

2. Lord Jesus, our Shepherd so tender,
Immanuel, Saviour divine,
From heaven's unspeakable splendor,
Thou comest to seek all who pine;
To save all who, humble and lowly,
Have longed for thy heavenly rest,
And gather them, ransomed and holy,
With heavenly love to thy breast.

3. To thee, dearest Saviour, be glory,
All honor on high be thy own
And as we are kneeling before thee,
We pray that thy will may be done.
Lord Jesus, illumine each nation,
And gather thy saints with thy love,
Till blest with eternal salvation,
Forever they praise thee above.

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WITH OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Teacher's Background

By Dean H. T. J. Coleman, Ph.D.

One of the great teachers of our day, Professor Palmer of Harvard, once said that his greatest difficulty in the preparing of any lesson was in deciding what to leave out. There are many teachers who, I fear, do not find this difficulty to be on ordinary occasions a very acute one. Their chief concern, and it amounts at times to a genuine anxiety, is to find enough material to fill up the lesson period. When we consider, however, how much every lesson may properly be made to teach and how short the time at our disposal is, even under the most favorable circumstances, we can understand that the question of the more and the less important, of the pertinent and the not so pertinent, of what to include and what to exclude, of what to emphasize and what to touch upon lightly,—is a highly important one.

An important element in the training of any teacher is the development of this ability to select. No series of lesson helps, however admirably prepared, can provide the material which is the best material for the particular lesson which you or I have to teach, for every such lesson is particular in two ways: it deals with a particular topic of course, but also it must be made to appeal to a particular group of pupils whose interests and tastes and previous experience no writer of lesson helps can understand as you or I—their teacher—should understand them.

If we look to Lesson Helps for specific guidance, rather than for suggestions upon whose suitability we must continually pass judgment, we are apt—in fact we are certain—to make ourselves the servants rather than the masters of our material.

The teacher who feels pressed for time or the teacher who lacks confidence in his own resources and resourcefulness will of course ask; Why should I concern myself with material which I shall probably never need to employ? The answer is twofold or, rather, there are two answers.

The first is that one never really knows what bit of information will be needed and what will not. A noteworthy defect of a great many teachers is that they have not a sufficient margin of safety. They do not encourage free discussion in class because in such discussion unexpected questions are sure to arise. Even in their attempts at exposition such teachers often betray a certain uneasiness for, sooner than they have realized, they have reached the edge of their immediately available knowledge and they tremble with apprehension lest they fall over.

The second answer is in a sense implied in the one just given. One of the greatest assets to any teacher is self-confidence, not only because of the pleasure which the sense of power brings to its possessor but because that sense of power impresses itself in a host of subtle ways upon the class. Our pupils believe in us because we believe in ourselves. We read in the Gospels that Jesus spoke "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Perhaps one of the troubles with the scribes was this: they did not care to answer a question until they had looked up the answer in a book.

There are, however, two other elements in the teacher's background which should be mentioned even though they cannot be elaborated. One is, of course, an intimate knowledge of the characters and dispositions of individual pupils. Such knowledge does its best work unconsciously or at least subconsciously. An observant stranger may detect a difference in the tone or the language used in addressing one pupil from that employed in addressing another, but the teacher, absorbed in the exercise of his art, merely feels that he is doing the natural thing in the circumstances.

A further important part of the teacher's general equipment—of his background, as we have called it—is experience of human life. Christ taught men with such marvelous effect not only because he knew the scriptures, not only because he knew intimately individual human beings,—Peter and James and John—