The Pastor As Teacher

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The pulpit is the center of the evangelical Christian movement. It is the spearhead of the Christian advance. But Christian nurture, Christian teaching, has from the days of the Meeting for the Word in the early church been one of the basic functions of the church. While it is true that preaching and teaching are distinctive as functions yet there are indispensable didactic elements in preaching. The preacher must be informed, yet he must not merely dispense “certain intellectual nothings”. The heralding of the Gospel involves majestic content; the statement and defense of doctrine involves intellectual and spiritual acumen.

The pastor as teacher, then, functions in the pulpit, in prayer-meeting, in group meetings, in counselling, in the class room, and in supervision or the projection of his teaching office throughout the educational ministry of the church.

As the ambassador of Christ the pastor is deeply concerned to know what Jesus taught¹ and how He taught.² He must also know why Jesus taught, which question projects the basic problem of aim in Christian education.

_Aim Controls Method_

Aim in Christian teaching has been defined by Murch as “Fitting man to live in perfect harmony with the will of God.”³ This is, of course, the inclusive aim and its accomplishment involves various immediate aims. A very basic aim is the passing on of the Christian tradition from generation to generation. When Jesus said “I am the truth” it was a dated statement as well as a timeless one.⁴ Once ultimate truth is found tentativeness is ended. This statement is so significantly true that to preserve the doctrine of “creative activity” on a basis of evolutionary naturalism the idea of the finality of truth has been sacrificed. It is this basic principle, that Christ cannot be improved upon, which Robert E. Speer so strongly defies in _The Finality of Jesus Christ_.⁵ Christian teaching must include the claims of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God, concerning truth and concerning ethics. This involves the transmission of a body of truth from generation to generation. And at the cost of life and property, amidst untold suffering and with matchless heroism the church has maintained its witness and transmitted the truth down through the centuries. The pastor, then, cannot be true to the Christian tradition as a preacher and false to it as a teacher. The pastor is responsible for the theology of his class rooms. This theology will be reflected in personnel, plant and equipment, program, curriculum, promotion, methods of teaching, finance—the whole program of the church in Christian education.⁶ Doctrine is a pervasive thing and cannot be departmentalized in a church.

_The Supervision of Instruction_

Supervision properly begins with the selection of personnel. In Christian teach-

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²Charles F. McKoy, _The Art of Jesus as a Teacher_. (The Judson Press), Chapter 1.
⁵Robert E. Speer, _The Finality of Jesus Christ_, (Fleming H. Revell Co.), 1933.
⁶Robert C. Bower, _The Bible in Religious Education_, (The Book Concern, Columbus, Ohio), pp. 107-111.
ing the Holy Ghost speaks through hu-
man personality, which means simply that
the Christian teacher must be yielded to
the Holy Spirit, and that His presence must
be recognized in the activities of the class
room. Nothing can take the place of the
New Birth as a basic requirement in per-
sonnel. The teacher to be most effective
must evidence holiness of heart and life.
Whatever else a Sunday school teacher or
leader of youth possess in the way of
intelligence and charm, without Christ they
can do nothing.  

Having overseen appointments on this
scriptural basis it is the pastor's respon-
bility to guide his teachers doctrinally and
educationally. This he may do in many
ways some of which are noted here.

For his teachers he may conduct pas-
tor's classes in Christian doctrine, in
denominational beliefs, in missions, in psy-
chology and education on the various lev-
els of age and experience. He should en-
gage in doctrinal preaching with a sense
of responsibility for the teaching ministry
of his church. He must make sure that his
teachers enjoy doctrinal clarity and that
there is among them unanimity and fellow-
ship on basic matters of faith and conduct.
The trumpet must give no uncertain sound
either in the pulpit or in the class room.
When he speaks to a luncheon club or the
chamber of commerce, when he preaches
the funeral sermon of an outcast or that
of the most influential man of the city or
of the church there must be occasioned no
feeling of ambiguity as to his basic posi-
tion as a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

He will be concerned that everything
which accords with the basic aim of his
church be employed for the betterment of
the educational program of the church. He
will ask that his teachers be both child cen-
tered and Bible centered; that they teach
with a passion for souls and an undying
loyalty to the Word of God. A child cen-
tered philosophy of education which does
not recognize the central fact that belief in
the Bible and its presentation of the plan of
salvation is necessary to the salvation of
sinners is not the type of thing which

Christian educators can endorse or es-
pouse. On the other hand mere didacticism
in handling the Word of God and the soul
of a child is not enough.

The pastor will recognize that a soul out
of harmony with God is not ready for Pes-
talozzi's "harmonious development"; that
Herbert's mere subject matter can not
change the nature of an unregenerated per-
song; that Christian methodology cannot be
based on Dewey's experimentalism, nor
on the progressive educationists' idea of an
everly ongoing process in the natural
realm. The term "creative activity" will be
dealt with by the pastor in its true conno-
tation that the mind is not merely a physical
organism acting in response to a material-
istic environment; he will explain to his
teachers that the term "creative activity"
as projected by those who devised it means
that the mind is active only as a muscle
is active and that "creativity" is based up-
on the concept of a "fortuitous combina-
tion of circumstances" entirely in the nat-
ural realm, producing the unique, de nova.
There is no concept of God as supernat-
ural and personal, or of man as a living
soul in the "creative activity" of progress-
ive education. Explanation of these shall,
to the Christian mind, constitute a warn-
ning against them.

On the other hand he will recognize the
principle of "learning to do by doing" which
many decades before contemporary
educationists used the term was being pro-
jected by the Moravian bishop, Comenius,
by Johann Pestalozzi, the Swiss innovator
and advocated by Colonel Francis Parker
in Quincy, Massachusetts, as early as 1880.  

The project method is ours to use, as is the discussion method, within its
true limits. Within the past few days a
senior high school boy told this writer
how his teacher in Sunday school was tak-
ing the problems of boys named by the boys in his
class from Sunday to Sunday as the
 succeeding Sunday school lesson. The wisdom
question if he uses

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the Bible as authority and guide. He is reaching boys in the area of their life situations, of their pressing problems. Thus did Christ teach, but with a totally different philosophy from present day humanism or emergent evolution.

Workers’ conferences afford opportunity to the pastor to indoctrinate his teachers in the field of true Christian education. While the pastor is earnestly preaching Christian doctrine in the pulpit, unless he and his teachers understand the implications of liberalism for present day religious education, some one in the class room may be sweeping from under him the very ground on which he stands.

At all times the pastor must be aware of the fact that his workers are volunteers, without salary. Out of the goodness of their hearts they give of their time and strength. To hurt one of the least of these is a serious thing. Hence supervision in Christian education is a thing of love, patience, understanding and utmost tact.

The church library should be an instrument in the hands of the pastor for the guidance of the teachers in his church school. With what care and understanding this library should be selected and used! Also, there should be provided for the teacher the best literature available for her in the performance of her task. How to understand children, young people and adults should be seriously considered by every Christian teacher, and always in the light of the Christian revelation and the Christian faith.

The new teacher or worker should be acquainted with the aim, the organization, the personnel, the curriculum, the plant, and the program of the whole church. Time schedules should be provided indicating time of arrival of workers, time of closing of class periods, schedule of weekly and monthly meetings, staff meetings, special days, etc. There should be an overall schedule of the church’s program for the year in the hands of every worker. The schedule should be arranged by the pastor and the staff of workers in a meeting, if possible.

In his doctoral dissertation The Pastor as Educational Director* J. Clark Hensley sets forth some of the ways in which the teacher may be aided in her work. She should be encouraged to visit classes in other schools or in the same school to observe methods and reactions. She should regularly attend teachers’ meetings, both departmental and workers’ conferences. She should know her pupils, calling faithfully at their homes, visiting with them often as friend and counsellor. She should know about tools and supplies and how best to use them. She should be given opportunity to attend institutes, conventions, workshops, laboratory schools and training courses with expenses paid, if possible.

The incompetent teacher should not be continued in her position. Her removal from a teaching position should be very thoughtfully and kindly arranged by finding another worthwhile task for her so as to prevent a sense of stigma or frustration on the part of herself or her friends.

Conclusion

The pastor as supervising teacher must work within the framework of a philosophy or theology of Christian education. No supervision is adequate or possible without clear insight into the purposes of the program and the relation of methodology to philosophy and theology in Christian education. He must realize and meet his responsibility to God and man for the accomplishment of the basic objective. He must see to it that every opportunity for in-service training be provided and that tools and materials with which the teacher can work are at hand. He must be human and brotherly in his supervision and avoid wounding or crushing one who with the best of intentions has been endeavoring to serve God in the church’s program of Christian education. In all situations, however, he must make it known that his first loyalty is to the Lord Jesus Christ and the revealed Word of God.

*J. Clark Hensley, The Pastor as Educational Director, (Central Seminary Press, Kansas City, Kansas), pp. 64-65.