

As my AF colleagues have asked me to reduce the six-page #968 "What Is 'Teaching'?" to a few propositions, and as one of them wishes to use the propositions for classroom dialectic, I make bold herewith, and plead that the baldness not be taken for dogma:

1. Warning! How-to endangers what: attention to style diverts from substance, manner from matter--tending to dilettantism and hypercriticism. If the message is disconcerting, the medium comes under inauthentic attack--as in the case of Israel's prophets, including Jesus. Schools attend to pedagogics, in addition to good reasons, for the fraudulent reasons that it's easier than to attend to the philosophical issues of aim and therefore content and that the logic of "the intellectual love of God" requires agonizing with human laziness, duplicity, and ego--theological schools not excepted.
2. The biblical teaching occurs within, and from, the singing community of longing--e.g., Ps.84. Where either of these qualities is absent, the teaching is unbiblical at least, perhaps antibiblical, even though the "subject" may be "Bible"!
3. The Bible itself--clear, comprehensive, coherent, but not consistent--models for the biblical teacher and the biblical educational institution. Neither integrity [in both moral and intellectual senses] nor integration [of person, society, world] is optional. "Integration" is not a course or a seminar, but a steady aim and spine.
4. On WBAI this morning [10May77] I was in a hassle--having affirmed that Johnny Appleseed's core motivation was love for and obedience to God--with phone-ins who claimed he mainly loved animals [and tried to pour him into the shamanic mold] or people [and tried to make him an atheist humanist]. Biblical teaching is unreservedly theocentric and, as such, wherever challenged, antinaturalistic and antihumanistic. It is lovingly intolerant of near and far substitutes for theism--e.g. near, gnosticism (e.g., Jungianism); far, the human-potential movement (e.g., Maslow's "eupsychism," or "humanistic psychology"). This is my main reason for liking continuance of "Continuing the Biblical Seminary..." in NYTS literature.
5. The dominant Jewish teaching model, developed straight out of Scripture, is what in the history of American education is called "Mark Hopkins at one end of the log and his student on the other": you select a teacher and follow him around, mastering his message in your heart and his words in your synapses, so that you can parrot him and thus "follow" him in the secondary sense of becoming a medium for his message. The Bible offers no prominent variant of this pedagogy--certainly not Jesus as discipler! Imitatio Christi may or may not take this seriously: I personally do, for all my great teachers got from me the intellectual-spiritual attention implicit in this model, and likewise all my great students [e.g., Norman Gottwald, of whom James Muilenburg said to me, "Willis, if you and I can produce two like him in a lifetime, it's worthwhile!"]. I pretend to have high respect for other models, but I can't really cut it: at most, for other models I have only middling respect. I try not to give too much offense to what is, from time to time, voguish, trendy, "in"--but I disrespect myself for it. My first seminary course, 40 years ago this summer and the best course I ever had, respected me only insofar as I was prepared to respect the truth; in this, Howard Tillman Kuist was following Jesus' model. There is no inherent reason for respecting a human being, any more than an ant or a flea. But teachers get fired for uttering such a blasphemy against humanism, so I don't say it. But the Bible forces me to think it.
6. The center of biblical teaching is not the teacher or the student or the content, but God-as-coming-to-us-from-the-future....in Jesus' holophrase, "the Kingdom of God."
7. Teaching is not to be under control of love. Rather, the content of "love" is to be biblically determined: "love" of the student is to be under the control of "holy Love," the divine Presence in truth and therefore judgment-hope.