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Teaching Situations, Outlines, and Lesson Plans

One of the strangest distinctions which is observed when men are being *trained for the ministry* and, for that matter, when men are *in the ministry*, is that which prompts ministers to lay just about the exclusive emphasis of their office on preaching, that is, on delivering the sermons and addresses in public gatherings of the Christian congregation. No doubt this is the most conspicuous part of the ministry and one upon which success depends in a very vital way. We are prone to quote the statement from our Lutheran Confessions "Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche haelt denn die gute Predigt." It is true also that our Savior is frequently spoken of as a Preacher; in fact, Matthew opens the account of His public ministry with the significant remark: "From that time Jesus began to *preach* and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," chap. 4:17. Cp. chap. 11:1; Mark 1:38, 39; 2:2.

Yet it is surely not without significance and intention that the Bible even more frequently speaks of Jesus as a *Teacher* and that we have more discourses delivered by Him in a less formal way, interspersed with questions and stories, than we have regular sermons. The Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5—7 (cp. Luke 6:20 ff.; 12:1 ff.), is an interesting example of the more formal type of the Lord's discourses. Yet it is said of Him at the close of this great sermon: "The people were astonished at His *doctrine*, for He *taught* them as one having authority and not as the scribes," Matt. 7:28 f. Cp. Matt. 13:54; Mark 4:2; 9:31; Luke 5:3; John 6:59; 8:2. He was, even to the leaders of the people, "a teacher come from God," John 3:2. If we take time to analyze the ministry of our Lord, we find to our amazement that He was master of all the devices which are now being advocated in the field of pedagogy in general and in that of religious education in particular, so that the account of the four evangelists, also from this angle, is exceedingly interesting and valuable to every one who takes his teaching ministry at all seriously.

The facts concerning the teaching activity of our Savior are undoubtedly intended to convey some meaning to us. We know of course that the Bible is not intended as a text-book on pedagogy, and yet the amazing thing is that it contains pedagogical maxims and other information which fully meet the requirements of a comprehensive philosophy of education and of a methodology that is thoroughly up to date in every respect. From the references given above, for example, we are bound to draw the conclusion that a teacher of the Word should not concentrate his efforts on the sermon alone, with only a perfunctory preparation for teaching classes of all kinds, but that he should apply the same diligence

he devotes to the making and delivering of sermons to a conscientious study and careful preliminary work on his less formal lessons in the Word of God. The Christian pastor cannot afford to rely upon some general impressions of catechetics as he remembers them from his seminary days, but he is in duty bound to make every effort toward increasing his efficiency as a teacher of old and young in every possible way.

Among the specific subjects which require constant study if a corresponding constant growth in teaching ability is to be evident is that of *teaching situations*. The term as here used requires some elucidation. A teaching situation includes all the factors which comprise the setting or furnish the background for proper instruction and training of a given individual or group. It is more than a mere intelligence level, although a good teacher will try to ascertain the intelligence quotient of his group at least, even if he cannot be sure of the I. Q. of every member of the group. It is a fact which seems to have been sufficiently substantiated that group or audience psychology will tend to produce a normal level of an entire group, a level which may, on the one hand, be somewhat lower than the I. Q. of the more brilliant members of the group, while, on the other hand, it will be somewhat higher than that of the dull members of the group. We are not now discussing the possible effect of this normalizing on the learning attitude or the results of learning in the case of the pupils with a high I. Q., but merely indicating what the teacher will probably have to expect in an audience setting. The intelligence level of every class must be reckoned with at the outset if the teaching situation which it controls, at least in part, is to receive due consideration on the part of the instructor.

But while this factor is primarily concerned with heredity, it is just as important that the religious instructor pay close attention to that of the environment of his pupils or students. We are fully aware of the fact that the quarrel between the hereditarians and the environmentalists has not yet been decided and that recent encounters between their forces have merely offered some good arguments on either side. Our teaching deals with factual, not theoretical, problems, and we must know whether the background of the people whom we are trying to teach is urban or rural, whether their social and the economic background place their thinking in that of the wealthy class of our country or merely in that of the well-to-do or even the poor, and whether they have been able to overcome the handicap of an inferiority complex so often found in the poor or in those who have been denied some of the amenities of life which we commonly associate with the better American way of living. That the social, educational, and cultural

background of the members of a group affect their thinking and hence also their learning in a very direct and vital way and hence materially influences the teaching situation, is generally conceded by teachers who combine scientific pedagogy with dispassionate observation.

The teaching situation, in the third place, must take into account psychological levels and psychological development. While the boundaries between the various levels are not absolutely defined, it seems that we can and should distinguish the following levels: that of the preschool age, including that of the nursery school and the kindergarten; early, middle, and late childhood; early, middle, and late adolescence; and the adult age, in which we may again distinguish between early manhood and womanhood, middle age, and old age. Each one of these levels has its peculiarities as to attitudes and interests, and it is the business of the educator to study these factors and to make use of them when he prepares his lesson plans and when he meets his classes. To deal with children of the preschool age in the same manner as with pupils of the confirmation age is manifestly poor pedagogy. The Christian educator will combine the results of the most careful observation with the findings of reliable psychologists in order to have a clear perception of the mind-set which he may expect in his classes.

The proper evaluation of the respective teaching situation requires, in the last place, that the Christian teacher carefully study the attitudes of his classes as groups and of the individuals in these classes toward the subject which he intends to present to them. It makes a big difference in the preparation of a lesson whether the members of the group concerned are sympathetic or unsympathetic to the topic or question to be treated, whether their attitude is positive or negative. It cannot be stated too frequently that the chief function of education is to get people to think; but few people can think except on the basis of previous personal experience. If the subject-matter seems to be foreign to their interests in life, they will hardly take the trouble to pay sufficient attention to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge or skills. The matter of race comes into consideration here, especially if the race is compelled to live under the handicap of segregation. Even the matter of sex enters into the picture, for the psychology of most women differs quite radically from that of men, and hence their interests, their attitudes, must be given full consideration. These are the viewpoints which must be kept in mind by the Christian teacher if he wishes to do justice to the task assigned to him in the various classes under his guidance.

It will hardly be necessary in this particular discussion to stress the need of gathering a sufficient amount of subject-material to

meet all possible contingencies of the lesson. The old pedagogical rule called for about eight times as much matter as one would actually need in the course of the hour or the period concerned. It is self-evident that the instructor will not attempt actually to offer all this food to his pupils. Nevertheless he must master the material, or, to use another picture, he must thoroughly digest and assimilate it, so that he can distribute the mass as he sees fit. To this end he will require a detailed outline of his subject-matter, with the main thoughts and the various subdivisions carefully arranged according to some definite plan. He may want his outline to be logical, unfolding the topic of the lesson in certain well-defined steps and moving on to the inevitable conclusion. Or he may prefer to arrange his material on the basis of psychological considerations, which very often agree with the intellectual level of his pupils. Naturally the question of general teaching procedures will also find consideration here. The teacher may want to arrange his subject-matter according to the inductive plan, as we commonly do in the case of younger children. Or he may be in a position to require logical conclusions from his pupils and therefore prefer the deductive procedure. Any kind of socialized procedure would require a still different outline. But whatever *form* the lesson may take, the conscientious teacher will never insult his pupils by stepping before them without a clear picture of the progress of the lesson in mind lest he fall into the error of a rambling discourse, which has no particular beginning, does not follow any specific order, and finally ends only because of inanition.

And now let us turn to the third chief point under consideration in this short paper, namely, that of *lesson plans*. A good many teachers formerly thought it quite sufficient if they taught on the basis of a somewhat sketchy outline and left everything else to the spur of the moment. The other extreme is represented by the very conservative exponents of the question-and-answer method in its strictest development, as it tries to anticipate the thinking of the pupils in its progression from point to point. Very few educators ever reached that stage in their teaching ability where they could do real teaching on the basis of a catechization that was worked out down to the last incidental question. On the other hand, nothing is more tedious than to listen to a teacher who is insufficiently prepared and resorts to stock phrases and glib definitions to cover up his lack of faithfulness in doing his work.

Yet it is by no means a superhuman task to prepare detailed lesson plans and to follow this procedure quite faithfully for at least ten years. In fact, it may be advisable to continue the habit of making and using lesson plans, at least at intervals, during one's entire professional life.

A lesson plan should include a number of steps. The first is the consideration of the teaching situation, as described above, so that the entire atmosphere of the lesson will be favorable to good teaching.

The second item which should appear on the lesson plan of the teacher is a statement of aims. This does not merely imply that the teacher will always be conscious of the general aim of Christian teaching, of the great objectives as laid down in the Word of God; for these considerations will permeate all his teaching, will be the background and foil of every lesson presented by him. But in addition to this factor every lesson should have its specific aim, its particular goal. Aimless teaching will rarely be good guidance, for it has not marked the way and therefore will not be apt to lead to a specific application. The questions which every teacher must ask himself as he prepares to teach a lesson are: What particular point do I want my pupils to get out of my presentation? What are they to take home with them and put to actual use in their lives? — Ordinarily the aim of the pupil is the correlate of that which the teacher has planned to present. The teacher should try to visualize the effect of his presentation and the response of the pupils to his suggestions and guidance. If he can succeed in having the pupils realize this aim and put the lesson into action in their lives, he may consider himself fortunate in his teaching.

The third step to be considered in the making of a lesson plan is the approach, which is naturally most intimately connected with the motivation of the lesson. From the great mass of suggestions concerning the forms of approach and motivation in religious teaching the following may be kept in mind. The *picture approach*, which is most effectively used in the case of little children but remains of importance throughout life, may present the psychological moment of the story to be taught at once and thus plunge the pupils into the midst of the lesson. A good many educators, however, prefer to use some other picture, one not related to the story to be taught, but one which will stimulate curiosity. The same effect may be achieved by means of diagrams or actual objects in hand, for every kind of visual approach is apt to be successful, especially when the teacher himself is deeply interested in the development of the lesson.

The *story approach* is very effective throughout the elementary school age and may continue to have value also in adult life, especially where the groups concerned are not accustomed to abstract thinking. The material may be taken from almost every kind of source, the entire field of literature, the daily papers and the current magazines, and even such tales as commonly go the rounds

in every community. The chief consideration is that the story be merely introductory, so that it only leads to the real topic of the lesson and does not divert from the aim which the teacher has set for himself.

Closely related to this form of motivation is the *approach from the field of experience*. Naturally this will not prove very effective in early and middle childhood, since many of the life experiences of children are blurred by their overactive imagination. But for older pupils, who have attained to a discrimination which enables them to separate romance from truth, and especially for adults, this kind of motivation will in most cases produce excellent results. Of course, the same caution applies here as in the previous instance, namely, that we should not emphasize the means at the expense of the end which we are attempting to reach.

A fourth form of approach is known as the *problem approach*. The problem presented by way of motivation may be based upon factual incidents, or the story may be fictitious. But as the name implies, it requires the instructor to introduce the lesson by presenting a complicated situation, preferably taken from life, though presented as hypothetical. It will usually open with the words "Suppose a person finds himself in such or such a position, with contingencies as follows, . . . what would you suggest that he should do?" This opening leads to the topic of the lesson. It is very effective if not overdone.

Some teachers find that the so-called *liturgical approach* yields good results. In this case the motivation leading to the topic of the lesson is taken from some part of the Church's liturgy and naturally requires a thorough familiarity with the entire liturgy and its significance on the part of the instructor.

A sixth form of approach is that which *employs an object or symbol* to stir the imagination and provoke thought. Since we have the rich symbolism of the Lutheran Church to operate with, there should be no dearth of objects which may be introduced. Both children and adults are observant enough to note the ornamentation in pictures, diagrams, and symbols as commonly employed in our church buildings and parish-halls, and this rich fund will hardly be exhausted in a lifetime of teaching.

The seventh approach is known as the *doctrinal*, which, as its name implies, makes use of the inductive procedure. It makes use either of the inner relationship between various doctrines and therefore works along logical lines, or it makes use of the principle of contrast in order to challenge the imagination of the pupils. A teacher may well present a false doctrine, as taught in a sectarian church-body, and then suggest to his class that this doctrine be examined in the light of the Word of God, the mode of procedure

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then being that employed in Biblical theology, which usually carries conviction to the student.

It stands to reason that the alert teacher will often use a combination of these various forms of motivation or that he will discover others which can be applied with good success. It will be best for him to remember at all times that the requirement in the lower grades is chiefly to stimulate curiosity and arouse interest, while the upper grades of the elementary school demand that he meet the psychological level of the children. During the post-confirmation age the approach must be based upon the contacts with life established by the young people and by the interests which they develop, and in adults the instructor must strive to meet the thinking of his pupils with reference to social and economic conditions with which they are concerned.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Some Observations on the Vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel

The fact is well known that the "disciple whom Jesus loved" frequently employs such simple but withal deeply significant terms as "life," "light," "truth," etc., and their antonyms, words and phrases totally lacking in the synoptic gospels.

The Gospel of St. John has none of the terms translated "compassion," or "pity" (ἔλεος, ἐλεέω, σπλαγχνίζομαι), although the synop-
tists have thirty-three of them. John supersedes them with ἀγάπη, and its verb αγαπάω. The noun is exclusively Biblical, used by both the LXX and the New Testament. The assumption that the "Great Prayer to Isis" (Oxyrhynchus Papyrus No. 1,380), composed in the second century A. D., may have called Isis ἀγάπ(η) in the North Egyptian coast town of Thonis (line 28), or even ἀ(γά)πη θεῶν in Italy (according to a more or less doubtful restoration in line 109), does no violence to this claim. As early as the second century a gradual interchange between Christian and pagan vocabularies began to take place; indeed, it is difficult to draw the line always to determine just which expression was exclusively Christian and which pagan. So, for instance, some of the early Christian writers had no scruples to use ἔρωσ, love between the sexes, in place of the apostolic ἀγάπη. Theodoret writes: "He who hath received the divine love (ὁ τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν θεῖον δεξάμενος) despises all earthly things"; but Theodoret did not despise the use of the very earthly ἔρωσ. Ignatius uses the noteworthy expression: "My love hath been crucified" (ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ ἐσταύρωται). Origen interpreted ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ of Christ and thus gives evidence by the introduction of ἔρωσ into the Christian vocabulary for the departure from apostolic care