

Wesley's way of unifying the curriculum under a trinitarian paradigm necessarily the best or only way of using such a model. One might equally well orient the three foci around the worshipping life of communities of faith, ordering the seminary curriculum accordingly. The force of my argument is simply to suggest that in searching for the unity of theological education in this age of pluralism, we must not look outside the manyness of our situation for a principle of unification. To do so opposes a one to a many in ways which risk arbitrariness and dualism. Rather, we have a theological paradigm within the very doctrine of the Trinity for seeing relations within pluralism which suggest ways of ordering a curriculum with coherence and theological faithfulness.

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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM III
THE RELATION BETWEEN METHOD IN THEOLOGY
AND IN TEACHING THEOLOGY

I have chosen to discuss the theme of theological education as a theological problem from a very narrow and precise point of view. I will view theological education in terms of teaching, so that the phrase theological education is taken here as synonymous with teaching theology. Even more narrowly I wish to speak about the method of teaching theology or the pedagogy that is appropriate for this discipline.

As a way of getting into this subject very quickly and directly, I propose the following hypothesis: The method of teaching theology should correspond with the method of the discipline of theology itself. Another way of putting the same hypothesis would be to say that there should be a correlation between the method of teaching the content of theology and the method of the discipline of theology itself whereby theological content is generated.

The reason why this proposition is put forward as a hypothesis and not a thesis is that in fifteen or twenty minutes it would be impossible to substantiate it. The purpose of these remarks, then, is not to prove anything, but simply to open up a question for discussion; and the point of the hypothesis is to provide a framework for such a discussion. In simple terms the question addressed is this: When theologians do theology, that is, generate theological positions, how do they do it? And when the same theologians teach theology to others, how do they do it? With the hypothesis that there should be a correlation between these two methodologies, I want to open up the question of what such a correlation would mean for both methodologies.

In order to discuss this question somewhat concretely in a short time I want to give examples from two authors who have been helpful for myself both as a theologian and as a teacher. These are Paul Tillich and Paulo Freire. This choice is arbitrary; other thinkers could have been chosen; they are chosen therefore not to prove a point but as illustrative examples. And because the broad lines of the thought of both of these men are rather well known, I can presuppose a general

knowledge of them. On the basis of the hypothesis, then, I will answer the following questions: If in doing theology one adopted a method similar to Paul Tillich, what would one's method of teaching look like? And similarly, but from the other side of the correlation, if one accepted the principles of Freire's method of teaching and theory of learning, what would a method of doing theology that corresponded to this look like?

One last prenote is necessary before beginning this outline. I take theology to be a critical discipline. Whether theology be understood as a critical understanding of reality in the light of Christian symbols or a critical understanding of Christian faith in the light of common contemporary human experience, it is a critical discipline. And by that I mean it is a questioning discipline that gives reasons for its positions. It is not based merely on authority in an extrinsicist sense but tries to examine and "explain" its conclusions.

Paul Tillich and the Teaching of Theology

I begin with a brief characterization of the theological method of Paul Tillich in order to ask then the question of what the teaching of theology would look like if it corresponded or correlated with his method for the discipline of systematic theology.

Tillich described himself as a theologian as one who was "on the boundary" between the Church and the world; his theology is an attempt to mediate between his understanding of the Christian message and of human existence in the world.¹ He called his theology apologetic not in the sense that he tried to prove his positions, but in the sense that he felt that he had to make them intelligible by having them respond to the actual human situation.²

The actual method followed in his systematics he called a method of correlation, which he described in terms of question and answer. "In using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions."³ To the objection that the Christian message not only responds to human questions but also calls human existence into question, Tillich concedes the point: "Symbolically speaking, God answers human questions, and under the impact of God's answers human beings ask them."⁴ And to the objection that our contemporary questions by determining the answers received risk distorting the message, Tillich conceded that only the form of the answer is influenced by con-

¹Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), *passim*. Cf. also Paul Tillich, "Personal Introduction to My Systematic Theology," *Modern Theology* 1 (1985), 83-89.

²Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 3-8.

³*Ibid.*, 62.

⁴*Ibid.*, 61.

temporary questioning.⁵ The response does not come from human experience but from original revelation, from the symbols of the tradition that mediate God's self disclosure. "Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence."⁶

What would a method of theological education or the teaching of theology look like if it corresponded to Tillich's method of correlation? First of all it would begin by raising questions. Whatever one may think of Tillich's method in theology, it reflects a psychological axiom that one cannot understand an answer without first appreciating the question to which it is a response. Without trying to determine how much time should be given to raising the question, it is safe to say that this pedagogy would be very patient in developing the questions to which the Christian message responds before interpreting what that answer might be.

Secondly, the questions to which the content of theology responds are not simply my personal questions but the questions of common human experience. This is implied in Tillich's use of a transcendental philosophical anthropology in raising the questions. But because of our heightened historical, social and political consciousness today, this must be supplemented by historical and social analysis. Ironically, as Johannes Metz has pointed out, in order to arrive at a truly concrete understanding of individual human existence, one must ask historical, social and political questions.⁷ What is the meaning of our common social history as a race in the face of so much human suffering that human beings inflict on others? Does the symbol of the salvation of God mediated through Jesus give any answer to this? But the questions do not simply concern our dilemmas and passivities, but also our active freedom. What is a worthy cause for the surrender and commitment of human freedom today in the light of the Christian message? Through the raising of these questions the teaching of theology, theological education itself, will be hermeneutical even as the discipline itself is.

Paulo Freire and Theological Method

Many are familiar with Paulo Freire because of an association with liberation theology. But Freire is primarily an educator who developed a theory and tech-

⁵This is the significance of Tillich's denial that experience is a source for theology. "Experience is not the source from which the contents of systematic theology are taken but the medium through which they are existentially received." (*Ibid.*, 42) "The medium colors the presentation and determines the interpretation of what it receives." (*Ibid.*, 46) "There is a mutual dependence between question and answer. In respect to content the Christian answers are dependent on the revelatory events in which they appear; in respect to form they are dependent on the structure of the question which they answer" (*Ibid.*, 64). In other words, Tillich operated out of a distinction between form and content.

⁶*Ibid.*, 61.

⁷"[A]ny existential and personal theology that does not understand existence as a political problem in the widest sense of the word, must inevitably restrict its considerations to an abstraction." Johannes Metz, *Theology of the World*, trans. by William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 111.

nique of education. In a way his method of education is an attempt to unify learning content and the process of learning itself.⁸ Here I will only mention three of the principal features characteristic of his theory and program.

First of all, the subject matter in Freire's educational programs consists in the actual experience of those who participate in them. In other words, that which is to be learned does not come from outside the world or the experience of the subjects, but is already there in them, already experienced and known. In this respect Freire's views are analogous to a socratic theory of recollection. The aim of education is to pass from a naive, passive and uncritical consciousness of what is already known to a reflective and critical consciousness of it.⁹

Secondly, this process of a transition to a critical consciousness unfolds through the medium of small group discussions. But these discussions are the very antithesis of group sharing of personal experiences. Rather they are focused on the subject matter. By a device which Freire calls codification, the experience of the more or less homogeneous group is objectified or represented in objective forms, such as pictures for uneducated people or texts for those more advanced. These objectifications, if they are correctly chosen, both represent the experience of the learners and at the same time objectify it, and thus allow for the distance needed to analyze it critically. "These representations function as challenges, as coded situation-problems containing elements to be decoded by the groups."¹⁰

And thirdly, the teacher in this process is not quite a teacher in the accepted sense of a purveyor of knowledge. The teacher is more of a participant or collaborator whose role it is to continually raise further and deeper questions in the group without answering these questions for the group. The role of the teacher is thus more of a socratic leader who keeps pushing the questions further and thus evoking a deeper understanding of the origins and causes of what was first merely given by naive experience.¹¹

On the hypothesis that there should be a correspondence between the methods of teaching theology and the discipline of theology itself, what would method in

⁸Paulo Freire, "Education as the Practice of Freedom," trans. and ed. Myra Bergman Ramos, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. 49. Other basic works by Freire consulted for this synopsis are *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M. B. Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); "The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom" and "Cultural Action and Conscientization," *Harvard Educational Review* 40 (May, August, 1970), 205-225, 452-477.

⁹Freire describes his intention in setting up his literacy training programs in this way: We wanted "a program with human persons as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients, a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention." "Education as the Practice of Freedom," p. 43.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹¹All of the three points mentioned here are developed by Freire polemically in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* over against what he calls a "banking" theory and practice of education. In this system the teacher first learns something from outside the world of the student and in imparting it encourages passivity and thus discourages creative discovery or "invention" of truth within a situation.

theology look like in terms of a Freirean theory and practice of learning? Insofar as theology is a complex discipline which involves other subdisciplines, especially that of history, a Freirean view of it will fall far short of an adequate theology. However there are some lessons to be learned here.

First of all, insofar as theology is hermeneutical, it must begin with contemporary experience. And insofar as one's theological audience is the Christian community, one can presuppose already in hand the basic faith experience and language upon which the whole discipline of theology rests. Theology can be considered a discipline that moves from a first naive understanding of Christian religious or faith language to a questioning, analytical and critical understanding of the same subject matter. In other words, theology in the end is not so much a matter of new knowledge, but of reappropriating what is already experienced in faith in a new way. Thus a Freirean conception of theology will not be contained by a Freirean pedagogy. Rather its critical questioning will overflow present experience into the area of the historical origin and tradition of Christian symbols. But it will begin with a critical questioning of actual experience today in terms of problems.

Secondly, similar to Tillich's method, a Freirean method in theology will be a problem-solving method. It will focus on the questions and problems that are experienced by believing subjects in their present situation. The exact locus or source of these problems will be the encounter between the symbols of Christian faith as they are understood and the experience of life in the world. In other words, just as in Tillich, the focus for beginning theology will be the actual lived and experienced conjunction and mutually interacting influence between Christian symbols and life in the contemporary world. And the dynamic process of theological thinking will move from question to ever new question. The goal of theology will be to show how our experience of reality today modifies and forces a reinterpretation of Christian symbols, and how Christian symbols illumine reality and empower life in the world.

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to reassert that the point of these remarks is not to prove anything, except perhaps something about a certain line of reflection and discussion. To be a theologian usually involves a double professional responsibility. Those who write theological books are also teachers, and teachers of theology are also creating theology. There should be a correlation between these two exercises of a single profession. Conscious reflection on this correlation may mutually enrich both theological method and theological education.

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