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The Use of the Bible in Grades Four to Eight of the Elementary Schools of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

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**THE USE OF THE BIBLE
IN GRADES FOUR TO EIGHT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD**

**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
Bachelor of Divinity**

by

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June 1950

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Thesis

The purpose of this study was to determine in what amount the use of the Bible was recommended for the upper five grades of Lutheran elementary schools, how it was taught, and how the situation could be improved, where needed, both in furthering the amount of Bible usage and in improving the methods employed.

The Procedure

To make this study, it was necessary to read the curricula and guides for Lutheran elementary schools to determine what use of the Bible was recommended. Lutheran writings on Bible study were consulted to learn what the problems and methods in Lutheran schools were, and what means Lutherans advised towards a solution of the problems. Books on Bible study by other authors were also consulted to determine whether any of their methods were adaptable to the situation of the Lutheran parish school.

Lutheran educators have become increasingly aware of the need for improved methods of Bible study. Their writings were the chief sources for this study.

CHAPTER II

THE AIMS OF TEACHING THE USE OF THE BIBLE

The Importance of The Bible in Lutheran Theology

The Lutheran Church calls itself the church of the open Bible. By its emphasis on revelation and the Means of Grace the Lutheran Reformation has raised the Bible to a high position in the Church. Before the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had relegated the Bible to a subordinate position, on a level with tradition, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the decrees of councils and popes.¹ The Church had been considered the medium of revelation, and the Bible was revelation only in so far as it was a product of the Church. The Church was not bound to the Bible, but could continue to give revelation as the voice of God to man. Therefore Bible reading by the common people was not only unnecessary, but discouraged.² Since the Church was the author of the Bible, the Church alone could interpret it. People learned the will of God by inquiring of their priests. The Bible was regarded as a difficult, even a dangerous book.

¹L. P. Gualben, A History of The Christian Church (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, c.1945), p.185.

²J. Hilgers, "Censorship", The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: R. Appleton Co., 1908), III, p.520.

The Lutheran Reformation changed all this. Luther received the impetus for his reform efforts through study of the Bible. The Bible gave him the assurance and authority to withstand popes and diets. To him it was the eternal Word of God, which men could not change or edit. Here was the only means, or channel, through which God speaks to man and comes to him. God has decided to give all His spiritual benefits to man through His Word. According to Lutheran teaching, God's Word appears in two forms, in written form in the Bible and in signed form in the Sacraments.³ The Lutherans insist that these Means of Grace are the only place man should seek to find the love of God and salvation. They hold that the Bible is a clear book⁴ and is to be read by every person who is able. Luther at the same time revived the doctrine of the royal priesthood of believers, making every individual Christian responsible for his own soul and a priest before God. This view of the way God offers and brings salvation to man raised the Bible to a high level. Not only was the Gospel preached to men, but the believers themselves, being kings and priests before God, were to read the Bible for their own salvation and growth.

³J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1934), p.441.

⁴Ibid., p.128.

"To promote this knowledge of the Scripture, to place this priceless treasure in the hands of the people, Luther translated the Bible."⁵ Since Luther maintained that man could find God's favor and love only in Scripture, it was necessary for him to give the common people a Bible they could read and use. The German translations then in existence were so unsatisfactory, many of them mere transliterations of the Latin Vulgate, that Luther undertook the task of translating the Bible himself. This great work was accomplished early in the Reformer's life, while hidden at the Wartburg Castle. His translation of the New Testament appeared in print in September, 1522, the Old Testament in 1532.⁶ For his translation Luther used the best language of the man on the street without stooping to use the language of the gutter. The use of the Bible by the common people was regarded so highly by the Reformer that he devoted precious years of labor to translating it when the Reformation movement was still weak and his efforts were needed everywhere.

"In rendering man responsible for his faith, and in placing the source of that faith in Holy Scripture, the Reformation contracted the obligation of placing everyone in a condition to save himself by reading and studying the

⁵P. V. H. Painter, Luther On Education (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1928), p.148.

⁶Qualben, op. cit., p.238.

Bible."⁷ This necessitated popular education for the masses. Schools for boys and girls were established to teach them how to read, that they might be able to read the Bible. Luther states:

Above all in schools of all kinds the chief and most common lesson should be the Scriptures, and for young boys, the Gospel; and would to God each town had also a girls' school in which girls might be taught the Gospel for an hour daily, either in German or Latin: ...But where the Holy Scriptures are not the rule, I advise no one to send his child. Everything must perish where God's Word is not studied unceasingly.⁸

The viewpoint that schools should be provided and reading be taught primarily to enable children to read the Bible is still held by the Lutheran Church. This can be seen, for instance, in a letter to the pupils written on the inside cover of a Bible workbook, in which the author expressly says that God gave the children teachers to teach them to read so that they might read His Word.⁹ This reading of the Scripture is one of the characteristics of a Lutheran school, which, together with the natural references to its content and teachings in the course of the regular school day, distinguishes the Lutheran school from the purely secular institution.¹⁰ According to the Luth-

⁷Quoted by Painter, op. cit., p.61, from Michel Breal, Quelques Mots sur l' Instruction en France.

⁸Painter, op. cit., p.147.

⁹W. A. Schmidt, et al., Working with God's Word (Saginaw, Mich.: Lutheran School Service, c.1941).

¹⁰General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools Published under the auspices of the Board of

eran philosophy of education, the Bible is the only source and primary means for religious education. Such books as the Bible history, catechism, and hymnal either contain portions of the Bible or are based on Bible teachings.¹¹ The Bible occupies the central position in Lutheran education. Lutheran educators emphasize the actual use of the Bible itself as of great importance. Oscar E. Feucht, Secretary of Adult Education for The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, lists six reasons why it is important to have firsthand experience with Scripture.

1. The Bible Book is available continuously and goes along with the human being. (The Book remains when the voice of a teacher has died away and when other books are discarded.)
2. Personal Bible reading is essential for vital Christianity. (Hearing the Word only cannot take the place of personal reading.)
3. The Bible is intended for the common men. (It was written in the Koine, the language of the people.)...
4. Dynamic lay leadership requires Bible reading and study. (The priesthood of all believers demands much of the individual Christian. The sine qua non of Christian leadership is "at homeness" in God's Word.)
5. Personal knowledge of the Bible is essential for Protestant Christians. (Every Christian is to exercise the right of private judgment.)
6. Firsthand knowledge of the Bible strengthens conviction. (People who take their knowledge of religion only from other men are not as likely to be rooted so deeply and firmly in the Word as are those who regularly approach the Bible directly.)¹²

The arguments he lists apply in the case of children as

Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p.67.

¹¹ibid., p.5.

¹²A. E. Jahsmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp.13-14.

well as adults. The reason Lutherans go to the trouble of providing parish schools in addition to the secular public schools is for the purpose of religious instruction and to give an underlying Christian philosophy of life in all fields of education. Since they believe that the Bible is the only source of religious knowledge, faith, and life, it is natural that the Bible occupies a central position in Lutheran education.

The General Aim

In order to teach children to use the Bible, it is necessary to have clearly defined aims in mind. Since for Lutherans Bible reading is a Means of Grace, their fundamental aim in teaching its use to children is that they may grow in Christ, in faith in Him, and that His life may increase in them. Many teachers think of the Bible as the end of religious education instead of the means, as is shown by their practices of memorizing without understanding, superficial reading, and speed drills.¹³ According to the Lutheran Church the use of the Bible is not an end in itself, but the means whereby God comes to man with His grace and love. Therefore the fundamental aim of Bible use is not acquaintance with the Bible and its teaching, but growth in the life of God through the Means of Grace.

¹³E. E. Emme and P. R. Stevick, Principles of Religious Education (New York: Macmillan, c.1927), p.144.

Specific Aims

To teach children how to use the Bible, certain specific aims must also be kept in mind. The first such aim is indoctrination, for there must be facts on which faith may rest. Jesus was a historical person. The Bible teaches facts about God and man. Without knowledge of certain facts, there can be no Christianity. Kretzmann says:

In our days, when "creedal" instruction is looked upon with decided disfavor, it is all the more necessary for every pupil to know that the Bible makes knowledge of the way of salvation fundamental in religious study, both in establishing the basis of each believer's stand and in preparing him to meet the objections of the gainsayers.¹⁴

The child must know the facts of redemption. He also should learn the many other doctrines of Scripture and be able to some degree to distinguish between Law and Gospel. Indoctrination should not become the sole aim of Bible study, nor dare it ever degenerate into the mere imparting of impersonal facts. Doctrines should always be taught in the light of what they mean for the child in his faith and life.

A second specific aim in teaching children to use the Bible is that they may be able to worship with benefit. Children should be taught the difference between devotional

¹⁴p. E. Kretzmann, The Religion of The Child and Other Essays (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p.149.

reading and reading for entertainment or information. They should be able not only to receive benefit from group devotions in home and school, but also to take an active and intelligent part in them. They should learn to know what sections of Scripture are especially suited for worship, and how to use them. They should practice concentrating on God as they read in the reciprocal activity of worship.¹⁵ Children should also be able to use the Bible independently in their private devotions.

A third aim of teaching Bible use is that children are able to turn to the Bible for strength in time of trouble and to apply the words to themselves. Not only should the location of comforting passages be taught, but children should develop the habit of going to the Bible regularly for comfort and strength.¹⁶ Since the Gospel is the Means of Grace, it must be the means of receiving assurance of the forgiveness of sins and help in trouble.

Children should know how to use the Bible not only to benefit themselves but also for the sake of those whom they meet in life. This is the missionary aim of Bible teaching. Children who have themselves experienced the joy and comfort of God's Word will bear witness of this to their friends. The Bible not only supplies them with the motivation for Christian witness, but gives them the mes-

¹⁵Jahsmann, op. cit., p.34.

¹⁶General Course of Study, p.55.

sage to tell and the method of telling it as well.¹⁷

The fifth aim is more comprehensive. Its goal is for children to achieve a Christian philosophy of life in all fields of activity. Bible reading should not be just another subject in school. It should control the children's entire outlook on life, and cause them to live as Christians in all their subjects and activities. Therefore the Bible will not only be used in formal reading periods, but in connection with all other subjects throughout the day. According to the Lutheran view, the primary advantage of the Lutheran school is that the children, by means of the Bible and its influence, achieve a Christian philosophy of life in all fields.

¹⁷W. A. Kramer, "The Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education," unpublished, (Himeographed in outline form, 1949), p.7.

CHAPTER III

REFERENCES TO BIBLE USE IN THE CURRICULA

Religion and Related Subjects

Since the Bible occupies such an important position in Lutheran education, it is to be expected that many references are made to its use in the various curricula written for Lutheran parish schools. The greatest number of such references will naturally come in such subjects as Bible study, Bible history, Catechism, Church history, and the liturgy. The study of the curricula in this chapter is based upon a number of works, chiefly The General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools,¹ and The Educational Guide and General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools,² together with a number of separate courses of study written for individual subjects of the curriculum.

All the above mentioned curricula recommend that Bible study be made a separate subject in the upper grades. According to the General Course of Study, "two separate per-

¹General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943).

²Educational Guide and General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Texas District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1930), hereafter referred to as the Texas Educational Guide.

iods of from 15 to 20 minutes each per week are generally set aside for this subject."³ The Texas Guide also recommends two periods a week, with this provision that, when necessary, as in rooms with more than one grade, one of the periods may replace a regular reading period.⁴ As a rule Bible study as a separate subject is begun in the fifth grade and continued through the eighth.⁵ Kramer, however, thinks that a child should own his own Bible "at least by the age of 9" which would normally mean while in the fourth grade.⁶ But the majority of writers believe that the fifth grade is the desirable starting point.

In the fifth grade it is suggested that the first lesson of every week be devoted to reading through the Gospel according to Matthew, while the second hour be used to teach the children where to look in Scripture to find the message that will fill their specific need at any time.⁷ In the sixth grade the first hour of the week is to be devoted to a study of the books of the Bible and their general content, while the Gospel according to Luke is read the second hour.⁸ The seventh grade is to read through the

³General Course of Study, p.58.

⁴Texas Educational Guide, p.15.

⁵General Course of Study, p.58.

⁶W. A. Kramer, "Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education," unpublished, (mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p.5.

⁷General Course of Study, pp.59-60.

⁸Ibid., pp.60-64.

Gospel according to Mark and the Epistle to the Romans the first lesson of the week, and a variety of noteworthy and useful selections the second hour.⁹ The eighth grade is to read through John's Gospel, the Book of Acts, Galatians, and a few select paragraphs and chapters.¹⁰ The Texas Guide does not divide Bible study according to grades, but treats all grades together. It offers lessons twice a week which are divided into nine monthly units. The emphasis lies chiefly on isagogical material, such as the names and order of books, the format of the Bible, the location of important selections, and the inspiration of the Bible. Detailed study is recommended for a number of doctrinal passages.¹¹

In Bible history the curricula do not give the Bible itself such a large part. The Texas Guide refers to the lesson to be taught only by the numbers of the lessons in the text book, which is a Bible history book.¹² The General Course of Study offers no suggestions for pupils to use the Bible except in the assignment of supplementary material in the seventh and eighth grades.¹³ The sixth aim listed for the teaching of Bible history is to achieve "an enduring

⁹Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 65-66.

¹¹Texas Educational Guide, pp. 15-25.

¹²Ibid., pp. 55-62.

¹³General Course of Study, pp. 22-24.

interest in Bible history and the desire and habit to read, study, and contemplate the Bible itself."¹⁴ Bible reading is regarded as the natural sequence to the course in Bible history.¹⁵ In the upper grades "the Bible itself is used to provide the larger setting and background for the stories in the Advanced Bible History," and to avoid boredom at the repetition of stories heard before in the lower grades.¹⁶ Since the Bible history book itself is made up largely of direct quotations from the Bible, it may be argued that the use of it is the use of the Bible; but the dangers of such a practice will be discussed below.¹⁷

In the study of the catechism, no reference is made to the pupils' use of the Bible either in the Texas Guide¹⁸ or in the General Course of Study.¹⁹ The catechism itself directs the pupils to look up an occasional related story in the Bible, but never is the pupil asked to look up a proof passage and study it in its context. Since the catechism contains a topical arrangement of Bible passages, the use of the Bible itself is not regarded as necessary by some teachers.

¹⁴Ibid., p.23.

¹⁵Ibid., p.33.

¹⁶Ibid., p.30.

¹⁷Infra: Chapter IV.

¹⁸Texas Educational Guide, pp.49-53.

¹⁹General Course of Study, pp.9-22.

In the teaching of religious memory work, the Bible again is put to almost no use. The Texas Guide gives only the catechism references for the passages to be memorized.²⁰ A separate memory book for Lutheran schools contains 325 Bible passages taken from the catechism together with the references to their location in the Bible, but gives no suggestion as to the use of the Bible itself, even in the directions it provides on how to memorize.²¹ Nor does the General Course of Study make any reference to using the Bible in memorizing.²² There is, however, a statement to the effect that regular Bible reading will help the memory to recall passages already memorized and will clarify them by means of their context.²³ The one exception to this lack of Bible use in memorizing is found in the Texas Guide for the seventh grade. There longer sections of the Scripture are to be memorized, such as the first Psalm, the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah.²⁴ Otherwise the Bible itself is not referred to in the curricula for memory work.

Every school day in a Lutheran school opens with a devotion of some kind. In his book, Devotions for Lutheran Schools, Kramer lists four or five Bible readings for each

²⁰Texas Educational Guide, pp.42-45.

²¹W. A. Kramer, Memory Book for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944).

²²General Course of Study, pp. 45-54.

²³Ibid., p.53.

²⁴Texas Educational Guide, p.41.

devotion, to enable the teacher to select the one that corresponds to the emphasis he is giving the religious lesson of the day.²⁵ There is some difference of opinion regarding the question whether children should be allowed to lead in the devotions. The Texas Guide states that since devotional reading is an act of worship, it should be performed by the teacher himself.²⁶ The General Course of Study maintains that occasional reading of the Scripture by the pupils should be encouraged, as well as unison reading of the Psalms.²⁷ There is agreement that Scripture readings should be varied and in harmony with the religion lesson for the day.

Church history is another subject in the field of religious education. In the General Course of Study, no references are made to a: tual use of the Bible by the children,²⁸ though two passages are adduced in the introduction to the course to provide a proper approach to Church history.²⁹ The Texas Guide makes one reference to the Bible in showing that God foretold the Reformation.³⁰

²⁵W. A. Kramer, Devotions for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946).

²⁶Texas Educational Guide, p.14.

²⁷General Course of Study, pp.6-9.

²⁸Ibid., pp.68-76.

²⁹Romans 8:28. Matthew 16:18.

³⁰Texas Educational Guide, p.65.

Otherwise it contains no references for Bible use, even in its study of the Lutheran Confessions.³¹ In a twenty-four page curriculum by H. E. Dobberfuhr, there are seventy-two references to reading the Bible, these chiefly in the seventh and eighth grades.³² But two out of the three curricula make little use of the Bible in the teaching of Church history.

The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church. To worship properly, the children must understand the meaning of the liturgy. Both the Texas Guide³³ and the General Course of Study³⁴ devote several pages to directions for explaining the liturgy and the Church Year. Although the liturgy is made up largely of quotations from the Bible, there are no references to using the Bible to explain it.³⁵

Other School Subjects

The remaining subjects taught in a Lutheran parish school fall into five major divisions: the language arts, the social sciences, arithmetic, science, and the fine arts.

³¹Ibid., pp. 64-71.

³²H. E. Dobberfuhr, Curriculum in Church History for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932).

³³Texas Educational Guide, pp. 71-76.

³⁴General Course of Study, pp. 76-80.

³⁵There is one exception, a reference to Isaiah 6:3 in connection with the Sanctus.

The first classification, the language arts, includes reading, language, spelling, and penmanship. The curricula for reading have quite a number of references to using the Bible. According to the Texas Guide, the first aim of teaching reading is "to enable the pupils to read the Bible and other good literature."³⁶ The fourth aim for reading listed in the General Course of Study agrees with this, namely: "The desire and habit to read for spiritual enlightenment and edification, particularly in the Bible."³⁷ The Lutheran edition of the Heath series of readers contains a number of Bible selections, as does also the literature book for junior high school grades. Bible reading is emphasized throughout the upper grades, and the habit of independent Bible reading is expected.³⁸ Starting in the fifth and sixth grades "the Bible itself is read."³⁹ In the subject of reading in general the curricula make many references to using the Bible.

In the teaching of language, the Texas Guide has only one reference to a Bible passage to motivate the children to a God-pleasing use of language.⁴⁰ The General Course

³⁶Texas Educational Guide, p. 83.

³⁷General Course of Study, p. 84.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 84-87.

³⁹Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁰Texas Educational Guide, pp. 84-90.

of Study lists many passages for such motivation, but makes no other reference to the Bible in the course itself.⁴¹ In a separate fifty-five page curriculum for language by Alfred Schmieding, the Bible is used fifteen times for motivation and five times to be studied for literary merit.⁴² In penmanship the Texas Guide makes one mention of the Bible for motivation.⁴³ The General Course of Study makes no reference to the Bible.⁴⁴ It does, however, state that the pupils should "write memory work, stressing especially the proper form of recording Bible passages, writing hymn stanzas, and the exact reproduction of material."⁴⁵ There is, of course, some danger that the child who dislikes copy work will transfer this feeling to the Bible.

The social sciences include geography, history, and civics. In geography the Texas Guide has one reference to the Bible,⁴⁶ while the General Course of Study makes a number of references to give a Christian approach and understanding of geography.⁴⁷ The Bible gives a child the Christian attitude towards the world about him, since he will, for

⁴¹General Course of Study, pp. 98-107.

⁴²A. Schmieding, Curriculum in Language for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932).

⁴³Texas Educational Guide, p. 112.

⁴⁴General Course of Study, pp. 112-119.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 117.

⁴⁶Texas Educational Guide, p. 98.

⁴⁷General Course of Study, pp. 137-146.

example, "discover from Bible stories that misuse and waste of earth's riches lead to punishment and withdrawal of such gifts."⁴⁸ In history the Texas Guide makes no reference to the Bible,⁴⁹ while the General Course of Study recommends that the teacher use the Bible⁵⁰ to show children how God rules in history, controlling even the evil for good.⁵¹ In civics the use of the Bible is suggested to a greater extent. Although the Texas Guide has only four references in connection with its aims,⁵² the General Course of Study recommends the use of the Bible frequently to provide a Christian foundation for citizenship.⁵³ There are twenty-four Bible references throughout the unit to give a Christian interpretation of man's place in society. A separate curriculum on citizenship by H. H. Gross has twenty-five references to Bible use in eighteen pages, three of them as to the divine origin of government, fifteen regarding the duties of a Christian towards the state, and seven as to the qualifications of good government officials.⁵⁴

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 139.

⁴⁹Texas Educational Guide, pp. 103-106.

⁵⁰Ps. 66:7. Matt. 16:19. Jer. 29:7. Prov. 14:34.

⁵¹General Course of Study, pp. 146-160.

⁵²Texas Educational Guide, pp. 103-106.

⁵³General Course of Study, pp. 160-169.

⁵⁴H. H. Gross, Curriculum in Christian Citizenship for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis:Concordia Publishing House, 1942).

In arithmetic the Texas Guide has one Bible reference in connection with its aim for arithmetic, to serve God and man better.⁵⁵ The General Course of Study makes no mention of the Bible, though it does discuss the congregational budget, synod, church attendance, and stewardship.⁵⁶

Science is divided into the study of health and of general science. In teaching health, the Bible is not used by either of the major curricula, except once for motivation.⁵⁷ In teaching general science the Bible again comes into more frequent use. The General Course of Study has many references throughout to show God as Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, and to show man's place in the universe. Among many others, the Creation story, the Flood, the story of Joseph in Egypt, and the Feeding of the Five Thousand are to be studied.⁵⁸ J. E. Potzger wrote a separate curriculum for science which is particularly rich in Bible references.⁵⁹ He expressly states that children are to look up passages in the Bible and report back to the class for discussion on such topics as man's

⁵⁵Texas Educational Guide, p. 92.

⁵⁶General Course of Study, pp. 119-128.

⁵⁷Texas Educational Guide, p. 108. General Course of Study, pp. 170-184.

⁵⁸General Course of Study, pp. 184-231.

⁵⁹J. E. Potzger, Curriculum for The Teaching of Science in The Lutheran Elementary Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1931).

station in creation,⁶⁰ the meaning of natural catastrophes,⁶¹ kindness to animals,⁶² and the controversy between scientific hypotheses and the Bible.⁶³

Under the fine arts are included music and drawing. The General Course of Study makes no mention of the Bible either in music or in drawing.⁶⁴ The Texas Guide directs the teacher to "show from the Bible that God wants us to sing and praise Him with instruments."⁶⁵ A separate curriculum on music by Zurstadt makes no reference to the Bible,⁶⁶ while another by Deffner and Diesing on drawing makes one passing reference to illustrating Bible stories.⁶⁷

To sum up, the curricula recommend the use of the Bible chiefly when taught as a separate subject, and when used in devotions. To a great extent it is neglected in other religious subjects. Its use otherwise in any significant amount is restricted to reading, the social sciences, and general science.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 23.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 37.

⁶²Ibid., p. 30.

⁶³Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁴General Course of Study, pp. 232-247.

⁶⁵Texas Educational Guide, p. 63.

⁶⁶H. M. Zurstadt, Curriculum in Music for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1926).

⁶⁷E. Deffner and A. H. Diesing, Curriculum in Art for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932).

CHAPTER IV

OBSTACLES FOR CHILDREN IN USING THE BIBLE

Unfortunately there are many obstacles that serve to discourage children from using the Bible. Though some of these obstacles may never be done away with entirely, they can and should be minimized as much as possible. In the first place, the Bible is an adult book. It is written to and for adults, from the adult point of view, with adult arguments and reasoning. Nowhere do the writers try to adapt their message to the level of children.¹ This work is left to the heads of families. Teachers, therefore, must make an effort to interpret the thoughts of the Bible in terms of the needs and interests of children. The line of reasoning followed in the Epistle to the Romans or in the Epistle to the Hebrews is difficult for children to understand. The philosophical nature of John's Gospel makes parts of it difficult in spite of the simplicity of language it employs. It is up to the parents and teachers to translate and interpret these ideas and thought patterns for the children. It is a difficult task to get children to read an adult book or the editorial section of the newspaper. The Bible is a very long book. Children's books are short enough that they can be mastered by children without any great trial of their patience and perseverance. A child becomes discouraged with a book too long for him to master, and the Bible is such a book.²

¹J.P. Love, How to Read The Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 165.

²A.H. Jahsmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 17.

In the second place, adults often set children a bad example by their disinterest and neglect of the Bible. Mere lip service to the Book accomplishes very little. It is unfair and unreal to expect children to read the Bible if their parents do not, or if their teacher shows that he does not. While many of the so-called "fundamentalist" groups of churches accomplish great things in getting their people to read the Bible, (although some of them have a different motive from the Lutherans, with mere contact and familiarity as their goal,) the Lutheran Church - "The Church of The Open Bible" - is often far behind in this respect. A.H. Jahsmann sums up his opinion of the status of Bible reading in the Missouri Synod in these words:

Surveys of schools, youth camps, congregations, and families disclose not only an astounding neglect of Holy Scriptures in personal life, but a disturbing illiteracy with regard to the Bible.³

W.A. Kramer too lists as one reason why children do not read the Bible the fact that too little time at home is devoted to it.⁴ This is a problem especially in the present accelerated mode of living. The example of parents, teachers, and other adults is often a strong negative influence on children towards reading the Bible.

A third obstacle for children that is readily recognized is the King James Version of the Bible so widely used at present in Lutheran circles. After teachers of the Northern Illinois District of the Missouri Synod had made a study of this problem, they requested of Superintendent A.H. Kramer "a Bible translation and arrangement which can be

³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

understood more easily than the King James Version."⁵ Children are not expected to read Shakespeare until high school, and then only with elaborate foot notes and explanations. Yet the life-giving Word of God is handed to elementary school children in the form of the same Elizabethan English which their twentieth-century minds cannot digest. Educators would object strenuously if such a medium were used in secular subjects, but in religion it is regarded as a necessary cross to bear. Not only is the language too antiquated for modern young minds, but the very typography in which the Bible is printed is a hindrance to interesting reading. Instead of the running paragraph to which they are accustomed, the children must read two narrow vertical columns, divided, often without regard to sense, into chapters and verses. Poetry and prose, direct speech and quotations, are all written in the same way.⁶ No publisher would think of putting out a book in this form today if he wanted it to sell. The very appearance of the Bible page, as well as the "funny" language, is a hindrance to children in reading Scriptures.

A fourth, and a very serious obstacle to reading the Bible, is the constant use of books based on the Bible in place of the Bible. Such books are the Bible history, Catechism, hymnal, memory book, and other Bible story books. In a study by the teachers of Immanuel Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the following statement occurs:

The path of least resistance encourages indiscriminate use of Bible histories, catechism, devotional booklets, memory books, and others which have in them carefully selected and well arranged portions and doctrines of Holy Writ. It is possible to use these books with-

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

⁶Ibid., p. 16.

out ever seeing a Bible.⁷

It is often a characteristic of people confirmed in churches of the Missouri Synod that they can defend their faith by quoting page and paragraph from the Small Catechism, but at the same time they are unable to find the story of the Prodigal Son in the Bible. The General Course of Study holds that the teaching of Bible history and Catechism is actually Bible study, although a more extensive acquaintance with the Bible itself is necessary if the Bible is to be used properly.⁸

A.H. Jahsmann has this to say about books based on the Bible:

Scripture, of course, can be excerpted, and appears also in catechisms, Bible story books, and many other necessary and valuable aids to the study of the Bible. But the Book from which all other presentations of the Word are drawn is the Bible. Therefore the basic material for Christian education is the Scriptures. The Bible is the area to be covered. All other books should be regarded as aids to learning the Bible.⁹

Although the Bible history and Catechism have a place in the teaching of religion and are useful, the teacher must exercise great care lest they push the Bible itself far into the background.

The hindrances to the use of the Bible by children are sizable and dare not be ignored. The teacher must face these obstacles squarely and overcome them to the greatest degree possible.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁸ General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 55.

⁹ A.H. Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 7.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPING PROPER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BIBLE

If children are to be taught to use the Bible with benefit, they must have the proper attitudes toward the Bible from the start. The dictum is true: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."¹ In creating a reverent and useful attitude towards the Bible, the example of adults, particularly of parents and teachers, is of the utmost importance. They should use the Bible regularly themselves and bear witness to the children of what God's Word means to them.² The teacher must be an enthusiastic Bible reader himself to create enthusiasm in the pupils.³ Teachers should have the Bible constantly at hand and refer to it while teaching.⁴ The children should see that the Bible is read, honored, and loved by their teacher and parents. Cooperation between home and school is important. Parents should know what the school is doing with the Bible, and the teacher should know what is being done at home. There is a church in Ponca City, Oklahoma, that provides a Bible reading schedule for the children which calls for guidance by the parents.⁵ If parents as well as teachers show a love and respect for the Bible, and use it

¹Prov. 22:6.

²W.A. Kramer, "Use of The Bible in Agencies of Christian Education," unpublished, (mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p. 1.

³A.C. Mueller, "The Use of The Bible in Sunday School", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XIV:3 (July 1940), p. 176.

⁴Kramer, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵A.H. Jahsmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 21.

themselves daily, much will have already been done to form the right attitude in the child.

The Bible should not have to be forced on pupils. Educators oppose compulsion in any type of study, for such an attitude diminishes learning. How much less should God's Word be made a drudgery to His little ones. The Psalmist expresses the desired attitude towards the Bible: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"⁶ As in other learning, the teacher must arouse interest in the pupils in order for them to receive benefit from Bible reading. Every modern device for achieving interest that can be adapted and would not degrade the Bible, should be used. These will include many things discussed in below under method,⁷ such as: the problem approach, questioning the text, exhibits, sensory aids, games, quizzes, drills, dramatizations, and many others. Care should be taken to maintain a proper respect at all times, yet without dampening interest. Although the Bible is a divine power which generates and creates life, still the psychological nature of the human individual is to be reckoned with, and the teaching made interesting and stimulating.

Perhaps the most important attitude towards the Bible that is to be created is that of reverence. Two extremes must be avoided. In the first place, the Bible should not be handled with superstitious awe. It is not a talisman or good luck charm by which man wards off evil spirits. How many soldiers in World War II used their Bibles as did this one who said to his spiritual advisor: "Chaplain, I always carry

⁶Ps. 119:103.

⁷Infra: Chapter VI

it right here (slapping the breast pocket), I hope it will bring me luck."⁸ Other people will seek to find the answer to their problems by letting the Bible fall open to any page by chance, then reading the first verse their eyes catch, believing that God has so directed the chance element that this verse will be the special answer to their present need. God has no where condoned such a use of His Word. The Bible is to be revered as the Word of God, but not in a superstitious or magical way. God's Word is honored when it is diligently read, not when it is used as a good luck piece.

There is danger of going to the other extreme also. The Bible may become so commonplace that it is regarded no more highly than any other book or comic magazine. Because of familiarity and constant use, children often learn to despise their school books and are careless with them. They breathe a sigh of relief when at the end of the school year they can be rid of them. Such a fate dare never befall their Bibles. "Familiarity breeds contempt" need not happen if the teacher is careful and takes time to instill honor and love for God's Book in the hearts of the pupils.

The Bible is to be regarded with the deepest reverence. The Book itself has much to say about this. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word."⁹

⁸T. Graebner, "Is America Losing The Bible?", Walther League Messenger, XLIV (Feb. 1946), p. 13.

⁹Isaiah 66:2

The Bible demands that it be read by believers.¹⁰ Such reading, however, is different from ordinary reading. It is a special technique with special approaches. Believers must come to the Bible with an attitude of faith, of prayer, and of obedience.¹¹ He must recognize the Bible as the inspired Word of God, or his reading will do him no more good than that of the rationalist and skeptic.¹² Luther designates two parts to Bible reading: God speaking to the reader through the Bible; the reader in return speaking to God in prayer.¹³ Trumbull lists six basic attitudes for a Christian approach to the Bible:

1. A predisposition to believe it.
2. In the spirit of learners desiring to be taught.
3. Scriptures as an infallible source of all the truth they were meant to teach.
4. Equal faith in the Old and New Testaments.
5. Depending largely on the book itself for its own interpretation.
6. Prayer for the illumination of the same spirit who inspired the Bible.¹⁴

These attitudes are necessary not only when children themselves read the Bible, but also when it is read to them in church and otherwise. They should listen attentively. God is speaking to them.¹⁵

The secret to truly profitable Bible reading is finding Christ in

¹⁰ Isaiah 34:16. John 5:39.

¹¹ A.C. Mueller, "Methods of Bible Study", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XXVII:4 (Oct. 1942), p. 261.

¹² H.C. Trumbull, et al., Hints On Bible Study (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Co., 1898), p. 12.

¹³ Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 34.

¹⁴ Trumbull, op. cit., pp. 19-30. His statement under point three is not in perfect harmony with the Lutheran doctrine of inspiration.

¹⁵ Kramer, op. cit., p. 5.

all of it. Where Christ and the redemption are not central, the Bible degenerates into a legalistic code, as the Jews made of the Old Testament. The Apostle says of those Jews who couldn't find Christ in their Bible: "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart."¹⁶ Jahsmann sums it up as follows:

The Bible is primarily the Gospel - the Word of Reconciliation... Primarily the Bible is the revelation of God in Christ - in the Messiah who was to come, and in the Christ who came and will come again.¹⁷

As stated before, the fundamental aim of all Bible reading is growth in the life of Christ.¹⁸ This aim can be realized when the child comes to understand that all of the Bible centers around Christ and His work for men.

A correlary to the attitude that all Scriptures center around Christ is the attitude that all Scriptures are useful for the Christian. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹⁹ All of the Bible is useful. It may be that certain portions are beyond the child's understanding for a time (some they never will understand), but it is an article of faith that all the Bible is useful. Kramer has this to say of the child eight or nine years old:

The child of this age can begin to see that Bible people were real

¹⁶ 2 Cor. 3:15.

¹⁷ Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 2

¹⁸ Supra: p. 7.

¹⁹ 2 Tim. 3:16.

people who had the same needs, troubles, hopes, sorrows, and joys that we have. They can learn to judge the feelings and actions of Bible people and apply the obvious lessons to themselves.²⁰

The General Course of Study ranks ahead of the intellectual purposes such as history and doctrine, the devotional purposes, namely that the child be acquainted with selections appropriate for thanksgiving, comfort, encouragement, etc., and also for use in private and family worship.²¹

To attain the right attitude in children towards the Bible, the parents and teachers must set a good example, and create interest as much as possible, retaining at all times a reverent attitude towards the Bible as God's Word about Jesus, all of which is useful to believers.

²⁰ Kramer, op. cit., p. 5.

²¹ General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 56.

CHAPTER VI

METHODS OF TEACHING BIBLE STUDY

The Book Method

One of the most popular and helpful ways of reading the Bible is what is known as the book method. This means that the reader select one book of the Bible, usually a shorter one, and read it through in one sitting. This should be done several times, each time more carefully, looking for thought. Reading aloud will help.¹ By this method the reader gets the idea the books were meant to convey. He interprets passages in the light of unit thoughts of the book. This method may be varied in a number of ways. Trumbull directs the reader first to master the contents of the book by several readings. Then he should read it again, making a written analysis of the thought pattern and the development of ideas. He should read it once more and write out a paraphrase of the entire book. Next he should go back and revise the original analysis. Then follows a topical study of the book, finding out who wrote it, where, when, why, and to whom.² This somewhat advanced method is more suitable for the children in the seventh and eighth grades.

¹A. C. Mueller, "Methods of Bible Study", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XXVII:4 (Oct. 1942), p. 259.

²H. C. Trumbull, et al., Hints on Bible Study (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Co., 1898), pp. 59-65.

Kettner has another variation of the book method which he calls the "favorite Bible-passages method." The class is to read the entire book at home. From the book they are to select a favorite verse and memorize it. When they meet in class, they are to explain why they chose this particular verse and tell any personal experiences they have had in connection with it. The follows class discussion of all the favorite passages. Someone is asked to give an oral summary of the book. While reading at home they were to mark with question marks any verses which they did not understand. These are used for class discussion. Notebooks are kept to record favorite passages and other notes.³ The advantages of this method are that it not only promotes intelligent reading, with a purpose in mind, but also gives the children a chance to testify before fellow Christians what certain verses of God's Word have meant to them.

When used with children, not all books of the Bible are suitable for this method. Kramer suggests for the ages of twelve and thirteen the books of Mark, Luke, Philipians, and James.⁴ Most of the shorter books are suitable, such as Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Jonah, the Gospels, and the easier epis-

³E. A. Kettner, "Favorite Bible Passages - A Method of Conducting A Bible Class", Lutheran School Journal, LXXIV (Oct. 1940), p. 74. Taken from an article in the American Lutheran of August 1940.

⁴W. A. Kramer, "Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education," unpublished, (mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p. 10.

ties. This method has the advantage of dealing with the books the way the authors intended as they wrote.

The Biographical Method

Another useful and interesting method of Bible study is the biographical method. Here the children study a character like Abraham or Jacob to see how real people with real problems used God for help, and apply the lessons to themselves.⁵ They will read the story of their life as it is found in various parts of the Bible, taking note of reference to the person by Jesus and other writers of Scripture. The Bible is full of characters whose lives are worthy of study. If the teacher has a chain reference Bible, or some other such help, he will find lists of characters together with the references for finding their history in Scripture. The Thompson Bible lists the following characters with full outline and references to their lives as found in the Bible: Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elisha, and Daniel.⁶ In addition to these it lists the references to one hundred thirty-one famous men of the Old Testament,⁷ fifty-four

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁶F. C. Thompson, editor, The New Chain-Reference Bible, 3rd improved edition, (Indianapolis: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., c. 1934), pp. 231-238 of appendix.

⁷Ibid., pp. 239-240 of appendix.

prominent men of the New Testament,⁸ and thirty-nine prominent women of the Bible.⁹ Some of these will be studied as example of wicked people and the evil consequences of sin, while others are models to follow. With preparation and effort, the teacher can make such a study not only one of the most fascinating ways of reading the Bible, but also a very enlightening and inspiring experience for action.

The Topical Method

The topical method is similar to the biographical. Instead of studying people, certain topics and doctrines are followed through the Bible. For example, prayer may be the topic. Children will look up examples of prayer in their Bibles, study the circumstances which led to prayer and the techniques used in praying, and thereby learn to pray for themselves.¹⁰ Another interesting study is that of prophecy and fulfillment, especially Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and their fulfillment in Christ.¹¹ Although one authority thinks this method is too far advanced even for Sunday School teachers,¹² the general consensus is that it may be used with profit by the upper el-

⁸Ibid., p. 240 of appendix.

⁹Ibid., p. 240 of appendix.

¹⁰Kramer, op. cit., p. 7.

¹¹Ibid., p. 8.

¹²Mueller, op. cit., p. 260.

elementary grades.¹³ Under this method might be included the Forty Famous Chapters by E. C. Gutz,¹⁴ which comprise one unit of thought each. The chapter is to be read and the location of the topic idea in the Bible memorized. The topical method is a little more difficult than either the book method or the biographical, but it has benefits all its own which the other methods do not provide. There is no better way of achieving clear insight and firm assurance of what God says about specific doctrines and ethical problems.

The Word Study Method

A method similar to the topical is word study. Key terms of the Bible are studied in their contexts to arrive at a deeper understanding of their meaning. Words that occur frequently, such as world, flesh, sanctify, justify, righteousness, and others should be studied.¹⁵ Such a study will involve the use of a concordance of some sort. A knowledge of the original word on the part of the teacher, or at least the knowledge that the same word is used in all cases in the original, will prevent the study from being inaccurate. A study of synonyms and their use would be

¹³For example, Kramer, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁴They are listed in Jahsmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 32.

¹⁵Kramer, op. cit., p. 9.

fruitful. Many words are studied best by their contrasts, as for example, the word grace. Others should be studied with their correlatives, as promise and faith. Such a study will involve more preparation for the teacher, but will yield rich dividends.

Principles of Interpretation

Six principles of interpretation are listed by Trumbull:

1. Be willing to let the Bible mean what it wants to mean.
2. Give careful attention to the connection of your passages.
3. Remember the Bible is a very old book.
4. Compare Scripture with other portions of Scripture.
5. Interpret the Bible upon principles of common sense.
6. Cultivate spiritual sympathy with the Bible; for it is a spiritual book.¹⁶

The Bible should first be taken to mean exactly what it says. The literal meaning should always be the first to come to mind. If this meaning seems unlikely, or conflicts with previous knowledge of Scripture elsewhere, then Scripture must be allowed to interpret Scripture. When Jesus says a prophecy refers to Him, it refers to Him. Clearer statements of the Bible are always basic, and more obscure passages are interpreted in their light. The context must always be read to see in what sense the writer uses the words, and where the passage fits in the story or line of reasoning. The Bible should be read with common sense, not

¹⁶Trumbull, op. cit., pp. 99-107.

making it say things it doesn't say. Any one who uses the reason God has given him and lets Scripture interpret Scripture will arrive at the true meaning of the Bible.

The Bible As Literature

Since the Bible is not one book but a library of books, it contains many kinds of literature, from historical prose to poetry and oratory. It took over two thousand years to complete the Bible. It was written in two widely-separated languages, Hebrew and Greek. No translation can completely cover such differences of thought pattern and vocabulary. The Bible "must, to some extent, be studied as literature, with literary appreciation, and with reference to its literary phenomena and peculiarities, if it is to be intellectually, as well as devoutly, studied."¹⁷ The student should recognize the different kinds of literature: history - narrative, chronicle, and biographical; letters - to churches, to individuals, and encyclicals; orations; sermons; parables; drama; poetry; prayers; and elegies.¹⁸ The King James Version of the Bible does not bring out these differences. Therefore the teacher must do all he can to make clear to the child what type of literature he is reading. He may want to use modern translations, or modern arrangements of the King James Version, to show the children

¹⁷Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 93-94.

the differences in literature. The teacher must also explain that different literary types are to be interpreted in different senses. Prose tends to be more literal than poetry. The poetical sections of Holy Writ must be read with imagination, as when it says that God has wings.¹⁹ A parable has only one point of comparison, and too many conclusions cannot be drawn. Certain parts of Paul's Epistles were advice for the people of his day which no longer applies to Christians, others are for all time. The children should know what kind of literature they are reading if they are to get the most out of it.

Taking Notes

It will stimulate the children's interest if they keep notebooks. Here they might list passages under various headings, such as: My Favorite Stories, My Favorite Prayers, My Favorite Promises, etc.²⁰ Older children might keep outlines of books, character studies, and other information they will treasure and use. This dare not be made drudgery that the Bible becomes just another school subject that involves a lot of work. Any artistic bent the children may have may also be used on such a notebook. If the teacher has them refer to their notebooks and put them to actual

¹⁹W. W. White, "Some Sugrestions about How to Read The Bible", American Lutheran, XVIII:10 (Oct. 1935), p. 17.

²⁰Kramer, op. cit., p. 10.

use, the children will see the reason for making and keeping them.

Another aid to understanding is some system of marking the Bible. The one probably best suited to Lutheran schools is the one suggested by Jahsmann.²¹ The children might underline memory gems, favorite verses, impressive sermon texts, outstanding Messianic promises, and other famous sections of the Bible as the Magnificat, the Beatitudes, etc. His system would correlate with the Lutheran Catechism and Hymnal. As the catechism is studied, the passages are looked up in the Bible and marked with a code. A Roman numeral would stand for the number of the Chief Part of the catechism, and an arabic number for the subdivision under the Chief Part. For example, I-5 would be the First Chief Part, the Fifth Commandment. H-95 would stand for hymn 95. In this way, as the child reads his Bible in private devotions, or otherwise, he would come across these markings which would serve to bring out the meaning of the passage and emphasize its familiarity and importance.

One other method of taking notes, one seldom used, is paraphrasing. To get more out of a text and to deepen one's understanding, the reader should make a running paraphrase of an epistle or prophet, or give a summary of the facts of a historical book. This would involve comprehen-

²¹Jahsmann, op. cit., pp. 58-60.

sion of what is read and give the reader a good overview of the book.²²

Another device to make Bible reading more meaningful is to ask questions of the text. As the child reads a portion of Scripture, he should ask himself three questions: What does the text say? What does it mean? What does it mean to me?²³ These three questions are simple enough that they can be used with profit by children of the elementary grades. At first it may be necessary for the teacher to do this orally with the children a few times in order that they may understand the process. It should take very little time until they are able to do this questioning on their own in all their Bible reading. Jahsmann gives a variation of this when he would have the children read a selection until they find something that is meaningful to them. They should raise their hands, read it aloud, explain how it is meaningful, and discuss his choice with the class.²⁴ Reading with the express purpose of finding something for oneself stimulates interest and increases understanding.

Sensory Aids

Sensory aids are controlled experiences which aid the child in learning by means of any or all of his senses.

²²Trumbull, op. cit., p. 61.

²³Kramer, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁴Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 34.

In Bible reading many sensory aids can and should be used. The Bible itself has many examples of sensory teaching. There are prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea who taught by symbolic actions. God himself sanctions the use of visual aids when He says through Moses:

And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up, And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.²⁵

One such sensory aid to the study of the Bible is dramatization. Kramer recommends this method for occasional use, in costume if possible.²⁶ In order to dramatize the story accurately, the children would first study it in the Bible. This reading would be interesting and meaningful to them since they have this definite goal in mind. Normally they would act out the story without rehearsal, or with one rehearsal, and with makeshift costuming. For ordinary teaching purposes, too much time should not be lost in detail. The children should act out the story using their own words to convey the thoughts as well as they can remember them. Occasionally they might go to the trouble of putting on a polished production for the other rooms of the school or for the parents. For this they

²⁵Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

²⁶Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

would study the Bible carefully and rewrite it into a script for the play. In such a play "the language of the Bible should be employed where Biblical monologue or dialogue is used."²⁷ Of course this is not to be done in those stories where the dialogue would become meaningless to the children because of difficult language. But "some Bible stories are sufficiently dramatic in nature as to be used by the direct quotation of the Bible story."²⁸ An example of such a story would be that of Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau. Such use of Bible language would give accuracy to the story, which is of greater importance to the older child than to the primary child. It would also aid in memory work of certain passages which occur in stories. The question whether children should be allowed to play the part of Jesus, as well as the question whether portraying evil people hurts character, will have to be worked over in the local situation. Dramatization will be an aid to Bible reading if it gives purpose to the reading and helps clarify the meaning by bringing it into the experience of the children. The application of the truths behind the story must be impressed upon the children from their reading as well as from the drama. A simulated radio broadcast would eliminate the need of costumes and give

²⁷C. S. Ikenberry, Motives and Expression in Religious Education (New York: G. H. Doran Co., 1922), p. 66.

²⁸Ibid., p. 72.

the children a chance to read their lines from the script or directly from the Bible. Acting out a story brings the lesson into the pupils' own experience and thereby makes the Bible more alive.

Another sensory aid is the exhibit. There are many types of exhibit that will both stimulate interest in Bible reading and improve understanding. An exhibit of old Bibles and of foreign language Bibles could be arranged in connection with a study of stories about the Bible and Bible translations.²⁹ There might be a contest to find the oldest Bible, the largest Bible, the smallest Bible, and other oddities. Jahsmann suggests the following exhibits in connection with Bible reading: a museum of Bible miniatures, Bible scrapbooks, a bulletin board of news about the Bible, miniature buildings such as the Temple or a hall of Bible heroes, and a collection of Bible posters and pictures.³⁰ These exhibits should be planned and prepared by the pupils as much as possible if they are to achieve the maximum learning from them. Exhibits may be used to arouse interest at the introduction of a unit, or as a summary and review of the unit.

An expensive but valuable aid to Bible study is the motion picture. Although there are not enough films avail-

²⁹Kramer, op. cit., p.7.

³⁰Jahsmann, op. cit., p.43.

able to accompany most Bible stories, the lives of Christ and of Paul, as well as those of certain other notable Bible characters have been produced. The children should first read the story in the Bible and discuss its meaning in class. Before seeing the picture they should be instructed to watch for certain things, especially to notice what has been added to the Biblical account to round out the story. The teacher should always preview the movie to prepare for class. After seeing the movie, the children should go to their Bibles, noting how much more alive the story is for them. They can discuss whether the movie presented an accurate picture, and how the picture helped make the story more meaningful to them. This story should not only be a critique of the film, but primarily an application of the Bible story to the lives of children. If time permits, a second showing of the picture clinches the subject matter.

Much of the same process of teaching could be used with slides and film strips. They have the advantage that they may be shown three or four times if the teacher desires, because of their brevity. The absence of a sound track makes it possible for the children to tell the story or to read it from their Bibles while it is being shown.

Both Kramer³¹ and Jahsmann³² strongly favor the use of

³¹Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

³²Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 45.

flat pictures as aids to Bible teaching. They could be mounted in scrapbooks, on bulletin boards, or used in many other ways to help the child's understanding. The children themselves should collect the pictures, cut them out, mount them, and engage in whatever other activities are connected with the pictures in order to receive the greatest benefit. Flat pictures are inexpensive, often involving no expense at all. Every school should be able to make use of this aid in studying the Bible.

In Bible study oral reading should play a prominent part. "An effort to bring out the meaning in oral reading leads to better understanding on the part of the reader, and it helps to convey the meaning to the listener."³³ Oral reading also helps the teacher find out if the child is able to handle the vocabulary of the Bible. It provides an opportunity to train the children to be devout and attentive listeners when God's Word is being read to them. The type of oral reading should be varied. Individual reading, responsive reading, and choral reading are among the possibilities.³⁴ The advantage of oral reading is that it makes use of two avenues of approach to understanding, sight and hearing.

³³Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁴General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 57.

The use of charts, graphs, and maps also has a place in Bible study. Charts should be used in teaching children the order of the books of the Bible, the relation of the Old and New Testaments, the harmony of the Gospels, the parables of Jesus, the lives of important men, and in many other lessons that lend themselves to such illustration. The Thompson Bible³⁵ and most Bible dictionaries contain such charts. Graphs are especially useful in studying chronology. It is doubtful whether graphs should be kept of the amount of the Bible each child reads, as this would encourage quantitative reading without understanding. The teacher should provide map study often, wherever it aids in Bible reading or study.³⁶ These would include the maps in the back of most Bibles, wall maps, maps drawn on the blackboard, and maps shown on slides. It is helpful for the children to draw maps themselves, especially to make elevated maps out of paper mache or a similar substance. Jahsmann suggests that the younger children make maps on the playground and use miniature figures out of clothespins to travel places.³⁷ The sand table might be used in the same way. All of these devices are valuable only when they promote understanding in the child and arouse his interest in reading the Bible.

³⁵Thompson, op. cit., passim.

³⁶Kramer, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁷Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 42.

Games and Drills

People have gone to much trouble to think of games and drills which would create interest in the otherwise tedious accumulation of Bible facts. There is danger that too much emphasis is placed upon the drill of mechanics, where frequent Bible reading would achieve the same familiarity with the Book.³⁸ A certain amount of facts have to be learned and skills practiced. Bible drill should be kept to a minimum and used only "occasionally."³⁹ Facts that need to be drilled are, for example: the order of the books and their authors, the general content of the books, the division a book fits under (historical, poetical, prophetic, doctrinal, epistolary), and the location of a number of important passages and selections.⁴⁰ The General Course of Study suggests "place memory" of the following:

The Creation, Genesis 1 and 2; The Fall of Man, Genesis 3; The Giving of the Law, Exodus 20:1-17; The Aaronic Blessing, Numbers 6:24-26; Main Prophecies of Christ's Death, Psalms 22 and 69, Isaiah 53; Christ's Birth, Luke 2:1-20; Christ's Passion, Matthew 26 and 27, Mark 14 and 15, Luke 22 and 23, John 18 and 19; Sermon in [sic] the Mount, Matthew 5-7; Christ's Intercessory Prayer, John 17; Joy in Heaven, Revelation 7:9-17.⁴¹

It is best if such drill be brought in gradually as the les-

³⁸General Course of Study, p. 57.

³⁹Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 11.

⁴¹General Course of Study, p. 57.

sons are taught, rather than devoting a half hour to a contest of memory and speed. The child may easily get the false idea that he knows his Bible when he is able to find a reference in a short time. Drill should be kept at a minimum and taught incidentally with the regular Bible study as much as possible.

Kramer recommends the occasional use of Bible games and quizzes.⁴² Jahsmann suggests the playing of Bible charades or Bible baseball.⁴³ Since such games accomplish little in the application of Bible truths to lives, but emphasize facts alone, they too should be kept at a minimum. There are many Bible quiz books on the market which provide the teacher with questions on the facts of every book of the Bible.⁴⁴ A quiz book by Jacobs⁴⁵ has one chapter that does make application of Bible truths. The drill is to be mimeographed and distributed to the pupils to work independently. Under every book of the New Testament different situations are listed, and the reader is asked to find which Bible reference in that book applies to the given situation.⁴⁶

⁴²Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴³Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁴For example, A. W. Kelly, Our Bible - What's In It? (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., c. 1939).

⁴⁵J. V. Jacobs, Bible Quiz Book (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., c. 1939).

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 47-72.

With this exception, Bible games and quizzes usually deal exclusively with facts and are of limited value. Too much time should not be devoted to such devices.

Memorizing Bible Passages

It is a practice of the Lutheran Church that children commit to memory a large number of Bible passages to be of use to them not only in their youth but in years to come. It is not profitable to ask the child to memorize passages that are meaningless to him on the grounds that he will understand and use them later. "Any memory verse which the child does not understand and which does not concern his present need will be quickly forgotten."⁴⁷ Although the Missouri Synod has published a separate memory book containing the majority of the Bible passages listed in the catechism,⁴⁸ the author of that book, Kramer, says in another writing: "Memory verses should be studied directly from the Bible."⁴⁹ Studying memory verses from the Bible, in their context, will prevent the child from attaching false notions to words and from using the passages to prove what they do not say. Much memory work, especially in the

⁴⁷I. S. Caldwell, Our Concern Is Children (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1948), p. 131.

⁴⁸W. A. Kramer, Memory Book for Lutheran Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944).

⁴⁹Kramer, "Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education", p. 8.

lower grades, should be taught incidentally in connection with the regular Bible lesson. By constant repetition, by participation in dramatizing Bible stories,⁵⁰ and by other references of the teacher, important passages will become ingraved on the minds of the children.

There are many methods of Bible study. The teacher need never feel that he is bound to only one or two of these methods. Many, if not all, of them should be used to give variety to the instruction and to reach the greatest number of pupils. It is difficult to declare one method the best, or some to be preferred over others. The method that is most suitable will depend on the age and interests of the class being taught as well as the material and time available for teaching. The teacher should be acquainted with as many methods as possible that he may take from them what is adaptable to his teaching situation.

⁵⁰Calhewell, op. cit., p. 135.

CHAPTER VII

MATERIALS USED IN BIBLE STUDY

Authorities generally agree that Bible story books are useful for introducing the Bible to children. While the child in the lower grades "should be familiar with the appearance of the Bible, his introduction to its contents may be through books of Bible stories."¹ By the time the child reaches fourth grade, his interest should have been stimulated by hearing Bible stories and reading Bible story books. The adult version may gradually be worked in.² The most common Bible story book used in the upper grades of the Lutheran schools is the Advanced Bible History.³ There is danger that continued use of such a book would compete with the use of the Bible. A Bible history has the advantage of selected stories that are more easily found than in the Bible. It also is written in paragraph form and has explanations for obsolete words. Some of these advantages would be lost to a modern translation of the Bible. The advantage of proper selections is one that remains and justifies the use of the book in the lower and middle grades.

¹I. S. Caldwell, Our Concern Is Children (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1948), p. 120.

²Kramer, "Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education", unpublished, (mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p. 5.

³Advanced Bible History (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1936).

Schmidt tells the pupils who will use his workbook:

Since there are many letters in God's Book, you will want to read them one at a time. To help you in choosing which to read first, some of the letters have been collected in a separate book. This book is your Bible History.⁴

Since the upper grade pupils have used a Bible history in the lower grades, it would not appeal to them as much as the Bible itself. Students in the upper grades should not get their knowledge of Bible stories from Bible histories, but from the Bible itself. The Bible history should be a supplementary text, a reference book for facilitating review. Bible story books and Bible histories have their place in introducing the Bible to children, but should not replace the Bible in the upper grades.

By the time they enter fourth grade, children should own their own Bible. It is poor practice for the school to buy a stack of Bibles and keep them in the classroom for the children to use. It is much better for each child to own his own Bible.⁵ The Bible the child owns should not be a cheap Bible with small print and low grade paper, but but a good, legible reference Bible that the child can use.⁶

⁴W. A. Schmidt, et al., Working with God's Word (Saginaw, Mich.: Lutheran School Service, 1941), Inside cover.

⁵A. C. Mueller, "The Use of The Bible in Sunday School", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XXVI:4 (Oct. 1941), p. 250.

⁶E. Mueller, "Teaching The Child to USE The Bible", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XXV:3 (July 1940), p. 175.

The edition recommended by A. C. Mueller is the "Concordia School Bible No. 150 Special," which he recommends for legibility, marginal references, self-pronouncing system, attractive format, dates, helps, maps, and its inexpensive price.⁷ All the above listed points should be considered when buying a Bible for a young child, while an older child should have one with more helps and a dictionary.

Since the King James Version is an obstacle to the profitable use of the Bible by children,⁸ the use of modern translations is worthy of consideration. J. P. Love recommends that the child begin first with Goodspeed's New Testament, and later use the entire Smith-Goodspeed Bible.⁹ This version has running paragraphs and distinguishes the different types of literature. Phillip's Letters to Young Churches is a modern paraphrase of the epistles of the New Testament.¹⁰ Moffat also made a modern translation of the entire Bible,¹¹ while the Revised Standard Version renders the New Testament in modern, yet stately, English.¹² All of these translations do away

⁷A. C. Mueller, op. cit., pp. 174-175. (This Bible is published by Concordia Publishing House and sells for \$1.10.)

⁸Supra: p. 24.

⁹J. P. Love, How to Read The Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 173.

¹⁰J. B. Phillips, Letters to Young Churches (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

¹¹J. Moffat, A New Translation of The Bible (New York: Harpers, c. 1935).

¹²Revised Standard Version of The New Testament (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, c. 1901, 1929, 1946).

with the linguistic and typeographical disadvantages of the King James Version. The Lutherans have no English translation of their own, and are therefore faced with the problem that each of these translations has some objectionable interpretation or phrasing. Nor do they agree with every word of the King James Version, but they have come to regard it as the least erroneous.

Since the King James Version is the most commonly used and accepted translation of the Bible, it should still be the chief Bible used with Lutheran school children until such a time as it is supplanted by a better one. However, the modern translations should be used along side of it to aid the understanding of the children and show them that the Bible is not a museum piece. Some of them should be used with caution lest the underlying theology of the translator influences the children negatively. Jahsmann suggests as a project that the children compare Bible verses in different versions.¹³ There are also better typeographical arrangements of the King James Version which are helpful. Although the King James Version is still the backbone for Lutheran study of the Bible, modern versions should be used frequently for comparison.

¹³A. H. Jahsmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1960), p. 43.

Making Selections

In selecting portions of Scripture for children to read, there is the problem of the frank references to sex in the Bible and to horrible deeds of bloodshed. Some people think that these stories have a harmful influence on the growing personality of the child. According to Love horror stories do not frighten children or warp their personalities.¹⁴ Horror stories where the moral is clearly seen on the surface are best suited for children. These stories should not be augmented by the teacher with the historic details of the horrible act. It should be read for the lesson it teaches, and application be made to the lives of the pupils. Similarly, the stories involving sex will not be harmful to the child if the teacher does not dwell upon the act, but rather upon the moral of the story and its meaning for the children in their lives.

In selecting portions of the Bible for children, the interests and needs of the child should be considered. Children enjoy stories that deal with children and family life, such as the stories of Joseph, Samuel, Joash, the Shunamite boy, Jesus blessing children, Jairus' daughter, and many others.¹⁵ Of course, all the important stories of the Bible do not center around children. But children

¹⁴Love, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 165.

are more interested in stories than in essays or poetry. According to Love, "the Gospels ought to be the child's chief reading from the Bible."¹⁶ It might also be a good idea to adapt the reading program to the major festivals of the Church Year.¹⁷ In reading the Bible, children as a general rule want stories, something full of action that will provide them with a hero or heroine.

In a Bible reading program the teacher must decide whether he is going to emphasize reading as much of the Bible as possible with a minimum of explanation, or whether he is going to have them read small portions and explain it in detail. Both extremes are to be avoided, for too large a quantity of reading means little understanding, while too limited an amount does not teach the Bible in its fuller applications.¹⁸ It is possible for an assignment to be too long either for the teacher to explain it or the children to discuss it. A teacher should limit the amount and teach it thoroughly, rather than try to teach too much half-hazardly.¹⁹ The selection should contain one chief unit of thought, but be long enough for discussion.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁷General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1936), p. 58.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁹Caldwell, op. cit., p. 124.

Bible Helps

"The teacher cannot say everything himself, and he cannot satisfy every viewpoint, but he can show his pupils how to obtain and evaluate the best information."²⁰ One of the aims of Bible teaching is that the student becomes an independent Bible reader, able to read alone with understanding and profit. The teacher will not always be available to answer questions and explain difficulties. The child must learn to handle the various Bible helps himself so as to arrive at an interpretation of difficult passages on his own. While Kramer thinks that children should have drills to learn the use of a concordance and Bible dictionary,²¹ The General Course of Study recommends the use of cross references, commentaries, concordances, and Bible dictionaries be taught incidentally as the need arises.²² It is better teaching if a skill can be taught in connection with some need, in its natural setting, rather than as an isolated drill to be mastered for its own sake.

The Bible of the child should contain marginal references. Such references should be used not only for parallel passages but also for the variant readings that are

²⁰Op. E. Kretzmann, The Religion of The Child and Other Essays (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 148.

²¹Kramer, op. cit., p. 9.

²²General Course of Study, p. 57.

found there.²³ The children should develop the habit of taking notice of the variant reading, literal translations, and other possible translations, as they appear in the margins of their Bibles. The simplest and shortest type of commentary is the annotated Bible. The Concordia Bible with Notes is especially recommended for Lutheran school children.²⁴ It has the advantage of being all in one book together with the Bible text, and brief enough to allow reasonably rapid reading of the Bible itself. The Bible commentaries a child uses should be simple. They should not contain Hebrew and Greek words or be written in theological terminology. The only Lutheran commentary that meets this need is Kretzmann's Popular Commentary.²⁵ The child should also be acquainted with Bible dictionaries, for they contain many valuable summaries and diagrams as well as explanations of Biblical customs and geography. A concordance is a necessary help for a topical study of the Bible or for word study. The concordance does not mean much by itself, but the passages alluded to in part must be looked in full. "The context must by all means be taken into consideration, otherwise a concordance is not an aid to the

²³H. C. Trumbull, et al., Hints on Bible Study (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Co., 1898), p. 126.

²⁴Kramer, op. cit., p. 11. (Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.)

²⁵p. E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921-1924), 4 vols.

understanding."²⁶ A complete concordance is not necessary for work with children. While they should be acquainted with such a book, the small concordance in the back of their Bibles is sufficient for most of their needs.

In selecting the materials to be used by the children in Bible study, the teacher should bear in mind the abilities and interests of the children, not only in the versions and translations they are to use, but also in the stories and readings he chooses for them, and the helps he trains them to use.

²⁶Kretzmann, The Religion of The Child and Other Essays, p. 148.

CHAPTER VIII

ADAPTING BIBLE STUDY TO AGE DIFFERENCES

When should a child become the owner of his own Bible? The authorities are agreed in that none of them suggests that a child have possession of his own Bible before the fourth grade. Kramer says: "Give the child his own Bible at least by age 9."¹ This corresponds to the fourth grade of elementary school. Mueller agrees, for in the Sunday School he advocates giving the child a Bible in the second year junior department or first year intermediate, which would be the fourth grade.² On the other hand, Jahmann³ argues that if it is to be a Bible for study and use the rest of the child's life, he should receive it when he is in the sixth grade and can use it independently. The Texas Educational Guide maintains that "each pupil of grades 5 - 7 should have his own Bible."⁴ Generally speaking, a child should own his Bible as soon as he is able to use it independently. While the young child's Bible should be simple and in large, legible type, by the time a child is in the sixth grade he should have a Bible with a concordance and dictionary, such as the Concordia Home and Teachers' Bible.⁵ This should replace the large

¹W.A. Kramer, "Use of The Bible in The Agencies of Christian Education" (Mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p. 5.

²A.C. Mueller, "The Use of The Bible in Sunday School", Concordia Sunday School Teachers' Quarterly, XIV:3 (July 1940), p. 172.

³A. H. Jahmann, Leading Children into The Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1950), p. 24.

⁴Educational Guide and General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Texas District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (Concordia Publishing House, 1930), p. 5.

⁵Kramer, op. cit., p. 9.

print children's edition of the Bible he got in fourth grade.⁶ If the parents are unable or unwilling to supply the needed Bibles, the church should do so.⁷ These should be given to the children, not kept in stacks in the school room.

The difference in the age of a child in the fourth grade and one in the eighth grade is sufficient to warrant careful adaption of the stories and selections chosen for the children to read. Jahsmann classifies these differences as follows: Young children - vivid imaginations; Middle grade children - love of adventure; upper grade children - need a feeling of guilt and problems to solve.⁸ Children of grades four, five, and six are inclined to hero worship, and therefore selections should be centered around incidents in lives of Bible people.⁹ The child of grades seven and eight has developed enough mentally to study the Bible doctrinally, as well as to solve problems of everyday life.¹⁰ The selections the teacher gives the children should vary accordingly. The fourth grade child should not be expected to handle the doctrinal material that challenges an eighth grader, or to make the applications to life that come with increasing experience. Nor should the older child be limited to a simple reading of a well known story, without something to tax his mentality. It is well to remember that not only the vocabulary and sentence structure need to be adapted to the age level of the children taught, but the concepts and stories as well.¹¹

⁶Supra: pp. 55.

⁷Kramer, op. cit., p. 5.

⁸Jahsmann, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹¹Ibid., p. 24.

The beginner in Bible reading will not make much use of Bible helps. His first aim is to read himself into the Bible. Then he will find problems and be ready to use Bible helps. They should be introduced gradually as the need arises. By the time a child is in eighth grade he should be able to handle even a Bible dictionary and concordance. But the younger child should not be expected to use Bible helps to as great a degree or with as much facility.

The teacher must also adapt his method of teaching Bible study to the age and ability of the child. The book method¹² is beyond the ability of fourth graders except for short books that tell a story, such as Jonah and Ruth. This method is one of the best for older children. The biographical method¹³ lends itself very well to all ages, the difference being in the material the teacher selects to characterize the person under consideration. While the topical method¹⁴ is best suited for older children, simple topics could be studied by fourth and fifth grade children if the selections read are on their level and to their interest. Word study¹⁵ should be used chiefly in the seventh and eighth grades. Younger children will generally be interested in methods that involve stories and people, while the older children will be able to some extent to handle methods involving doctrines and exhortations.

All sensory aids are not equally suitable to all ages of children.

¹²Supra: p. 35.

¹³Supra: p. 37.

¹⁴Supra: p. 38.

¹⁵Supra: p. 39.

¹⁶Supra: p. 45.

While all ages can plan and show exhibits, ¹⁷ movies generally are suited better to the older children. ¹⁸ Their mass of detail and confusion of characters may cause the fourth grade child to lag in attention. Slides and film strips ¹⁹ are better for the younger children, and these should be kept as simple and unobstructed as possible. Children in grades four to eight are all able to use flat pictures ²⁰ and to read orally with benefit. ²¹ The use of charts, graphs, and maps ²² in the lower grades will be chiefly in the hands of the teacher, with a few simple efforts on the part of the children. The older children can be expected to draw charts, graphs, and maps themselves with some skill.

In memorizing Bible selection, much less will be expected of younger children than of the seventh and eighth grade children. While older children may occasionally be assigned passages to study and memorize since they can more readily see the purpose for it, children of the fourth grade should do most of their memorizing in class with the teacher, in an incidental way whenever possible. ²³

In teaching Bible study, the teacher must adapt both his methods and his materials to the age and development of the children under his

¹⁷ Supra: p. 47.

¹⁸ Supra: p. 48.

¹⁹ Supra: p. 49.

²⁰ Supra: p. 49.

²¹ Supra: p. 49.

²² Supra: p. 49.

²³ Supra: p. 53.

guidance. Their previous religious backgrounds, their special interests, and their home life must all be taken into consideration. Generally speaking, the younger or less mature child will be interested in less complex or abstract methods and subject matter than the older children can handle. The younger children will want concrete materials and simple methods and aids, while for the older child, Bible reading should present a challenge in interpretation and application.

CHAPTER VIII

TRANSFERRING THE VALUES OF BIBLE STUDY TO LIFE

Forming Regular Bible Reading Habits

There should be a certain amount of carry over from the study of the Bible in school to the every day life of the child. One such transfer is that the child form the habit of reading the Bible regularly. A Bible reading program is not successful until the children are regular and habitual users of the Scripture, Kramer maintains: "Until we have established this habit, we have not succeeded in our effort; when we have succeeded and have established the habit, most other problems connected with Bible use are likewise solved."¹ For children as well as adults it is helpful to have lists of suitable daily Bible readings.² The American Bible Society has put out a chart called "My Reading Record" for this purpose. While such aids are helpful in the formation of habits, they can by the same token be harmful by leading the child to think that there is merit in reading a certain amount of the Bible every day, whether or not he finds Christ in such reading.³ It may be better for the teacher in the Lutheran school to make his own list for the children, adapted to their specific needs and related to the total religion program of the school and the church year. Children should be taught with care that Bible reading is not a good work in itself, and is not to be used as self discipline or penance, but that it is good only when they find Christ in their reading and use Him as

¹W.A. Kramer, "Use of The Bible in the Agencies of Christian Education". (mimeographed in outline form, 1949), p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Supra p. 31.

the answer to their problems in life.

Independent Bible Study

By the time the child reaches the age of ten or eleven years, he should be able to read the Bible independently with profit.⁴ A Bible reading program is not successful if it fails to enable the child to use the Bible by himself for his own spiritual growth. His experience in school should encourage him and give him the initiative and desire to read the Bible at home. He should be able, to some extent, to choose what selection in Scripture he wants to read. The school should help him develop the moral stamina to continue reading the Bible at home, even if the rest of the family does not read it and sets him a bad example.⁵ To attain such a goal the teacher must not only develop in the child the knowledge of how to read the Bible and where to find what he wants in the Bible, but also must create the proper attitudes towards to the Bible, that the child desires to read it independently. Unless the child is taught to read his Bible by himself, in the home, he cannot be expected to do so when he becomes an adult worker in the congregation.

The Child's Part in Devotions

A successful Bible reading program will enable the child to take an active part in devotions both in school and at home. Kramer recommends that children be allowed to read the Scriptures in home and school devotions at least occasionally, either individually, responsively, or

⁴Kramer, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵Ibid., p. 8.

in unison.⁶ More than that, he maintains that the children should even have a part in planning the devotions.⁷ Older children in particular, should be able with the guidance of the teacher to select a suitable Bible reading to accompany the lesson for the day. It is well to remember that memorized passages, Psalms, and longer sections of the Bible can be put to beneficial use in worship services at school, Sunday School, and home.⁸ The family altar in the home can be made more meaningful to the children by occasionally allowing them to read the Bible references in the devotion; and this variety of activity would also make such worship more stimulating for the adults.⁹ In the house there should be a certain corner set aside for a family Bible, children's editions, a Bible dictionary, and other helps.¹⁰ A good Bible reading program in the school can do much to improve the effectiveness of the family altar in the home.

Using The Bible in Time of Need

As mentioned earlier,¹¹ the teacher should develop in the child the ability to find God's message for him in every type of need. A list of such selections might be pasted in the front of the Bible, or

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸G.H. Betts, Method in Teaching Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, c. 1925), p. 469.

⁹Kramer, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁰I.S. Caldwell, Our Concern Is Children (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1948), p. 121.

¹¹Supra: p. 8.

better still through constant use in school such sections should become imbedded in the memory of the child that he knows where to find the help he needs. Not only should the child develop the ability to find what he wants in the Bible, but the teacher should arouse in him the desire and habit of turning to the Bible in time of trouble and emotional experiences.¹² There are portions to read when joyful and happy as well as when depressed and lonely. The Bible even has sections for the child to read when he feels no need for God or His Word.¹³ Once the child is aware of how to find comfort and help in the Bible in any need, and has the habit of going to Scripture at such times, the teacher may assume that his Bible reading program has been to some measure a success.

The Bible in Other School Subjects

In a Lutheran school the Bible will be the chief source of religious instruction. In Bible history the General Course of Study declares that the content "is taken directly from Scripture."¹⁴ In grades four to eight the Bible itself should be used in teaching Bible history. Even for children of the age of nine years, Kramer recommends that they "read a lesson from the Bible after it has been taught."¹⁵ Children might also read the lesson before it is taught, and refer to it during

¹²Supra: p. 8.

¹³For example, 1 Peter 2:2.

¹⁴General Course of Study for Lutheran Elementary Schools, published under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 66.

¹⁵Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

the discussion. The content of the catechism also is taken directly from Scripture.¹⁶ In catechism instruction Kramer recommends that the teacher have the children read from the Bible portions that apply to the lesson, explaining constantly that the catechism is based on the Bible.¹⁷ Another opportunity for Bible use in catechetical instruction is the inductive method of teaching. The teacher should direct the children in looking up a certain group of Bible passages in their Bibles. From these they would formulate a statement of Bible teaching on the given subject. Then they could open their catechisms and compare the statements of doctrine. In other subjects of religion the General Course of Study summarizes the place of the Bible as follows:

Generally speaking, the morning devotions are incomplete without a Scripture reading; Church history can be understood only against its background of Biblical history; memory material is selected largely from the Bible.¹⁸

In reading "entire reading periods may be devoted occasionally to Bible reading, this especially in one-room schools where time is at a premium."¹⁹ The teacher should not neglect to make use of the various types of literature found in the Bible. The Bible should come into frequent use in the teaching of reading, as is recommended in the curricula.²⁰ In teaching language the Bible should not only be used for proper motivation,²¹ but "Biblical events may serve as topics for lan-

¹⁶General Course of Study, p. 6.

¹⁷Kramer, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁸General Course of Study, p. 66.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 66.

²⁰Supra: p. 18.

²¹Supra: p. 18.

guage exercises and compositions. The writing of original religious verse based on Bible texts is encouraged.²² Biblical terms may be studied in spelling.²³

In geography the Bible could be put to much use. Passages of the Bible referring to the Creation, the Flood, and other sets of God in nature might be read.²⁴ The children should learn from their Bibles God's place in the universe as well as man's. A study of the geography of Palestine should include Bible references where such knowledge is significant.²⁵ In history "Biblical history is used to illustrate how God rules in the affairs of men (Israel, Balaam, David), how He blesses righteous and punishes disobedient nations and rulers, and how He can preserve whole nations against famine and enemies (Israel)."²⁶ In civics the Bible should be used as recommended in the curricula.²⁷

In arithmetic "Biblical weights and measures may be studied."²⁸ Arithmetic is also needed in drawing or making scale models of the ark or tabernacle, in figuring chronology, and in making graphs. Many Biblical problems are numerical.

In teaching health the Bible could be used more than is recommended

²²General Course of Study, p. 66.

²³Ibid., p. 66.

²⁴Ibid., p. 66.

²⁵As in the story of the Good Samaritan.

²⁶General Course of Study, p. 67.

²⁷Supra: p. 20.

²⁸General Course of Study, p. 66.

in the curricula.²⁹ The child might read passages to show him the importance of his body,³⁰ examples of how believers kept themselves healthy,³¹ and examples of how men ruined their health by excess.³² They might read stories that show Jesus as the divine Healer, and the protection of angels for the safety of believers. In general science the Bible should be used as recommended in the curricula.³³

In teaching music and art, in addition to the few references made to the Bible in the curricula,³⁴ passages which have inspired hymns or masterpieces of art should be read as these are studied.³⁵

To make its Bible reading program reach over into the everyday lives of its pupils, the school will have to not only promote knowledge of the Bible, but develop habits and skills in handling the Bible, and above all instill the attitudes of respect, love, and hunger for Scripture.

²⁹Supra: p. 21.

³⁰Psalm 139:14. 1 Cor. 3:16.

³¹Daniel refused the diet of the king of Babylon.

³²1 Sam. 25: 36-38.

³³Supra: p. 21.

³⁴Supra: p. 22.

³⁵General Course of Study, p. 67.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

Since the Lutheran Church is the "Church of The Open Bible," the Scriptures will be used frequently in her parochial schools. The teacher will necessarily have a number of aims in mind. The fundamental aim will be that the children may grow in Christ through the use of the Means of Grace. This general aim may be broken down into such specific aims as indoctrination, devotional use, ability to find comfort and strength, inspiration and material for personal witness to Christ, and a Christian outlook on life in all aspects.

The curricula and guides that have been written for Lutheran parochial schools of the Missouri Synod recommend the use of the Bible in varying amounts. Chiefly it is to be used as a separate study, a subject on the curriculum. The daily devotions always contain a Scripture reading. In other religious subjects the Bible is more or less neglected, other books taking its place. Its use otherwise is recommended in reading periods, in connection with the social sciences, and in general science. Possibilities for use in other subjects have been largely overlooked.

There are a number of obstacles that hinder children from reading the Bible as much as desired. The fact that it is an adult book, written to and for adults, necessitates an adult interpreter for parts of it, to bring it down to the level of the children. Adults, however, often take an attitude of disinterest and neglect for the Bible, which discourages the child from reading it. This is especially true if the adults concerned are the child's parents or teachers. The language and typography of the King James Version destroy interest for the child

and stand in the way of understanding. The frequent use by Lutherans of books based on the Bible in place of the Bible also diminishes the importance of the Bible in the minds of children.

To use the Bible with benefit, the child must have correct attitudes regarding Holy Writ. Parents and teacher must set a good example of regular use of, and love and reverence for the Bible. All legitimate pedagogical means of arousing the interest of the child should be employed. While the Bible should not be handled in a superstitious way, it should not be held in contempt as commonplace. The Bible itself demands that it be revered and followed. The key to profitable Bible study is finding Christ in all of Scripture. All of the Bible is useful for the child of God, and the child must realize the Christocentricity and the usefulness of the entire Scripture.

Of the numerous methods of teaching Bible study, the book method is one of the most popular, and has the advantage of reading the Bible the way it was intended to be read by the writers. The biographical method is more appealing to children, who are by nature more interested in people than in logic. The topical method is more advanced, but will bear special fruit with the older children. The word study method is still more difficult, and should be carefully prepared by the teacher and used not earlier than in the seventh and eighth grades. To understand the Bible, the child must recognize the various types of literature he finds in it and know how literal to interpret each. Such mechanical devices as keeping a notebook, marking the Bible, paraphrasing, and questioning the text, are useful in deepening the understanding of the child. Whatever sensory aids are available to the teacher should be used to vivify the lesson, while games and drills should be kept to

a minimum. Memorizing of Bible passages should be done in an incidental way as much as possible. Only passages that are meaningful and useful to the child should be learned.

While Bible story books are helpful in introducing the Bible to children, by the time they enter fourth grade they should begin reading the Bible itself. Children's editions are suited for the lower grades, but the seventh and eighth graders should have a Bible with maps and helps. Modern translations should be used constantly for clearer insight, but the children should be taught to use the King James Version as long as it continues to be the authorized version of the Lutheran Church. While sex and horror stories will not harm children if properly taught, the stories that appeal to children are those dealing with children and family life, or at least with heroes that they may cherish. The teacher must compromise between quantitative reading with little comment, and short readings with excessive explanation. As the children reach the upper grades, they should be taught how to use the helps both in their Bible and in commentaries, concordances, and dictionaries.

The teacher must adapt his methods and materials to the children. The child should have his own personal copy of the Bible when he enters the fourth grade. This might be a simple, large print, children's edition which would be replaced in the sixth or seventh grade by a Bible with more helps. The selections for the lower grades will involve children, home life, or people. The upper grades are able to handle occasionally doctrinal sections and exhortations. The teacher will adapt his methods and sensory aids to the level of his children, leaving the more complex methods and aids for the upper grades. The older child will memorize more and harder selections than the young one.

A good Bible reading program will reach over into the every day lives of the pupils. They should form regular Bible reading habits, and be able and eager to study the Bible independently. They should be able to understand and take part in devotions, both in school and at home. They should know where to find the message they need in time of trouble, and have the habit of turning to the Bible in every need. The Bible should be used to a greater extent than is recommended in the curricula for some subjects. Bible history and catechism should be taught directly from the Bible. The use of the Bible might be increased in such other subjects as language, arithmetic, health, music, and art.

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