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## The Pastor and Religious Education

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what the Lord has said on a subject on which we pastors should be much better informed than we are and which affects our whole ministry. It is not the purpose of this article to propound theories of education, religious or secular; but we shall attempt to point out a few Scripture-passages which serve to give us direction and encouragement in one of the most important phases of our pastoral work. It is, of course, self-evident that we can merely offer a few texts that may stimulate our interest, arouse our enthusiasm, and impel us to renewed zealous activity in the exalted task of winning souls for Jesus and for nurturing, training, and edifying the souls entrusted to our care.

Who are the men to whom the Lord of the Church has entrusted the work of Christian education? Paul calls them ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4, 1. These ministers are servants, galley-slaves, who patiently, consistently, labor at the oars, are called upon to do the most difficult work of propelling the ship in the service of one who loved them and gave Himself for them. They are householders, or stewards, of God's mysteries, of the means of grace. At no time are they working independently of the Lord. Their course is charted for them; their task is allotted to them; their work is laid out for them by Him who owns them, body and soul, and who has a definite purpose in mind when He puts them to work. For "we are laborers together with God," 1 Cor. 3, 9. In the vineyard of the Father the precious seed is sown by some; others water the young plants, while the Lord gives the increase. But chief emphasis must be placed on the fact that we are θεοῦ συνεργοί, fellow-laborers with God, who are to spend and be spent in their efforts to accomplish His ends.

Such working together with God, such ministry of the Word, demands certain qualifications, such as Apollos had, of whom we read: "And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord," Acts 18, 25, 26. The teaching ministry presupposes that the incumbent be instructed in the way of the Lord, well prepared for the holy office by being intimately acquainted with Holy Writ, with the way of salvation, with Law and Gospel; it presupposes furthermore that this knowledge be not merely intellectual, but the sincere and innermost conviction of the heart, a heart that is burning with love for the Savior from sin and with zeal for His cause. "Fervent in spirit," ζέων τῷ πνεύματι, — would to God that we pastors and teachers were always men of that description! Are we fervent in spirit? If not, how can we become men whose

hearts are aglow with love and zeal? How else than by prayer and diligent use of the means of grace? Moreover, it is not sufficient for the religious teacher to have living faith in His Lord and holy zeal for winning others; He must have teaching ability, be equipped for the task of making plain to others the way of the Lord. Of Ezra it is said: "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments," Ezra 7, 10. And St. Paul bids Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. 2, 2. Only twice in the New Testament does the word *διδασκαλός* occur and both times as a requirement of a pastor. "A bishop must be blameless, . . . apt to teach," 1 Tim. 3, 2. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient," 2 Tim. 2, 24. The Lord Jesus can use no men in His service who have not the aptitude, the skill, of teaching others, of opening the eyes of their understanding, of making plain to them the truths of God. No finer testimony can be given a minister of the Word than to say that he is "apt to teach."

For the marching orders of the Captain of our salvation are clear. The messengers of the Gospel are to make disciples of the nations by baptizing them and by teaching them to observe all things commanded by Him. We are to consider ourselves pre-eminently as *διδάσκοντες* in the service of Him who is the Master Teacher. Taught by the Spirit in the past and at the present time, we are to transmit unto others the result of our teaching, aye, the curriculum of our Savior. What He has commanded to observe we are to teach others to observe. We are not to limit religious education to any age group, but are simply to disciple the nations by the means of grace and to educate them for the observance of the divine Word. Thus old and young are to be taught, not at one time or another merely, but as the present tense indicates, this teaching is to be a continuous process from the cradle to the grave.

Nor are we at a loss as to the teaching material. "We speak not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world that come to naught, but we speak the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 2, 6, 7. Also in our teaching we are to be "determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," 1 Cor. 2, 2. Surely, to teach all things whatsoever He has commanded us includes the Law, the holy will of God, that men may know their sins, that their consciousness of sin may ever be deepened; but chiefly we are to proclaim the Gospel of God's infinite love, the message of the crucified and risen Lord, who is

the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. We are to teach men the marvelous truths concerning the true God, the person and work of Christ, the forgiveness full and free earned by Him on the cross; we are to make plain the way of salvation through faith in the divine Redeemer; we are to impress upon our hearers the glorious truth that they have a Father in heaven who not merely created and preserves them, but who, above all, showed His divine grace in the sacrifice of His Son; we are to inform old and young of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit through the God-appointed means, who brings men to faith, sustains their spiritual life, works all good in them, makes them grow in holiness of life, and finally leads them to the glory that shall be revealed in us. Thus life-giving, life-transforming means are at our disposal in our teaching ministry.

Religious education, no one will dispute, should be begun in the home and should right there receive the largest share of attention. Says Luther: "Married people should know that they can perform no better and no more useful work for God, Christianity, the world, themselves, and their children than by bringing up their children well." Even before the child arrives, Christian parents must say with Manoah, "Teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born," Judg. 13, 8. It is the duty of the Christian minister to train up the young in such a way that they be prepared to assume the duties of Christian parenthood; it is furthermore incumbent upon him to instruct married people for the task of training their children, to teach parents in public and private, by precept and example, how to fulfil their God-given obligations. This includes the task of creating a right attitude toward marriage and towards children,—no small task in our day, in which children are no longer regarded as a heritage of the Lord. And if the Lord Jesus is right in quoting the well-known words of the Eighth Psalm "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise," Matt. 21, 16, are we not justified in working for the rehabilitation of the home and in paying more attention than ever to the preschool child as well as to the children of the Beginners' and Primary departments of our Sunday-schools? The danger of being adult-minded and overlooking the children in our pastoral work is always great; but the danger of slighting the work among the tiny tots in the homes and in our Sunday-schools is perhaps greater. And yet there is hardly an age in the life of a human being when impressions are more lasting, more decisive for the whole future, than at this age; there is hardly an age when the marvelous truths of Jesus and His love, of a kind Father in heaven, of answered prayers, find a more ready response than at this age of early childhood. What are we doing

to make the most of a wonderful opportunity to win the little ones not only for Baptism, but for Christian education as well? We are to see to it that at the earliest possible moment they may become conscious of the grace and love of their Savior, form prayer habits, and learn to appreciate His holy Word. The Cradle, or Font, Roll, the Beginners' and Primary departments, offer avenues of service for the teaching ministry that are bound to result in inestimable blessings for the little ones concerned, for their parents, for the home, and for the Church. Experience has taught us that little ones won at this early age for regular instruction, for instance, in the Sunday-school, are more readily kept with the Church than those with whom we come in touch at a later period in life. We sincerely hope that much more thorough-going work may be done for this age by the pastors of the Church and that suitable materials for the instruction and guidance of parents may be placed into our pastors' hands. In the mean time let no pastor neglect his homes, the Cradle Roll and the Beginners' and Primary departments of the Sunday-school, in order that our little ones like Timothy may know the Holy Scriptures "from a child."

Religious education is frequently, though erroneously, thought of as applying solely to the children of school age. There is no denying that our Synod has placed the emphasis upon this age group what with our unique parochial school system, what with our growing confirmation classes for children, what with our large Sunday-school system. We certainly do not find fault with our Church on this score; for "these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," Deut. 6, 6. 7. "He that has the youth has the future" has ever been borne in mind by our branch of the Lutheran Church. For this reason we have spared neither time, effort, nor expense to found and maintain parish-schools for the Christian education of our children. We do not propose to demonstrate the superior merits of the Christian day-school nor to show that in this way, by keeping the child constantly, throughout its school-life, in Christian environment, by teaching every subject in the light of God's Word, by exercising Christian discipline and continually holding before the child the love of Jesus when admonishing and correcting it, by reserving the best hour of every school-day for the study of the one thing needful, the aims and objectives of Christian education can best be attained and the provision of the Great Commission to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us can best be met. All this we take for granted. We feel deeply sorry for any pastor who does not see these things from the very outset and who does not sin-

cerely pray for, and work towards, the establishment and maintenance of such a school for the children committed to his trust. Yes, it calls for intelligent planning, for heroic sacrifices, for a large measure of faith and devotion, for fervency of spirit, and for divine assistance; but the immeasurably rich returns outweigh any sacrifices that can be made. Where a congregation does not enjoy the benefits of a Christian day-school, let not the shepherds of the flock be responsible for this situation.

Far be it from us to cast reflections on the faithfulness of such pastors as must labor in the field of Christian education without the wonderful aid of a Christian school and of consecrated teachers. Too many there are whose hearts are heavy because they cannot, under existing circumstances, enjoy the blessings of such a school. But are there not perhaps a goodly number who are prevented from taking energetic steps towards opening a school by fearfulness, reluctance to make sacrifices, the consciousness of their own inability to teach school themselves for the time being, and the feeling that they are unable to persuade their congregation to open a school? Such pastors should take the matter to the Lord in prayer, study the situation, get advice from others, and above all set to work in all seriousness by taking the necessary steps towards opening a school. The cause is the Lord's, and He who commanded us to teach His Word diligently to our children, to teach them to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded us, has added the promise of His abiding presence, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Much could be said with regard to pastors who have a school; but space forbids. Suffice it to point out a few important things. We have no right as pastors merely to delegate our teaching ministry to others. In the last analysis the Lord of the Church holds us responsible. For this reason regular visits to the school by the pastor are required; he should be informed of the work done; he should work in harmony with his teachers; not as their superior, but as their friend, counselor, and fellow-laborer; he should exercise his God-given prerogative of leadership in promoting the welfare and the best interests of school and teachers; he should train his teachers to be mission-minded, to assist in bringing the saving Gospel into the homes of the children, to aid in keeping the young people with the Church; he should work to the end that the religious instruction in the school be not merely mechanical, but thoroughly spiritual and personal, that the children be trained not only to memorize important Scripture truths, but to translate them into action, that they be prepared for intelligent, active membership in the congregation, and that they be imbued with a fervent missionary spirit.

In very many of our congregations no day-school exists, and religious instruction for the children of school age is limited almost entirely to the Sunday-school. For thousands of our children the Sunday-school thus becomes the chief agency for religious education, for tens of thousands the only agency. Can we be pastors who are faithful to their calling if we slight the Sunday-school, if we do not bend every effort to improve the standard of instruction? It is not enough to have a good organization; not enough to have a large enrolment; not enough to have a group of willing teachers and officers; not enough to be provided with sound literature. The question most urgent is, How are the children instructed? What kind of teachers have we? How are they being prepared for their task, and how are they aided in their work? Because of her justifiable emphasis on Christian education the Lutheran Church has been called the "teaching Church." Are we living up to that rather flattering appellation? We most certainly are not if, losing sight of the handicaps of the Sunday-school with its limitation of time, its great number of untrained teachers, the irregular attendance on the part of the pupils, we are satisfied with a mere organization, with mere numbers, with merely keeping Sunday-school. That pastor is not mindful of the apostle's statement "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful," 1 Cor. 4, 2, who does not improve every opportunity of making the most of his Sunday-school. This requires careful choice and selection of teachers, men and women who are true Christians, have a fair, if possible thorough, knowledge of Christian doctrine, and possess other qualifications of a good Sunday-school teacher, including the necessary age. It requires furthermore that the prospective teachers be trained for their task. This is one of the weak links in the chain of Christian education in our midst at the present time. With the help of the synodical Committee on Sunday-school Teacher-training we shall soon have courses on the market that will make it easier for our pastors to train their teachers for their work. In addition to such training of teachers we earnestly recommend regular teachers' meetings, at which attendance on the part of the teachers is required. In these meetings the lesson for the coming Sunday is explained, suggestions are made for the presentation of the material, and the lesson aim is pointed out. The pastor may furthermore use the opportunity for widening the background of the teachers by means of Bible-study, studies in mission and church history, doctrinal discussions, the study of the confessional writings of the Church, and additional teacher-training. Such meetings will be a great aid for the pastor in sustaining the interest of his teachers in their work and increasing their efficiency.

Shall a conscientious pastor be satisfied with a Sunday-school only? Or shall not every effort be made to supplement the instruction in the Sunday-school by means of Saturday-schools, summer-schools and week-day religious instruction? The more we remain conscious of the high standard of indoctrination in our day-schools, the more we shall strive to give other children as thorough a course in the truths of Christianity as we can. This calls for training in addition to that which is given in our Sunday-schools.

In more than one sense the climax of religious education for the children of school age is instruction for confirmation. The apostle says: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." The training of intelligent church-members, the preparation of children and adults for full membership in the church, for making frequent use of the means of grace, for worthily receiving the blessed Sacrament, is a task that calls for the most consecrated efforts on the part of the shepherd of the flock. Confirmation is not prescribed by Holy Writ, but self-examination is a matter that is enjoined. Our Lutheran Church is acting in accordance with the Lord's Word when it admits no one to the Sacrament who has not been previously explored as to his spiritual knowledge and understanding, as to his ability to examine himself before going to the Lord's Table. It must ever be the conscious aim of the minister of the Gospel in his confirmation instruction "that in everything [his catechumens are] enriched by Him [Jesus] in all utterance and in all knowledge," 1 Cor. 1, 5. Hence great care must be exercised in order that the course of instruction be not abbreviated; that a definite program be outlined, according to which the course is adequately covered at a given time; that regular attendance at confirmation instruction, Sunday-school, and church services be insisted upon; that the children be required to do home work and the cooperation of the home be enlisted; that children not attending the Christian day-school attend instruction at least two years prior to their confirmation. The preparation of adults is becoming more important as church-membership classes increase. But there is grave danger that such preparation be curtailed, with the result that prospective members come into the Church with very little preparation. If the promise is made that only six or eight lectures are to be attended and that no questions will be asked of the members of the class, there may be a large response; but what becomes of our standards of indoctrination? Are such people actually previously explored, or are they not merely previously exposed to a little religious teaching? It is beyond the grasp of this present writer how a class can be properly prepared



for membership in the Lutheran Church in fewer than eighteen or twenty-four hours of instruction and how a conscientious pastor can be satisfied without having asked questions in the class and found out for himself whether the catechumens have understood the great fundamental truths and are actually "enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge." There are no real short cuts in education, least of all in religious education, and the pastor who thinks and acts otherwise may discover to his own and his congregation's sorrow that he was wrong and that he did his Church a questionable service by lowering the standards of indoctrination. It never pays to cheapen church-membership, as sectarian churches can attest. May there be a conscious effort put forth throughout Synod, especially on the part of our Visitors, to halt the trend towards loose methods in preparing children and adults for confirmation, and may our pastors, also in this department of Christian education, ever acquit themselves as wise master builders, who lay a solid foundation!

While our Synod has ever stressed Christian education among the children, the work among our young people in the critical years of adolescence has until recently been frequently neglected. Yet the psalmist asks, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and answers, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word," Ps. 119, 9. Young people's Bible classes in our Sunday-schools and in societies of young people have received much attention of late, and justly so, especially also through the good offices of the Walther League. If ever courses in religion are in order, it is after the children have been confirmed, after they have left the Christian school, after they have entered secular schools, where many instructors and many text-books teach things that tend to undermine the faith of our young people. A conscientious pastor will ever encourage systematic study of God's Word for the youth of his church that those who are of an inquiring mind may act in accord with the Lord's word "Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will teach thee," Deut. 32, 7. We are well aware of the obstacles in the way: the lack of time on the part of the pastor; the unwillingness of many young people to attend Bible classes; the lack of qualified instructors or leaders; the complaint concerning suitable literature; the demands made on pastors and members by the many organizations of the church. And yet, if "teaching them to observe all things" is the command of our Captain, ways and means will be found to overcome the obstacles. As far as literature is concerned, the experience of many years has taught us that tastes, teachers, pupils, and conditions differ so widely that only by supplying a large selection of courses and materials from which to choose can we hope to satisfy all demands.

Adults are educable, as the Bible shows and recent studies have confirmed. Our adult members are still too reluctant to join Bible-study groups; but consistent efforts should be made in this direction in order that the Lutheran Church may continue to justify its claim of being the Bible Church. Sectarian churches shame us by the zeal of their lay members in attending Bible classes. Our many organizations may well serve as a nucleus for the regular study of God's Word.

Also in our public services and in our *Seelsorge* we pastors must be religious educators. Every sermon should be preached by one who is διδακτικός, apt to teach; it should be educational, teaching a definite truth, edifying, building up, comforting, exhorting, admonishing. It need not bring new truths, but it should remind those informed of old truths that require constant re-statement, even as we read in Jude 5: "I will put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this," even as Paul says: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe," Phil. 3, 1; and again, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you," 1 Cor. 15, 1. 2. If we ever bear in mind, in preparing our sermons, that we are to preach and teach our hearers to observe all that the Lord has commanded us, we shall be more careful in our work, shall seek to preach down to the level of our hearers, shall try to make the truths of God so simple, so appealing, so interesting, that the audience will learn, understand, and be truly edified and built up in its most holy faith. And when we deal with our parishioners in private at the sick-bed, at Communion announcements, in their homes, or in our study, we should never lose sight of our calling as teachers of the Word. Having diagnosed the case in hand, we are to apply the proper remedy from the Lord's apothecary, using Law and Gospel as the situation demands.

Even in our private and professional life we ministers of the Church are teachers who are consciously and unconsciously educating others by our own conduct. By walking humbly with our God; by trembling at His Word; by doing justly and loving mercy; by displaying sincerity in our calling and in our personal Christianity; by our whole attitude towards God and men, we should ever aim to emulate Paul, who wrote: "Walk as ye have me for an ensample," Phil. 3, 17.

There is a blessing in all such religious education. As the Lord says: "It is not a vain thing for you because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it," Deut. 32, 47. Spiritual

and material blessings without number are showered on the Church that takes heed unto Christian education. Such labor in the teaching ministry will be attended by earnest prayer "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you [our hearers and pupils] the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of your calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph. 1, 17. 18; "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," Eph. 3, 16. "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that we . . . may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ," Eph. 4, 11 ff. By taking heed unto ourselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made us overseers to feed the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood, Acts 20, 28, we can be religious educators in the most exalted sense of that term, and "in doing this, we shall save both ourselves and them that hear us."

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PAUL KOENIG

### Kleine Hefekielstudien

#### 5. Gog und Magog, Kap. 38 und 39

Längere Zeit haben wir geschwankt, ob wir diese schwierige Stelle in den Kreis unserer kurzen Hefekielstudien einschließen sollten; aber die Erwägung, daß es wirklich eine schwierige Stelle ist, und die Tatsache, daß die Schwärmer sich mit Vorliebe in ihren apokalyptischen Phantasien auch gerade mit dieser Stelle befassen, und die weitere Tatsache, daß auch innerhalb der lutherischen Kirche, und zwar nicht nur in den aufgeregten Zeiten des Weltkriegs, sondern bis auf den heutigen Tag, Gog und Magog in bestimmten Zeitererscheinungen, in den letzten zwanzig Jahren namentlich in Rußland, gesucht wird, hat uns schließlich doch betrogen, einen Abschnitt auch diesen Kapiteln zu widmen, dabei rechte Mäßigkeit und Besonnenheit in der Auslegung solcher schwierigen Stellen zu betonen und vor Mißbrauch und Verdrehung des heiligen Gotteswortes zu warnen.

Es ist ja bekannt, daß in den Zeiten großer Erregung, politischer wie kirchlicher Erregung, die Leute gern zur Schrift greifen, aber nicht zu den Evangelien und Episteln, nicht zu den Psalmen und den herr-