, although he is a sinner, can share in God's grace and glory and be God's child. The church is compelled to bring this Word to all men. The Word reproves and demands of man that he repent when he falls into open sin, but it is also the Word which brings life and light to the lost soul of man.

Finally, the Church exists that Christian fellowship may be maintained. This fellowship is in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. It is a necessary activity of the church. It is essential to the being of the church, of this Christian community. Christian fellowship is instituted with Baptism, it is maintained by the church, and it is expressed in the life of the individual.

Activity of the Priesthood

The church is the church of Jesus Christ. It is made up of living persons under a living Lord and it exists that men may worship, in order that the Word may be preached and taught, and that Christian fellowship may be maintained. God has given pastors and teachers for the special task of equipping the believers for the work of the ministry within this church. The Holy Scriptures,

however, refer to each Christian as a priest of God who has been given a share in the redemptive purposes which God is working out in the world through Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the first epistle of Peter, "and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."[7]

The priest has free access to the Father in prayer. In the home he teaches his children the Word and the will of God. He leads the worship of God in the home when he conducts personal and family devotions. His concern is with the Word which he brings to others as he testifies of the hope that is his in Jesus Christ. He joins the congregation in the calling and the support of those ministers who are to preach and to teach the Word and administer the Sacraments.

The priest of God reads and studies God's Word. He is entrusted with this Word, and good stewardship of it is expected from him. He is to let the Holy Scriptures guide and direct him in all that he does or says. He is obligated to read, study and thoroughly digest this Word. It is for this reason that within the community of the church there is definitely a need for an adult Bible study program.

Every Christian as a priest of God is responsible for

---

[7] 1 Peter 2:5.

the spiritual welfare of others. This is true especially in the home but it is also true in the administration of the affairs of the congregation where the Word is preached and taught and the Sacraments are administered. The baptized royal priests are joined in a special way to Christ and to one another. They are at one and the same time the Body of Christ and individually members one of another. Martin Luther explained it in this way:

> So wir aber Christen worden sind durch diesen Priester und sein Priesteramt, und in der Taufe durch den Glauben ihm eingeleibt, so kriegen wir auch das Recht und Macht, das Wort, so wir von ihm haben, zu lehren und zu bekennen vor jedermann, ein jeglicher nach seinem Beruf und Stande. Denn ob wir wohl nicht alle im öffentlichen Amt und Beruf sind, so soll und mag doch ein jeglicher Christ seinen Nächsten lehren, unterrichten, vermahnen, trösten, strafen durch Gottes Wort, wann und wo jemand das bedarf; als, Vater und Mutter ihre Kinder und Gesinde, ein Bruder, Nachbar, Bürger oder Bauer den andern.[8]

In Colossians we read:

> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.[9]

This Word of God is to dwell among the members of the church as they teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. The Christian is to nurture others through this Word, and he himself is to be nurtured in the church as the Word of God

---

[8]Martin Luther, Auslegung des Alten Testaments, in Sämmtliche Schriften, edited by John George Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1885), V, col. 1038.

[9]Colossians 3:16.

flows back and forth.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a chapter of his book, Life Together, entitled "Ministry," puts into concrete language some of the ways in which we as Christians are to serve one another. He refers to various ministries of the Christian. There is a ministry of holding one's tongue and a ministry of meekness. He includes a ministry of listening, a ministry of helpfulness, a ministry of bearing another's burden and a ministry of proclaiming.[10] The focus is not merely upon what we as Christians can do for others, but also how we are to conduct ourselves in our relations with others. Our ministry to our fellowman is not merely an idea, but it is something which is to be put into practice in our lives as we live within this Christian fellowship.

The Holy Spirit is active in the life of the Church through His continuing activity in the life of each believer. Once the Christian has been baptized, he stands in a new relationship to God and to his fellowman. He has placed his life into a new context, and the force behind this renewal is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who, through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, places the life of the individual into a new context under the Word of God. The Holy Spirit continues to be active in the life of the believer. His body is truly the temple of the Holy Spirit

---

[10]Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 80-99.

who dwells therein and leads the individual to will the will of God. By the activity of the Holy Spirit in this person the Holy Spirit is also active in the church as He directs and guides the individual Christian in service toward God and to his fellowman. He begins this activity through Holy Baptism, and it is sustained and maintained through the Holy Scriptures and through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The faith community is brought together by the gracious action of God through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for the Christian to see and to respond to God's loving action as he creates fellowship and strengthens the church for the task of witnessing to the faith. The church, which forms the context of the educational process, is a living fellowship which is produced by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Fellowship of Christian Nurture

It is within this fellowship that Christian nurture takes place. We have seen that the context of any Bible study program is the church. This is the church of Jesus Christ. This church has function here on earth, and this function is directly related to the fact that the church consists of all Christians who are the chosen priests of God. Their activity is impelled by the Holy Spirit, and this activity produces results. Among the results which

are produced is true Christian nurture.

Fellowship, first of all, is the distinctive mark of the Christian community. It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ was not always surrounded by His friends, but He lived in the midst of His enemies. The commission of the Christian is to live in the midst of his enemies.[11] "I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries."[12] According to God's will Christendom is a scattered people, scattered like seed "into all the kingdoms of the earth."[13] However, we read in Zechariah 10:8,9: "I will gather them; for I have redeemed them: . . . and they shall return." This has happened in Jesus Christ, who died "that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad,"[14] and at the end of time the angels of God "shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."[15]

> So between the death of Christ and the Last Day it is only by a gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible

---

[11] Ibid., p. 7.

[12] Zechariah 10:9.

[13] Deuteronomy 28:25.

[14] John 11:52.

[15] Matthew 24:31.

> fellowship with other Christians. It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and Sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing.[16]

Christian fellowship makes possible the interaction of persons through which true nurture takes place. Here there is strength as the Word of God is proclaimed back and forth. This is the Word of God; this is God's activity among men through men in their lives in relation to their fellow believers. This Word is the power of God unto salvation. It is in the fellowship of the Christian church that this power is brought to bear upon the lives of men.

The fellowship of the church, therefore, is the true setting for a Bible study program for adults. As the Christian carries out his responsibility, his Christian responsibility to his neighbor and in particular to his fellow Christians, the basis for his proclamation and the resource upon which he must draw is the Holy Scriptures. As we have seen in the chapter immediately preceding this one, the source and norm for the faith and life of the Christian is the Word of God as it comes to us in the Holy Scriptures.

Within the context of the Christian church there is a sharing in which each Christian "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us," prophecies, serves,

---

[16]Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 8.

teaches, exhorts, contributes, gives aid, and does acts of mercy.[17] Now the resource is the Word of Christ which dwells in us as we teach and admonish one another "in all wisdom," and as we sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God.[18] The Word of God in the Holy Scriptures is the means and the resource for adult Bible study in the Christian's life.

---

[17]Romans 12:5-8.

[18]Colossians 3:16.

CHAPTER VI

THE OBJECTIVES FOR A PROGRAM OF ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Directed to Spiritual Growth

The Word of God brings God's people into being. Through Baptism the individual becomes a member of the Holy Christian Church and he is brought under this Word of God which becomes also the norm and standard for his faith and life. This takes place within the context of the church. It is within this fellowship that the individual begins to grow and continues to grow spiritually as he continues to place himself under the Word of God and continues to study this Word. This leads to a consideration of a number of objectives which are essential for a Bible study program within the church.

As the objectives of an adult Bible study program are brought into focus they hinge upon the theology which lies behind adult Bible study, and they are geared to the program of the church. Such a set of objectives must necessarily begin with a concern for real spiritual growth. The faith of the individual Christian is strengthened through the study of God's Holy Word. Dr. Feucht described this purpose of Bible study in this way: "The essence and the purpose of good Bible study is finding, accepting, and following Christ. We are to grow in grace and in the

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."[1] This is found in 2 Peter 3:18 where the Christian is called upon to grow in such grace and knowledge. Dr. Feucht then goes on to say that,

> the Christian leader and worker can give only what he himself possesses. If his own life has been enriched by Christ and he is constantly growing spiritually, then he will have something to give. There is no substitute for deep, personal faith, great love and unwavering devotion.[2]

The dynamic central objective is that the adult attains a growing knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, his Savior. The faith of the individual is strengthened and as a result the life of the individual is also enriched. A growing faith is a fruitful faith. "Those who are grafted into Christ, the Vine, naturally bear much fruit."[3] This objective might be worded in this way: "Increasing personal holiness and righteousness, or the sanctification of the believer, on earth, for which the goal is also perfection, though not fully attainable."[4] As the

---

[1]Oscar E. Feucht, editor, Leadership Education Through Bible Institutes (St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.), p. 11.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Oscar E. Feucht, Adult Education in the Local Congregation, Information Bulletin on Christian Education (St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.), p. 2.

[4]A. C. Stellhorn, "The General Objectives of Christian Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, Thirteenth Yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956), p. 70.

Christian continues to grow spiritually his growing understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what it means for him leads to an enrichment of his own life and his relationships with others. It will also determine his service as it is directed towards God and his service as it is directed towards his fellowman.

The second main objective listed under spiritual growth is the attaining of a deeper insight into the meaning of God's will as it is recorded in His Word. The Christian develops a practical knowledge of God's Word. This objective includes a better acquaintance with the mechanics of the written Word. As the Christian reads the Bible he becomes more thoroughly acquainted with the content of the Christian message. He can then be a reliable guide and a faithful witness to this message. "Only by knowing the Bible as he knows no other book can the Christian worker serve as a resource person in Christian education, in Scriptural evangelism, in effective soul-keeping."[5] By studying the Word of God the worker receives the conviction, motivation, and many of the skills which he truly needs. He seeks to acquire a knowledge of the chief contents of the Scriptures, Law and Gospel, and the necessary skills for reading the Bible with profit in both the Old

---

[5]Feucht, Leadership Education Through Bible Institutes, p. 11.

and the New Testaments. The adult obtains these skills by continued study of the Bible to the point that he is thoroughly acquainted with it and is at home in the Scriptures.

It is in this way that the Christian develops a deeper understanding of the meaning and the content of God's Word. As he works through this recorded Word and sees God's activity in Jesus Christ, seeing how this is effective in the life of the Christian and the meaning it has for him, he begins to grow and to develop an understanding of the Word. This is a never ending process. There is no time at which he can sit back and feel that he knows the full meaning of God's Word. This growth is continual and it continues only as the Christian continues to study the Word.

As he studies the Word the Christian also learns to will in his own life God's will. Continued study of this Word leads him to understand God's will for him and leads him to will this same thing in his own life. This once again is termed sanctification. It is the will of God being expressed in the life of the Christian. Such sanctification is a guide to an understanding of the extent of the spiritual growth in the individual.

Directed to Spiritual Equipment for Life

The Christian is able to stand up under the strain of modern living only by the resource of spiritual power which

he receives from God's Word. God's Word equips him spiritually. Unless the study program of the church provides the skills to interpret modern problems in the light of the Scriptures it fails in one of its major assignments.

> The serious responsibilities of making a living today, of rearing children in crowded cities, meeting the hardships, trials, and temptations of life, and the tensions of a confused and troubled world cause the nerves of 750,000 people to snap each year in the United States alone. Adults bear the burdens of life and face its many demands. Those who live close to Jesus and get spiritual power regularly from the Word of God can best stand up under the strain of modern living.[6]

These were the concerns of Dr. Feucht as he set up objectives for adult Bible study programs within the church. Dr. Arthur Repp in an article in the Concordia Theological Monthly entitled, "Why emphasize a Bible Study Program Now?" brought forth some of the same concerns. The main concern is that any such program must definitely speak to the modern problems which confront the Christian today. First of all, a Bible study program is needed in the church because this is an adult world. It is the adults who are establishing Christian homes. They are the ones who are running the congregations, teaching the Sunday Schools, leading stewardship endeavors, participating in the work of Synod and taking their place as Christians in the community. It is for this reason that they are to be guided

---

[6]Feucht, Adult Education in the Local Congregation, p. 2.

by the principles of Scripture and they need to have an adult Bible study program.[7]

Secondly, a Bible study program is needed because of the increased contacts of Christian adults with the world. A good Bible study program is needed to offset the influence of movies, paper, television, radio, books and magazines. The contacts of the adult with the world are not always as wholesome as they might be in business, social contacts and schools. For this reason a program of adult Bible study is certainly needed.[8]

Thirdly, a Bible study program is needed because this is a shrinking world. The objectives of a Bible study program must be concerned with the fact that the Christian is bound to the rest of the world whether he likes it or not.[9] And finally, a Bible study program is needed for adults because many things cannot be taught effectively until adulthood. It is practically impossible to teach true responsibility of parenthood to a child, much less the problems of labor and capital or of Christian citizenship. New problems arise with adults and these problems are more and more complex.[10]

---

[7]Arthur C. Repp, "Why Emphasize a Bible Study Program Now?," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (December, 1948), 882.

[8]Ibid., p. 883.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 884.

The Christian must not only have a good Bible study program in his daily life, and he must not only be able to understand the problems with which he is confronted, but he must also possess the ability to translate God's Word into daily living. It is for this reason that a study program must be geared to the problems of this world. This is one of the major concerns in setting up any Bible study program, whether it is within the program of the church, within the home, or in one's personal study of the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures must be applied to daily living, and the Christian does this first of all by developing insights and attitudes. God's Word must be translated into daily living, because unless it is, it ceases to be God's active Word, an action which continues in the life of the Christian. Through the study of the Holy Scriptures, however, the Christian does develop Christian attitudes and insights into this Word and its meaning for his life.

The Christian finds in the Word of God the necessary strength needed to face the many trials of life with which he is confronted. The Word is not only the resource to which the Christian can turn for guidance, but more important, it is the power which turns the Christian and strengthens him so that he is able to bear up in all trials and temptations.

Directed to Spiritual Equipment
for Christian Service

The Bible study program of the adult equips him for Christian service. This service is spelled out in the thinking and the activity of the Christian. First of all, he develops a zeal for the promotion of the church's program. The church as the church is concerned with its Christian service and the many ways in which it is able to serve others as it serves its Lord and Savior. The individual member of this community of Christians, through the study of God's Word, is motivated to support the various programs within the church, and in this way he equips himself for Christian service and the Word becomes active in his life as it expresses itself towards others.

The Christian also possesses a sincere concern for the souls of others and takes seriously his call to witness to the faith that is in his heart. Such a Bible study program for Christian living is grounded in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), and in the Biblical concept of discipleship, namely, that every Christian has a vocation to witness to the faith that is in his heart.[11]

> In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you

---

[11] Feucht, Leadership Education Through Bible Institutes, p. 11.

> to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.[12]

For this reason there should be a passion for souls and an ability in each Christian to win people for Christ. There is hardly any better way in which we can serve our Savior than to win others in His behalf. One objective of a Bible study program is to equip the Christian to be able better to witness to God's activity in His Son, Jesus. Through the study of the Holy Scriptures the Christian is confronted with the "good news" of Jesus Christ which he is to impart to others. In this Word there is the content, the command, the direction and the motivation.

Another objective of an adult Bible study program as it equips for Christian service is for the Christian to become increasingly aware of his stewardship of his life.

> Low-standard giving for Kingdom purposes keeps most churches from realizing more fully their purposes and expanding their program. This is traceable to weak faith, lack of understanding, insufficient knowledge, and unhealthy attitudes.[13]

These attitudes, knowledge, understanding and faith can be properly directed only through the Word of God. The adult who keeps growing spiritually necessarily becomes concerned with his stewardship of his life. This, of course, includes not simply the stewardship of money, but also of

---

[12] 1 Peter 3:15.

[13] Feucht, Adult Education in the Local Congregation, p. 3.

time and talents. The objective is that the stewardship of the adult should be directed toward greater service toward God and to his fellow beings here on earth.

Finally, a Bible study program equips for Christian service so that the Christian finds countless opportunities for lay work in the church. An adult Bible study program is bound to give the church more workers. Every organization, group, class, board, and committee of the congregation must draw on the adulthood of the church for leadership. No church can rise any higher than the spiritual level of its adults. If the church is to get away from the dilemma of so much being accomplished by so few, the one answer is an adult Bible study program which, because of the nature of the program, will lead to a greater number of leaders and a higher spiritual level within the leadership group.[14]

The losses within the church are very often due to the lack of a good Bible study program. Not only is the spiritual level of the leaders much lower, but many Christians are also lost as their spiritual level drops below the danger point.

> There is a group that is now moving farther and farther to the fringe. It is made up of people who lack deep convictions. As a result their religion means little to them, and they have no enthusiasm for

---

[14] Ibid.

sharing it with others.[15]

These losses can be prevented with a compelling adult Bible study program, a program which will show that the Christian religion is vital for living.

The three main areas of objectives for adult Bible study are chiefly concerned with the Christian's spiritual growth, spiritual equipment for life, and spiritual equipment for Christian service. The overall objective for the adult Bible study program of the adult Christian is that he grow spiritually in the grace and knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the study of the Scriptures, and that he develops Christian attitudes and insights into this Word of God and its meaning for his life as it equips him for service to God and to his fellowman.

---

[15] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

THE ADULT BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH

Implementing Effective Bible Study

The objectives of an adult Bible study program lead to a consideration of the way in which these objectives are then carried out in the adult educational program of the church. The adult is now ready, both as an individual and within the fellowship of the church, to approach the study of God's Holy Word. Such an approach includes preparation and submission on the part of the adult.

The adult approaches the Holy Scriptures with a personal conviction of his own unworthiness. St. James exhorts us to "put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."[1] St. Peter stresses the fact that real heart-searching should precede any Bible study. He stresses that all malice, all guile, insincerity, envy and all slander should be put aside.[2] Torrey in his book entitled, The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study, refers to the fact that the Bible should be

---

[1]James 1:21.

[2]1 Peter 2:1.

studied with a child-like mind. It should be received with the confident faith of a child, never wavering. By realizing our own unworthiness and in all humility receiving this Word of God, we do receive it as children.[3]

The adult comes to the Scriptures in the conviction that they are the Word of God through which God speaks to him. The Bible attests to its own inspiration and authority. "All Scripture is inspired by God,"[4] and "no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."[5] In the Gospel of St. John there is the Scripture's own authenticating witness. "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."[6] He who doubts cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord.[7] Unless the Christian who approaches the Bible approaches it as the Word of God, it is of little value.

The adult is fully aware of God's Word as it is active in the Holy Scriptures. He finds in this Word not only the source and norm for a God-pleasing life, but in addition,

---

[3]R. A. Torrey, The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study (Chicago: Moody Press, c.1921), p. 53.

[4]2 Timothy 3:16.

[5]2 Peter 1:21.

[6]John 6:63.

[7]James 1:6,7.

the power to show forth this same God-pleasing life in his day to day living. This is his comfort and strength.

The adult studies the Bible with a will which is wholly surrendered to God. It would be good if he were to follow the example of those in Thessalonica, "for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."[8] The Word is to be studied in order to find out exactly what it teaches. "What is this Word to me?" In a will wholly surrendered to God the adult should meditate upon this Word and its meaning for him. The adult does not direct and twist the Word to his liking, but it leads him to an understanding of God in Christ and God's will for his life.

The adult studies the Bible under the Holy Spirit's direction.

> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting truths to those who possess the Spirit.[9]

It is the Holy Spirit who guides and directs us in the study of God's Holy Word, so it is to the Holy Spirit that the adult must pray for help and guidance as he attempts to understand and to study the Holy Scriptures.

---

[8]Acts 17:11.

[9]1 Corinthians 2:12,13.

The method which is employed in the study of the Holy Scriptures or in the teaching of the Bible is directly related to the particular circumstances surrounding the learning situation. The problem of method is related directly to the nature and extent of the problem to be considered. It must take into consideration the personalities involved. The time for each meeting and the total number of members will be a deciding factor. Also of importance in determining the method employed is a consideration of the physical facilities and the available resources such as the persons involved in teaching, books, films, and so forth.[10]

It is generally agreed that the study of the Bible should be a systematic study. It is best to study the Bible by books, that is, read one whole book. It is also most helpful to read the Bible in its entirety and then may follow a more detailed study of certain books. Torrey suggests, along this same line of thought, that "you never rightly understand any subject in the Bible until you understand it in its relation to other subjects in the Bible."[11] The greater section of the Bible which is studied at one time, the greater will be the understanding of what

---

[10]Paul Bergevin, "Religious Education for Adults," Religious Education, LIII (September, 1958), 466.

[11]Torrey, op. cit., p. 43.

this section is saying.

Ernsberger in his book entitled, A Philosophy of Adult Education, stresses that an approach to the Bible that starts from the definition and analysis of human need, from problems identified by the members of a study group, gives a sense of immediacy to the study of the Bible.[12] There should be no study of the Holy Scriptures without an understanding of the problems which confront the individuals and the way in which the Holy Scriptures, applied to these problems, is able to help them to answer them. There is a danger, however, and Ernsberger goes on to show what that danger is.

> There are dangers in an unduly one-sided approach from the standpoint of needs and problems of which the layman happens to be conscious. It may tend toward a practicalism in the use of the Bible.[13]

In this way the relevancy of the Scriptures may tend to be obscured; however, in spite of the fact that there may be a danger of such an approach, nevertheless, the Holy Scriptures are always relevant and this relevancy should be noted at all times.

The method of Bible study should not only consider human need, but it should be concerned about the individual

---

[12] David J. Ernsberger, A Philosophy of Adult Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959), p. 115.

[13] Ibid.

as an individual. For this reason both secular and church educators have come to emphasize the value of small groups for the study of the Bible. Dobler in an article in the International Journal of Religious Education entitled, "Church Looks at Adults," states three major factors in favor of small study groups. First, adults have a great variety of interests, represented by various backgrounds on the one hand and specific practical needs on the other. This would undoubtedly lead to a natural division of the adults into smaller groups which would bring about greater ease in applying the Scriptural teachings to each adult. Second, adults represent many "stages" of understanding in any given area of interest, and the results are best when the members of a study group are on a more or less equal level of understanding. This again would bring about smaller groups when they are divided in this manner. Third, learning occurs most readily when the individual has an opportunity to participate in the discussion and become an active member in the search for new facts and meanings. It is in this way that Bible study becomes meaningful for the individual.[14] Edward Westphal notes this basic teaching method of Jesus.

> He enlisted a small group, most of them younger adults. They identified themselves with Him and His

---

[14] Walter E. Dobler, "Church Looks at Adults," International Journal of Religious Education, XXXVII (December, 1957), 21.

> cause. Through their vital fellowship with their Teacher their lives were so completely transformed by their experiences that the world is different today. Their attitudes were changed--toward children, toward other races, even toward those who opposed them. As they worked together with one another and with their Leader knowledge increased, skill in dealing with people increased.[15]

The method of teaching the Holy Scriptures which is favored by many within the small study group is the inductive method. It begins with the particulars and, as it progresses to generalizations, it bases its conclusions on these particulars. It conforms to the laws of investigation and reason. It is for this reason that it is especially suited for the study of the Bible by adults in small study groups. This method is generally preferred because it makes the individual adult search the Scriptures for himself. In this way the adult becomes acquainted with the Scriptures and develops a method of Bible study which is most rewarding. Dr. Feucht favors the inductive method of teaching.

> The adoption of procedures and the making of assignments which lead the student to such direct, personal, firsthand use of the Scriptures is an important and ofttimes difficult, but always rewarding, task of the Bible teacher. As students employ the recommended procedures in practice, they will reap the benefits of independent and original study and will know the joy of firsthand discovery, and will grow in desire and

---

[15] Edward P. Westphal, "Adult Education through Church Organization," International Journal of Religious Education, IX (November, 1932), 13.

ability to present self-discovered truths to others.[16]

The method of teaching the instructor employs should lead his students to a direct and personal use of the Bible itself. The satisfying and successful use of the inductive method requires this direct, firsthand approach, particularly in its initial stages. It requires an independent quest, employing textbook or commentary as secondary, accessory tools. The primary textbook must be the Bible.[17]

Developing a Unifying Program

The study program which should be established for the study of the Holy Scriptures will increase the use of the Bible in formal educational settings within the church. The program of adult Bible study itself will be a unifying quality which will run throughout the total program. This is true, first of all, in the common worship of the church. The American Bible Society in a tract entitled, The Pastor and Ways of Using the Bible, emphasizes this.

> From the beginning of the Christian community the Scriptures have been a part of its common worship, such as the singing of a psalm and the reading of the Gospels or from the Pauline or other Letters. Still

---

[16] Oscar E. Feucht, editor, Leadership Education Through Bible Institutes (St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.), p. 49.

[17] Ibid.

> later, passages or phrases of Scripture were quoted in other parts of devotional services and were the inspiration of hymns. Today, in addition to these partial uses of Scripture, it appears most distinctly in the reading by the minister, in the responsive reading and as the basis for the sermon.[18]

The pericopic system used by many pastors in the selection of their sermon texts, the use of Scripture in the propers of the service and in the ordinary all lead to a unity within the total program of the church, especially within the church service. Church services reach more adults than any other agency and more regularly. The good sermon supplies not only the Biblical foundation for the whole life of the congregation, but it leads the worshiper closer to Christ. In this way the Bible is present in this formal educational setting within the church.

The Bible is also an essential basis for the adult confirmation program of the church. Within the setting of the adult instruction class there is public reading of the Bible which is carefully planned and prepared in connection with the various topics. There is the use of the Holy Scriptures as the source and norm for faith and life. Any instruction which neglects the Holy Scriptures neglects its own strength and authority. Within this setting the people are encouraged not only to participate in this

---

[18] American Bible Society, The Pastor and Ways of Using the Bible (New York: The American Bible Society, n.d.), p. 9.

public reading of the Bible, but they are also encouraged to read it in their homes in preparation for the following session and for daily meditation and worship.

The Bible study by adults in the formal educational setting of the Bible class vitalizes the entire congregation and its activities. It is not too difficult to draw a relationship between the size of the adult Bible class and the vital program of the church. Where the percentage of the members who attend Bible class is high, the vitality of the full program of the church is also at its peak. Where the attendance is at a low ebb, the lack of interest is also seen in the general attitude of the members. Dr. Feucht also stresses this fact.

> The Bible Class is second only to the sermon. In learning values it often is superior to the sermon. The Bible class permits questions and answers, the handling of the Bible, the study of reference passages, and the give and take of discussion. Many people will never get into the Bible itself unless someone guides them and supplies the weekly stimulation through a Bible class. Bible study by adults vitalizes the entire congregation and all its activities. The average expository sermon gives 30 minutes of the Bible to the parishioner. The good Bible class gives from 30-45 minutes more of God's dynamic Word; an increase of 100 to 150 per cent.[19]

A Bible class which does not call upon the resources of the Bible is weak, and it is missing a great opportunity

---

[19]Oscar E. Feucht, Adult Education in the Local Congregation, Information Bulletin on Christian Education (St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.), p. 2.

to bring the message of the Holy Scriptures into the lives of the members of the church. A Bible class should "help to reclaim Sunday for the study of God's Word, put Bible study on a weekly basis, make parents and adults examples in Bible study to their children."[20] In some churches the problem of a good time for such a Bible study class has been solved by having Sunday evening Bible classes or week-day Bible classes. These may be conducted in connection with a fireside hour" or the evening service.[21] However, the most likely time for a Bible discussion group is on Sunday morning during the regular sessions of Sunday School.

The teacher training and Sunday School staff meetings also offer a good opportunity for the proper study of the Holy Scriptures. These meetings are very important for the teachers in order that they might be able to properly set forth the Bible stories and the teachings of the Scriptures to their children. There is hardly a better opportunity to study the Holy Scriptures than that which presents itself in these study groups. Where only the teacher's manual or the Bible History book is used to summarize the Bible story, and where the Bible is neglected, the children too are neglected for the teacher is ill equipped to teach.

---

[20] Oscar E. Feucht, Studying His Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p. 25.

[21] Ibid.

The study program within the program of the church includes not only a program of formal education but an emphasis upon the informal Biblical education of its members. The main source of such teaching is within the home. A good study program encourages the use of the Bible in the home. The Bible should, first of all, have the central place in family devotions and secondly, each member should develop his own personal Bible reading habits in the home.

The Bible should be central in the family devotions. This does not exclude the use of devotional helps because such aids are very helpful, but they should not substitute for the use of the Bible. The parents set patterns not only for their children, but for their children's children. When the parents themselves understand, read and enjoy the Bible, the child too will read and study the Bible with interest.[22]

The American Bible Society suggests that the home is the place "where the Bible should be enjoyed as a Book read by people together."[23] Their discussion of the Bible will be a discussion of the book which is God's Word and which guides them into the knowledge and love of God. Such Bible reading must include all members of the family. Each should have a part, not that each should be expected to do

---

[22] Ibid., pp. 53, 54.

[23] American Bible Society, op. cit., pp. 6, 7.

the same things, but that the Bible-reading program should be varied and flexible. It should be interesting and should be combined with what goes on at church, Sunday School, school, home and at work. The early Christians had Bible reading daily in their homes. This practice is noted in the book of Deuteronomy.

> And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.[24]

The church should not only enlist the home, but it should also develop a constructive program of service to the home. It is suggested that the church should give the home guidance in suggesting ways and means for a good Bible centered devotion. One such outline of Bible study is the following. The devotion begins with a Psalm or brief informal prayer followed by a Scripture reading. There should be comment and questions by the leader followed by discussion and application. This is followed by a hymn verse suited to the text and a prayer on the text, related to the needs of the family. This would all be concluded with one of the benedictions or a doxology.[25] This is a suggestion. With such helps, however, the church is better able to foster Bible study within the family. The

---

[24]Deuteronomy 6:6,7.

[25]Feucht, Studying His Word, p. 53.

congregation might also send out a suggested list of Bible readings during such seasons as Lent or Advent.

Family devotions is not the only use of the Bible which should be present in the home. The church should also encourage individual Bible reading in the home. Private devotions are necessary for one's own spiritual growth and welfare. There should be time for meditation and reading. Whether the individual sets up for himself a program of concentrated study in a small portion of Scripture or a rapid overview of a larger section, it is in this way that he will find for himself the source of comfort and strength necessary to meet the trying needs of our times.

The study program of the church also encourages the use of the Bible in the parish program. In this connection, the voter's assembly is called upon to make Bible study an integral part of its program. This is well stated by Dr. Feucht.

> A Lutheran congregation is to be a Christian democracy, that is, the members themselves are to be judges of right doctrine and Biblical practice. To fulfill this function, they must be well versed in Scripture and have spiritual judgment on all matters that concern the church in the modern world. The voters' assembly should be used to give part of that preparation. Brief topics presented in various ways, carefully planned in advance, and fitting the needs of the parish will help.[26]

There is also unparalleled opportunity for greater use

---

[26] Feucht, Adult Education in the Local Congregation, p. 8.

of the Scriptures in the evangelism program of the church. Bible reading provides not only the incentive and method for evangelism, but it is also the means behind it. It encourages continuous growth and a willing desire to share the "good news" with others. This has been put into practice with what is referred to as "Mission study groups." Those who are willing to set up such groups find not only a sincere joy in reaching out to others and offering to them the rich blessings of God's Holy Word, but they themselves grow in understanding and in love.[27]

Finally, those who make church calls in the parish find that the full richness of these calls is in the study of the Holy Scriptures. They find that among the parishioners there is a genuine interest in the Bible. The reading and discussion of some familiar and appropriate passage may, therefore, naturally become an essential part of the visit. It is in this Word that the one upon whom the call is being made finds comfort and solace.

The study program in the church also enlists all the organizations in a well-rounded Bible study program. These parish organizations can greatly increase the amount of Bible study offered in a parish. The time which is given to Bible study in each group varies, but they should not be merely "social groups," but they should be part of the

---

[27]American Bible Society, op. cit., p. 17.

congregation's program of activities for all adults which is once again Bible centered. Their interest should be for the edification of one another, the building up of true Christian fellowship in the Word of God. This cannot be accomplished apart from the Holy Scriptures. These organizations should rather become agencies to create proper attitudes, stimulate Bible study, and encourage Christian action.[28]

Dr. Feucht offers these suggestions of what all organizations can and should do to help build up the Bible study program within the church:

1. Help build up the Bible classes in which their group would be naturally interested.
2. Allow time on the Society meeting schedule for Bible study.
3. Stimulate personal Bible reading with the "Bible book of the month" suggestions [a schedule for Bible reading].
4. Give to Bible study sustained support and consistent promotion in these ways.
   a. Get reports from the Bible classes at business meetings.
   b. Work toward the goal "every youth and adult in Bible class."
   c. Encourage the use of our Bible study materials.
   d. Enlist participation in Bible study conferences and workshops.
   e. Help the congregation purchase books on Bible study for the church library.
   f. Distribute Bible Study and Home Devotion tracts.
   g. Enlist members in teacher training courses, Lutheran Bible institutes, and other leadership schools.[29]

---

[28] Feucht, Studying His Word, p. 61.

[29] Ibid., pp. 62, 63.

Such a study program within the congregation calls for prayer and work. Prayer is vital for success in Bible study. Bible study is a spiritual quality in people. It is the Holy Spirit who is the Agent who creates a real love for the Holy Scriptures. The prayer is for a larger measure of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of His people. We pray earnestly and consistently for the success of the Bible study program in our personal devotions, at the family altar, in the meetings of our groups and organizations, in executive and planning committee meetings and in our public worship.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE ADULT BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH

Knowledge and understanding of the theology of the Word of God is essential for God's people as they participate in a program of Bible study. The teacher of the Bible should understand and apply this theology in his teaching of the Bible. The learner should understand and apply this theology as he searches the Scriptures. The theology of the Word is the dynamic basis for all adult Bible study for both teacher and learner. The activity of the teacher is to be grounded in his conviction and faith that God's Word is vital in the life of God's people. The activity of the learner is to be grounded in this same conviction and faith.

The primary concern in Bible study is with the Word of God and its relationship to man. God's Word comes to man to make him aware of the fact that he is a sinner who comes far short of what God requires of all men. God's Word comes to man to reveal how God reached out to man to rescue him from sin and make him a new man in Jesus Christ, for through the Word of God a new covenant is made with man based on love and not on law. The heart of God's Word is God's act in Jesus Christ, and how, according to God's full plan of redemption for man, God sent forth His Son to

take upon Himself man's sin, and by His suffering, death and resurrection to release man from the bondage of sin. The central symbol of the Christian faith is the cross which portrays God's redeeming act in His Son Jesus Christ. The redemptive act of Jesus Christ upon the cross places man in a new covenant relationship with the Father. His rising again to life sealed the victory over the dominion of sin and its consequences.

The Christian Gospel proclaims the fact that it is possible for man to be re-created here and now and lifted out of the bondage of his sin. This re-creation takes place, first of all, in Holy Baptism. In Holy Baptism the individual sinner becomes a new creature who is placed under a new covenant and who becomes a member of the body of Christ, the Church. God in His mercy forgives him and accepts him as His child, giving him the righteousness of Christ.

It is within the setting of the church that the new creature, brought under the Word of God through Holy Baptism, remains under this Word. It is within the fellowship of the church that the Christian is strengthened and nurtured as the Word of God is brought to bear upon his life. Within the church each Christian is an individual priest who is enabled to participate in the redemptive purposes of God. As a preist he has free access to the Father, and he is also responsible for the spiritual

welfare of others. Because he is a priest he needs the Word for others. It is his responsibility to study the Word of God and to proclaim it.

The new life in the Spirit which is begun in Holy Baptism continues to grow in Jesus Christ. The Word of God in the Holy Eucharist continues to strengthen and to nurture the faith of the Christian, and the Word of God in the Gospel continues to awaken and exercise faith. The Christian continues to grow and to mature spiritually, but only in as much as the Word of God is brought to bear upon his faith and life. He clings to the Word of God which is the source and norm for his faith. The Bible as the written and recorded Word of God is the resource for the training of the Christian in order that he might be wise in the plan of God for his salvation in Jesus Christ. The Word of God as a living force is the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit operates in man and strengthens him in his faith. The Word of God, therefore, has an important place in the life and faith of the Christian. The Christian who reads and studies the Word is equipped for Christian service, and the Word of God finds expression, then, in his life.

An adult Bible study program within the total program of the church is essential. It is essential that the Word, the redemptive act of God in Christ, be brought to bear upon the faith and life of the Christian. God's Word is

power. It is the power which actuates life and living, and it operates through the proclamation of redemption. The influence of the Word of God is not simply upon the mind, but upon the Christian's actions. It is a power which results in activity when the Christian will draw upon it.

This paper has attempted to lay down the basic theological principles of an adult Bible study program within the church. Because of the limited scope of the paper the practical aspects and implications have been limited to the stating of the objectives which grow out of the theological basis and the program in general as it should be established within the congregation. There are various aspects of an adult Bible study program which have not been considered. If this paper were to be extended it would be essential to consider the adult in greater detail. It would be useful to consider basic adult needs, adult differences, centers of influence in the lives of adults and adult growth and maturity. There might also be a consideration of the curriculum of an adult Bible study program beyond the scope of the Holy Scriptures. It would be beneficial in a practical manner to fully develop the practical implications of this theological basis of adult Bible study and consider its full importance in developing a curriculum and a total program of adult Bible study.

Adult Bible study and specifically adult Christian

education is an expanding field in the total program of the church. The practical aspects of adult education or of Bible study among adults demands that there be a solid theological foundation on which to build and progress. This paper has been an attempt to formulate such a theological basis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American Bible Society, The. The Pastor and Ways of Using the Bible. New York: The American Bible Society, n.d.

Bergevin, Paul. "Religious Education for Adults," Religious Education, LIII (September, 1958), 461-466.

------, and John McKinley. Design for Adult Education in the Church. Greenwich: The Seabury Press, c.1958.

Bible, Holy. Revised Standard Version.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship. Translated by R. H. Fuller. New York: Macmillan Co., 1949.

------. Life Together. Translated from the fifth edition by John W. Doberstein. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1949.

Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959.

Caemmerer, Richard R. "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (March, 1951), 170-185.

------. "Kerygma and Didache in Christian Education," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (April, 1961), 198-202.

------. "Legalism, Revivalism, and the Gospel in Christian Education," Lutheran Education, XCVI (January, 1961), 214-223; XCVI (February, 1961), 278-287.

------. "The Word of God and the Bible," Proceedings of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1960. Essay in the possession of R. R. Caemmerer, St. Louis, Missouri.

Carlsen, N. C. A Living Church at Work. Blair, Nebraska: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, 1941.

Clemmons, Robert S. Dynamics of Christian Adult Education. New York: Abingdon Press, c.1958.

Colson, Howard P. Preparing to Teach the Bible. Nashville: Convention Press, c.1959.

Come, Arnold B. Agents of Reconciliation. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1960.

Cullman, Oscar. Baptism in the New Testament. Translated by J. K. S. Reid. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1950.

Cully, Iris V. The Dynamics of Christian Education. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1958.

de Dietrich, Suzanne. Discovering the Bible. Nashville: Source Publishers, 1953.

Dobler, Walter E. "Church Looks at Adults," International Journal of Religious Education, XXXVII (December, 1957), 20-21.

Dodd, C. H. The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments. 2nd edition. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944.

Edge, Findley B. Teaching for Results. Nashville: Broadman Press, c.1956.

Ernsberger, David J. A Philosophy of Adult Education. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959.

Evans, P. W. Sacraments in the New Testament. London: The Tyndale Press, 1947.

Feucht, Oscar E. Adult Education in the Local Congregation. Information Bulletin on Christian Education. St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod, n.d.

-----. Leadership Education Through Bible Institutes. St. Louis: Board for Parish Education, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d.

-----. Studying His Word. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948.

Flemington, W. F. The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism. London: William Clowes and Sons, 1958.

Franzmann, M. H. "Essays in Hermeneutics." St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1956. Reprint from Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (August, September, October, 1948).

Huggenvik, Theodore. Your Key to the Bible. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1944.

Koenig, Robert E. The Use of the Bible with Adults. Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, c.1959.

Lange, Paul W. "The Objectives of Lutheran Secondary Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education. Thirteenth Yearbook. River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956.

Little, Sara. Learning Together in the Christian Fellowship. Richmond: John Knox Press, c.1956.

Luther, Martin. Auslegung des Alten Testaments. Vol. V of Saemmtliche Schriften. Edited by John George Walch. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1885.

-----. "Treatise on Holy Baptism," Works of Martin Luther. I. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932. Pp. 49-71.

Meschke, Bernhardt F. "The Significance of Baptism for the Christian's Faith and Life." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1943.

Miller, Park Hays. How to Study and Use the Bible. Revised edition. Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1954.

Miller, Randolph Crump. Education for Christian Living. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., c.1956.

Nederhood, Joel Homan. The Church as Mission and the Educated. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959.

Perry, Lloyd M., and Walden Howard. How to Study Your Bible. Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1957.

Prenter, Regin. More About Luther. Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1958.

Repp, Arthur C. "Strengthen Them." Unpublished Manual for Confirmation Instruction in the possession of M. F. Mueller, St. Louis, Missouri.

-----. "Why Emphasize a Bible Study Program Now?" Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (December, 1948), 881-888.

Ritthamel, Franklin W. "The Educational Implications for Holy Baptism." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1957.

Stellhorn, A. C. "The General Objectives of Christian Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education. Thirteenth Yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association. River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956.

Torrey, R. A. The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study. Chicago: Moody Press, c.1921.

Westphal, Edward P. "Adult Education Through Church Organization," International Journal of Religious Education, IX (November, 1932), 13-14.

-----. The Church's Opportunity in Adult Education. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1941.

Wyckoff, D. Campbell. The Task of Christian Education. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1955.

Ziegler, Earl F. The Way of Adult Education. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1938.