THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS TEACHING

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PREFACE

RELIGIOUS pedagogy is one of the newer branches of the science of education. Despite the fact that teaching was made central by the Founder of Christianity both in his practice and in the Great Commission to his disciples and the further fact that many of the most notable achievements of the church through the ages have been due to the faithful exercise of this central function, modern church leaders, until very recent years, have given scant attention to the development of the principles and technique of religious teaching. Rapid progress has been made during the last two decades, but much pioneer work yet remains to be done.

The author offers this brief treatment as a modest contribution in a rapidly developing field. The book does not assume to be anything more than an introduction to a subject that deserves far more adequate treatment. Being constantly reminded of the limitations of teacher-training classes, particularly in the matter of time for study and the practical difficulty of completing long courses, the author has felt the necessity of brevity in the discussion of many topics that he would have preferred to treat in much greater detail.

In an earlier volume (*The Pupil*) it was suggested that practically the whole of the teacher's task is comprehended in the term "religious nurture." The problem that engaged attention throughout the textbook was, How may we most effectively nurture the moral and religious life of the pupil? The present discussion may be considered a further study of the same general problem. In the earlier study the question constantly in mind was, What are the pupil's needs that we must meet in nurturing his moral and religious life? In our present study we continue to regard the pupil as central and keep his needs constantly before us, but the problem that chiefly engages attention is rather the process by which the religious life may be developed. Our question is, What are the means by which the teacher may most effectively nurture the pupil's moral and religious life? Since we are thinking not of teaching in general but of religious teaching in a Christian school we may even more explicitly state our purpose by saying that we study the prin-

ciples of Christian nurture. In a third volume we shall consider the principles of nurture in terms of the organization and management of the school.

The plan of treatment is simple and will be obvious upon examination. Teaching is not defined narrowly, in terms of instruction only, as has been the usual practice in the past. Rather it is conceived in broader and more vital terms. The teacher's task is to nurture the religious life of the pupil (1) by personal association, (2) by instruction, (3) by the cultivation of religious feeling, (4) by training in Christian conduct and service. No Sunday-school teacher is really efficient who ignores any one of these vital elements in the teaching process.

The author's indebtedness to leading authorities in the field of general education is evidenced by numerous references. This indebtedness is here gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are due and are hereby expressed to authors and publishers for permission to use quotations from copyrighted books.

In the hope that it may be helpful to many earnest teachers, and young people about to become teachers, who are seeking to present themselves approved unto God, workmen who need not to be ashamed, this book is sent forth upon its way.

WADE CRAWFORD BARCLAY.

Cincinnati, Ohio,
September, 1920.

TO THE TEACHER

THIS book is intended as a textbook for the use of training classes, either teachers or young people in preparation for teaching. The teacher of the training class is advised to make a careful study of the textbook before beginning his work with the class. The book as a whole should be read in order that its plan and general contents may be thoroughly familiar in advance. Attention is called to the following features:

The Lesson Statement.—By the lesson statement is meant the entire body of the chapter exclusive of the "Constructive Task" and the "References for Supplementary Reading." The lesson statement is intended to be made the basis of discussion in the class session. Every member of the class should be required to have a copy of the textbook and to make diligent study of the lesson. Discussion should be participated in by all, and the teacher should not rest content until he has secured general participation. Those who are backward in expression may be led out by questions. A spirit of free and easy conversation is the ideal. Overtalkative members of the group should not be permitted to monopolize the time. The teacher who permits himself to fall into the habit of doing all the talking or of delivering a lecture based upon the lesson statement will accomplish little in training teachers.

As a rule an entire chapter may be taken as a single lesson. If this is done, a class meeting regularly once a week may complete the text in three months. In some cases, however, it will be found that certain chapters contain more material than can be thoroughly covered in a single session, especially if the class session is less than an hour in length. In this event more than one session should be devoted to a chapter. The length of the assigned lesson should be determined by the time the members of the class have for study, their ability to master the material, and the length of the class session. It is not necessary that the textbook should be completed in twelve class periods. On the other hand, the work should not be allowed to drag.

The inexperienced teacher who feels the need of guidance in method is advised to make a thorough study, in advance, of Chapters IV and VII. These chapters will be found to apply directly to the teaching of the training class.

Constructive Task.—The constructive task involves original thought and observation on the part of all members of the class. Assignments should be made a week in advance. For example, the constructive task for the second lesson, found on page 26, should be assigned at the session in which the first lesson is discussed. Reports should be mailed or handed to the teacher at least two days in advance of the class session. They should be read and graded. Frequently the teacher will find in these reports valuable points of contact for beginning the discussion of the lesson. Some two or three of the best reports may be read in the class session. The constructive task is one of the most important features of the course.

References for Supplementary Reading.—These will be found to be under two heads. There are, in the first place, references to the "*Worker and Work*" series. This is a valuable set of eight volumes, uniform in size and style of binding. It will be to the advantage of the class to purchase a set of these books for its own use. Under the second head, "*In the Library,*" reference is made to a limited number of the more important books in the general field of pedagogy. Those to which most frequent references are made should be purchased for the workers' library of the Sunday school. If a good public library is available, most of these books will be found in it. If they are not there found, the united request of the class made to the public-library board might result in their purchase. The workers' library of the Sunday school should be provided by the local Sunday-school board for the service of the teachers and officers of the school. In addition some of the class may be willing to invest in one or more of these books for personal use.

Enrollment of Classes.—As this textbook is regularly approved as a textbook in teacher training, any class studying it is entitled to enrollment as a teacher-training class. The successful completion of an examination will entitle the members of the class to credit by certificate. Each class should be regularly enrolled with its denominational Sunday-school board. Correspondence with the Department of Teacher Training will bring valuable assistance in the use of the textbook and conduct of the required course.

Teachers are invited to confer freely with the author. He may be addressed in care of The Methodist Book Concern, Cincinnati, Ohio. Suggestions and criticisms from teachers are invited and will be gratefully received.

CHAPTER I

THE TEACHER'S FIRST PUPIL

A BEAUTIFUL and true conception of the teacher's task is that symbolized in the memorial to Alice Freeman Palmer at Wellesley College. The teacher stands slightly behind her pupil with one hand resting upon the pupil's shoulder while with the other she points toward a distant goal, upon which the gaze of both teacher and pupil rests. We look in vain for any of the instruments we commonly associate with schools and teaching. Of classroom, textbooks, illustrative objects, there is not the slightest trace. Teacher, pupil, and unseen goal—that is all.

In beginning our study of the principles of teaching religion it is well to realize that nothing else counts for so much in teaching as character. Personality weighs more than words. Unless it speaks loud and clear, spoken words will fall on deaf ears. The spirit of the teacher, his moral and spiritual ideals, the atmosphere he carries, the disposition he manifests—these add to or detract from his spoken words and continue to speak when he is silent.

WHY PERSONALITY IS SUPREME IN TEACHING

Let us consider briefly some reasons why personality is supreme in religious teaching:

Religion Made Real in Persons.—Religion interpreted in words and ideas is likely to seem vague and unreal. In a beautiful or heroic character it becomes concrete and real. The facts of history or of geography can be taught from books, but religion is more than fact: it is truth and life and it needs to be seen in a human being before it can be understood or given a chance to exert its power and influence on others.

This is one reason why the Bible is a Book of such vital power. It is a picture gallery of great souls, a record of heroic lives. The explanation and interpretation of religion in systematic form is secondary; the record and exhibit of religion in the lives of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles is primary. We do not go to the Bible for definitions of religion; we go to it for

the inspiration, stimulus, comfort, and strength that come to us from the lives of its great personalities.

A missionary had labored for a long time without apparent success in preaching to a native tribe. One day the head man of the village came to him and said: "We do not understand your doctrine. It seems very far off from us. But we have been watching you. We believe in you. We admire you. You have something in your life that we do not have. If it is your religion that has made you what you are, we want it." The annals of modern missions are full of similar incidents. Religious truth shines clear when embodied in a person.

Character Nurtured by Personal Influence.—Character in a pupil is not something that is built as a carpenter builds a house. Character grows. It unfolds and grows in the sunshine of a beautiful Christian life as under no other influence. The greatest thing a teacher ever brings to a child is not lessons from a book but the uplift which comes from heart contact with a great personality.

Moral precepts have their value and their place, even as has Christian doctrine; but, as President King has said, "no teaching of morals and noble ideals by precepts is quite equal in effect and influence to the bringing of a surrendered personality into touch with a truly noble Christian soul." The same principle has been thus expressed by another: "Character comes not by drill but by contagion."

Personal Influence Abides.—Words are readily forgotten, but the personal influence of a noble man or a good woman who is a teacher goes forth with the pupil to abide with him in ever-present power. Teachers are remembered far more for what they are than for what they say.

Great teachers almost invariably work in accord with the fundamental principles of teaching; always they possess skill in methods, by which their instruction is made effective: but it is personality rather than method that makes an abiding impression upon their pupils. "It was the genuineness of Thomas Arnold," says Seely,[1] "rather than his methods of instruction, that made such a profound impression upon the boys of Rugby and sent them out to be the moral and political leaders of England. . . . Someone has said: 'It will be told in after days how there was once a heaven-born headmaster by the name of

[1] *A New School Management*, page 4.

Thomas Arnold, who, ruling at Rugby and allowing his boys to be merry and mischievous, yet taught them to be good Christians and true gentlemen.'" The same writer says of Mary Lyon, of Mount Holyoke, that her ideals found expression in such beautiful and consecrated Christian womanhood that her ideal became the ideal of their lives, and most of the girls of the seminary went out as Christian women to carry this spirit wherever they went.

The Teacher Training Himself

Since personality is supreme in teaching, it follows that the teacher's first pupil, and his last, is himself. The ultimate determination of any person's character and personality is latent within himself; he is "the captain of his soul," the "master of his fate." "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" is an inquiry that is at the same time an injunction—one to which every teacher and everyone ambitious to be a teacher should give most earnest heed.

One means of doing this is the study of just such a course as this upon which you are now entering. To the untrained teacher this textbook may serve as a means of acquiring not a little serviceable information; but the giving of information is not its sole purpose. It is hoped that its study will be a direct means of the enrichment of personality. This means that you are to do more than inform yourself concerning the principles of teaching set forth in this book: *you are to take yourself in hand and make of yourself the person you know you ought to be.*

Your first concern, therefore, now and always should be to develop your personality, constantly to grow in grace and in strength, in power of mind, integrity of will, beauty of spirit, in knowledge, in generosity—in all Christian graces. Your supreme goal is nothing less than completeness of Christian character. If you succeed in your great task of being a Christian you cannot fail in your task as Christ's teacher.

It is difficult to single out personal qualities of chief importance in the teacher. Says Professor Palmer: "There is no human excellence which is not useful for us teachers. No good quality can be thought of which we can afford to do without." With this reservation we venture to suggest certain personal qualities that may be cultivated which are of special importance in the work of teaching.

Love.—All the laws of teaching are summed up in this: Thou shalt love thy pupils. The first command of the gospel is the

first principle in effective teaching. Let a teacher have genuine love for his pupils, and no matter how he may be handicapped in other ways he will, like Pestalozzi, win in the end. Of course, by love we mean a genuine affection for one's pupils, not merely liking them so far as they show themselves likable. Dig deep enough into his nature and you will find in every child or youth that which is worthy of admiration and true regard. Love is at once blind and gifted with remarkable vision: it refuses to see fickleness and whimsicalness and moodiness and awkwardness, and underneath these or any other unlovely qualities that may be possessed it sees the man or the woman that is to be. Love may be cultivated through sympathy. Says Weimer, "See in the child your own self in your youth and you will learn to love the child."

The inestimable value of love and sympathy in a teacher are expressed in a strikingly beautiful way in the tribute paid by Helen Keller to her teacher, Miss Sullivan. We quote only a part of the statement: "It was my teacher's genius, her quick sympathy, her loving tact, which made the first years of my education so beautiful. . . . [She] is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. . . . All the best of me belongs to her—there is not a talent or an aspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch."[1]

Good Humor.—Gracious courtesy and kindliness, combined with good humor and cheerfulness, will go far toward winning the hearts of your pupils. A smile, a cordial word of greeting, a spontaneous handshake, if they bear the stamp of genuineness, have an almost irresistible appeal.

As a teacher you will need the gift of seeing the funny side of things: a laugh will often save a desperate situation. You will need to be light-hearted and happy; to know how to play as well as to pray; to be able to enjoy a joke as well as to be deeply serious.

Self-Control and Poise.—Few things are more essential in a teacher than the ability to control oneself. Many things will happen to try your patience and to vex your spirit but you must not allow yourself to be irritated by them. You must learn to avoid anxiety, restlessness, hurry, and nervousness, to remain calm and unruffled in the presence of distractions and petty disturbances. Observation of the effects upon yourself and upon

[1] *The Story of My Life*, pages 38-40.

others of high and low pitch of voice, of excited and calm tones, will emphasize the importance of this. If you become nervous or excited, if you speak in a high key or a harsh voice, your unquiet spirit is certain to be communicated to your pupils. The practice of self-control, even in such simple ways as controlling the hands and feet, the tones and modulation of the voice, will help in attaining a composure and poise which will be serviceable at all times and a saving grace in times of crisis.

Conviction and Enthusiasm.—It is the teacher's task to inculcate belief and conviction. To do so you must yourself believe and believe intensely. You must be positive. Conviction will give carrying power to the truth you teach. Only enthusiasm can kindle enthusiasm. Every really great teacher possesses these qualities. Take as an illustration Horace Mann, to whom American education probably owes more than to any other one person. Hinsdale says of him: "His devotion to truth and right, as he saw them, his sense of duty, his unselfishness, his benevolence, were very marked. His moral earnestness was something tremendous and constituted the first of the two great motive powers of his life."

Enthusiasm for the religious teacher must ever be defined primarily in terms of spiritual passion. The teacher in whose heart the fire of religion has ceased to burn is without one of the first qualifications of a religious teacher. Without spiritual ardor no teacher can effectively mediate between truth and life. Moreover, there must be depth as well as warmth.

Genuineness is absolutely essential. Insincerity or artificiality in the slightest degree is well-nigh fatal.

A positive, constructive attitude is likewise essential. One cannot teach in negatives. Emphasize virtues rather than faults; use "do" frequently, "don't" seldom if ever. Keep attention and interest centered on the good, the true, the beautiful, the desirable.

Generosity of Spirit.—Respect for the personality of others is an important quality in a teacher. You should have regard for the opinions of your pupils, for their likes and dislikes, and should be patient of their idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. You should put the best construction on every act of your pupils and be readier to praise than to blame. You will need to be fearless and just but you should never be harsh or critical. You should be broad-minded and tolerant; never narrow and bigoted, yet ever loyal to the truth as you see it and ready to stand for it

at any cost. You should be open and frank, concealing nothing; approachable, encouraging your pupils to question you.

By interesting yourself, so far as you can do so conscientiously, in what interests your pupils, even though their interests seem to you trivial and narrow, you will awaken in them a readiness to respond to your teaching. Your sympathy and genial fellowship will create a willingness on their part to coöperate with you in your plans and purposes for them.

In these and in other ways peculiar to your own personality, ever in increasing measure as grace is given to you, it will be your high privilege to show forth in and through your life and character the beauty and power of the religion of Jesus Christ.

The Teacher's Attitude Toward His Work

The quality of the teacher's work will depend very much on his attitude toward it.

Consciousness of a Great Work.—There is no greater calling than that of the teacher. There is no work more important, more fundamental, more far-reaching in its results. Testimonies to this fact have been many and various. Consider, for example, the words of John Bright: "I don't believe that all the statesmen in existence and all the efforts they have ever made have tended so much to the greatness and the true happiness, the security, and the glory of this country as have the efforts of the Sunday-school teachers." It is of first importance that the teacher shall realize the greatness of the work to which he is called.

Realization of Need for Training.—We have emphasized the supreme importance of personality in teaching, but we would have no one draw the unwarranted inference that either character or personality can be made a cloak for ignorance or inefficiency. Exact knowledge, a real mastery of the principles of teaching, skill growing out of study and experience, are required. Perhaps second in importance is the realization that *teaching is a work that requires all possible skill, the highest attainable efficiency.* The question is not so much one of present attainments in knowledge and skill as it is of steadfast purpose to attain. Arnold of Rugby, the great teacher of boys, was wont to declare, "I hold that a man is only fit to teach so long as he is himself learning daily." In the work of teaching even as in the Christian life, though one may confess with the apostle not yet to have attained, one ought also to be able to say with all his heart, "I press on toward the goal."

Eagerness for Hard Tasks.—Teaching is not easy. It makes severe demands upon those who engage in it. Often it presents difficulties that are baffling; obstacles that are all but insurmountable. The teacher needs the spirit *that is eager for hard tasks, willing to attempt the impossible.* It is said of the men who accomplished the impossible by successfully completing the Panama Canal that they came back from their insuperable task singing:

"Got any rivers they say are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
We specialize in the wholly impossible—
Doing what nobody ever could do."

Something of this spirit is required in the teacher. He who is impressed with the opportunity that religious teaching offers, who gives himself unreservedly, eagerly, and gladly to the work and to preparation for efficiency in doing it, who counts difficulties and sacrifices nothing for the joy of service that is his, will find in religious teaching a calling than which there is no higher. He who gives himself grudgingly, talks about what sacrifices it involves, or complains because of the difficulties it offers is out of place in the rank of Christ's teachers and should either change his attitude or cease to think of being a teacher.

The Sense of Wonder.—The best teachers sometimes become disheartened or temporarily discouraged. When the temptation comes, it will help one to consider *the wonder of the teacher's work.* It is truly a wonderful work. Meditate upon the fact that you are truly God's teacher—a colaborer with Jesus Christ. Consider that it is your privilege to aid God in the growth of a soul! The wonder of every teacher's work is well stated by Taylor: "We are dealing with the mind, not with physical forces. The most sensitive instrument ever invented by man does not compare with it in delicacy. . . . [We confront] the mystery of conscious life. No other phenomenon in the universe approaches it in sublimity; no other so fascinates us by its delicate subtleness. The force of gravitation that holds the stars in their courses, the fervent heat that melts down mountains and tosses them into the sky, the bolt of lightning that shivers the towering monarchs of the forest, powerful though they be, know not themselves nor direct a single one of their activities. That strange and wonderful attribute *conscious life* is reserved for the child, the man."[1]

[1] *The Study of the Child,* page xli.

Constructive Task

1. Recall your own early experience as a Sunday-school pupil: What influenced you most? Be definite in your answer.

2. Think of the best teacher you have ever known. Name some of the personal qualities of this teacher that have most impressed you.

3. In addition to those suggested in the lesson statement, name other personal qualities that you think a teacher should cultivate.

4. Write a brief statement in answer to this question: Why am I a teacher, or why do I desire to be a teacher?

References for Supplementary Reading

In "The Worker and Work" series

1. The teacher come from God: *The Adult Worker and Work*, Chapter XIV.

In the library

1. The personality of the teacher: *A New School Management*, Seely, Chapter 1.
2. The teacher's personal equipment: *The Making of a Teacher*, Brumbaugh, Chapter XVII.
3. The cultivation of personality: *The Teacher's Philosophy*, Hyde, Part II.