

A Heavenly Model

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The Master Teacher

Many people of the world, especially Christians, would agree with the assertion that Jesus was indeed "The greatest teacher who ever lived!" Few people, however, have any more than hearsay on which to base such a statement. Hinsdale said,

It is common for men to call Jesus the most original of teachers.

"But...what man, what sect, has mastered His thought, comprehended His method, and so fully applied it to life?" (Theodore Parker, *Discourses of Religion*, p. 303)¹

"One of America's greatest educational thinkers" of the early twentieth Century, Dr. H. H. Horne said,

In 1906 a volume of bibliography on "Jesus Christ Our Lord" by A.G. Ayers contained five thousand titles. The name of Jesus is more written about than any other in history. Where so much has been written, it is astonishing how little attention has been paid to the pedagogy of Jesus

The pedagogy of Jesus is a discovered and staked-out but unworked mine.
Let no one try it who in not both a biblical scholar and an educator.

(Emphasis added)²

It would seem that there would be great interest in what might be learned from the life and sayings of Jesus regarding teaching and learning and their proper conduct, especially among Christian people generally, but among educators who are Christians more specifically. However, few seem to have the interest and fewer still have made a serious effort to carefully and personally study the matter. But then, who is qualified to make such a study? Hornes' test, if accepted, is a tough one: "a biblical scholar and an educator."

In Search of the Truth

The few recent (the last few hundred years) attempts to consider Jesus as a teacher, and what might be learned about teaching from "the greatest teacher who ever lived", are fraught with serious limitations. The major problem has to do with truly grasping,

¹Hinsdale, B.A., *Jesus As A Teacher*, Christian Pub. Co., St.Louis, 1895

²Horne, Herman Harrell, *Jesus the Master Teacher*, Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, Preface.

whether intellectually or otherwise, the "world view" of Jesus and His time. And who knows when this has been achieved? How can one know when one knows? A second major problem has to do with current conventional notions of professional educationists such as curriculum, lecture, instruction and so on. Is the meaning we give to such words, when looking at Jesus and His time, really only the meaning we give to those words and notions in our own time? How do we know that what Jesus did or would do as a teacher isn't just a figment of our own imagination reflecting what we do or would do?

Case A:

A little familiarity with language study and translation, or the study of culture, reveals that different languages and different cultures, implicitly and explicitly, hold different conceptions, notions, understandings of reality, of truth, of the nature of things. Words, idioms, ideas, and meanings do not translate exactly into another language. Many translated writings will include some words or lines of the original left in the original language with a footnote attempting to give explanation, and yet often confessing failure and acknowledging no comparable meaning.

Case B:

Consider what happened when the first contact occurred between native American Indians and Spaniards with their horses. The American natives believed the Spanish mounted on their horses were single beings and represented a new form of life hitherto unknown to them. How does one avoid seeing in others (in another place or time) what belongs to one's own time and place?

Case C:

A Utah valley resident looking at Timpanogous Mountain "sees" an Indian maiden lying on her back (the top of the mountain). Would someone from Jesus' place and time "see" the same thing?

Case D:

How many children today would look up into the night sky without prior instruction and say, "Oh! look at the big dipper!", or "Look! There's the milky way!" Aren't the children taught to see what they see?

Case E:

A child of our day who is a speaker and writer of English might look at scattered stones on a hillside and see English words and even sentences. Would someone from Jesus' time looking at the same scattered rocks see English words and sentences? Or would they see

Greek, Aramaic, or Latin words and sentences?³

Case F:

What can be said about communication between peoples of different cultures and different times could just as well be said regarding communication among people of the same culture, language, time, and even family; the same words can have different meanings, different referents in the minds, feeling, smells, etc., of different individuals. Often this writer feels uneasy in his reading fearing that he's not really getting the author's true meaning, but rather the reader's meaning, meaning the reader brings to the author's words even when the author is writing in English and is one's contemporary. "Do I see what I want to see in the words, reading not what was really meant by the author, but what I believe he meant, or what I hoped he meant?" could be the disturbing question of every reader.

Concerning smell: "When smelling a certain cologne (that I wore when fourteen years of age), I'm transported back in time to a country road in south central Utah. I'm fourteen years old again and in a 1936 (it wasn't so old then) Ford Sedan, sailing down the road, listening to a cowboy radio station broadcasting from Clint, Texas. It's just about dusk." Would the cologne conjure up the same memory in another person?

Readers of this writing will come away from it with different messages and meanings. And what about this? Does it seem impossible that the same person reading the same writing on two different occasions would derive different meanings? People, it would seem, communicate far less than they think they do, and would probably be astonished at what others "heard" them saying.⁴

It may not be an exaggeration to say that communication is more mis-communication than communication. What might this mean? It means much greater care should be taken to get at the truth of a matter. Does one seek for truth? If one loves and seeks for truth there should be more learning, hearing, and communicating for sound understanding. More checking for meaning should occur. "Would you repeat what you just said?" "Let me see if I understand you. Are you saying---?" Ask to be shown or to see a demonstration.

³The reader is referred to the work of Adelbert Ames whose studies of human perception at The Hanover Institute in the 1940s has remarkable educational implications and whose findings remain largely unknown. See *Education for What is Real*, by Earl C. Kelley, Harper and Row, 1947.

⁴An excellent discussion of this topic is Edward T. Halls *The Silent Language*, 1959.

Offer to show or to demonstrate.

Many have participated in demonstrations of ineffective communication in which a group of listeners recreate with pen and paper a design or drawing as a verbal description is given to them. A good laugh has been had as everyone compares the various efforts with the actual drawing or design. The purpose of such an activity, besides having a little fun, is usually to teach the important lesson of shortcomings in communication. Does it? It should, but not really, in the long run anyway. Such a demonstration or lesson soon fades from experience, is forgotten, and life returns to normal (normal being to believe communication is effective when it probably is, in fact, not). We return to what might be called a mythological world in which we are convinced we see and hear and know clearly and certainly when we in fact do not.

Having noted shortcomings of words, language and communication, let us proceed to discuss some of the teaching characteristics of Jesus Christ of which it could be charged that "I've just disqualified myself to write about, for I'm neither a Biblical scholar," nor claim to be a very knowledgeable educator, "nor frankly do I know of one unless it is Hugh Nibley." (You are supposed to chuckle at this point as I go right ahead and attempt to do what I said I couldn't do. Actually, I wanted you to know that I know the limitations under which I attempt to write on this topic or any topic.)

Individual Initiative

The important point to make regarding Jesus as a teacher has to do with initiative for learning. The initiative, the responsibility for learning, lies with the learner. The learner is "to ask, seek, knock." The teacher is to hear, answer, respond. The Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door, if any man knock..."

This doesn't mean Jesus did not, nor does God, attempt to teach us or put before us teachings that we seemingly have not asked for. They do attempt to teach us and to put teachings before us, but all that they do is dependent upon the learner; the learner's response, attitude, desire. Because of this, many of their teachings typically are put forth indirectly; in "parables," in "types and shadows," in "hidden ways." God the Father and God the Son *seem slow to teach*, to respond. They seem not to speak or teach because the learner must qualify himself. When they do respond it seems that they do not respond "plainly." Why is this so? Because first, and most importantly, He, God, has made us free, and in a sense, equal to Him. Equals do not try to force or compel each other. Equals suggest, recommend, invite, advise, respond, help, etc. God does not force us to be, or to know, but leaves us free to be or not be, to know or to not know.

Know this, that every soul is free To choose his life and what he'll be;

For this eternal truth is given; That God will force no man to heav'n.
He'll call, persuade, direct aright, And bless with wisdom, love, and light.
In nameless ways be good and kind, But never force the human mind.⁵

A second reason God is "slow" to teach what we may desire to know is that knowledge brings responsibility and accountability. When we *know better*, for example, we are responsible to *do better*. In fairness to us, God protects us, shields us from responsibility, from accountability we do not unequivocally *choose* to bear and which we are not genuinely *qualified* to bear, for, "what we (knowingly) sow, we must also reap."

In His respect for us, the initiative generally lies with us. We "work out our own salvation." It is an awesome responsibility. We may indeed come to view the work "with fear and trembling." However, it also is a fair responsibility and a great compliment to us from our God and Divine Father. We are permitted to know and to be what we wish. (*Desire* is the word used in the Scriptures.) It's more than God just being nice to us by letting us run our own lives however. "There is no other way" learning, or growth, or development can come to us, and the responsibility *cannot be given to another*. All learning is a do-it-yourself project. Albert E. Bowen has said,

The principle of freedom of choice, and of course of action is implicit in the whole gospel teaching. It must be so for there is no soul-growth in any act done under compulsion. It is an immutable law of life that mental or spiritual growth comes only out of self effort. Intellectual attainment is not transferable. It may not be passed from one to another as a gift, nor by sale. It comes only by individual application directed in harmony with governing laws. But application must grow out of an inward urge. It cannot be forced. The same is true of the development of spiritual power. One cannot, for example wish or dream himself into a knowledge of chemistry. Neither may it devolve to him as an inheritance. He may spend all his days in close association with the most renowned of chemists and still know nothing of the subject. If he wants to be a chemist he must study the laws of chemistry and go into the laboratory and make the revealing test of the validity of his opinions or deductions. The necessary knowledge cannot be imposed upon him by the exercise of extraneous force howsoever great. The learning act must be his own voluntary exertion. Nobody disputes these obvious truths as applied to intellectual or physical accomplish. (Really? Isn't the prevailing view just the opposite?) They are just as vitally essential in the realm of spiritual growth, though strangely enough,

⁵Anon. *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1985, p. 240.

not generally so recognized. For that, spiritual laws must be learned and the virtues practiced which alone can lead to spiritual expansion. Among them compulsion has no place. It bears no fruitage. Freedom of spirit may be curbed in its expression, held back and stifled under despotic or tyrannical physical control. Hence the supreme value which the Church has always placed upon personal liberty and individual freedom and upon governmental systems which foster them.⁶

Readiness for Learning

How does God determine our learning needs? Are there *eternal* principles of growth and development and therefore of teaching and learning? Yes. They are,

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| 1)Desire to know. | 2)Preparatory learning. |
| 3)Continuous learning. | 4) Confidentiality. |

Let us consider them.

Desire

Proper learning arises from a given individual learner's desires, and even though there is a scope and sequence to learning, the scope and sequence is unique to each learner depending on the individual learner's desires and previous learning. For example, the Prophet Alma (the elder), said to his son, Corianton,

*But I show unto you one thing which I have inquired diligently of God that I might know--that is concerning the resurrection. (Alma: 40-42, Book of Mormon)*⁷

The most extensive information in all the scriptures upon the topic of the resurrection is found in the writings of Alma. Why? Because he, of all the prophets seemed most to desire to know about it.

Alma was inspired to "show" Corianton about the resurrection. However, God may not have permitted Alma to tell all that he knew regarding the resurrection to his son, or to anyone else, because his son and those others lacked readiness. God does not always

⁶ *The Church Welfare Plan*, by Albert E. Bowen. Gospel Doctrine Department course of study--Second half of 1946 for the Sunday Schools of the Church.(Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.)

⁷The *Book of Mormon* is along with the *Bible* a book of scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints. Biblical sources will hereafter be quoted, or referred to as well, but in most cases without giving the exact source, because it is assumed such quotes are common knowledge. However, full references will gladly be given upon request.

allow what has been revealed to the Prophets to be fully communicated to others whether "plainly" or in "parables. Because "meat," according to the Apostle Paul, must be preceded by "milk." Paul, remember, was "caught up into the third heaven and saw things it is not lawful for a man to utter." (to others i.e.)

Another prophet by the name of Nephi said,

And these things have I WRITTEN, WHICH ARE A LESSOR PART OF THE THINGS WHICH HE (Jesus) taught the people...And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. (Emphasis mine) (*Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 26:8,9)

The test of further light and knowledge to a given individual from Heaven is first, "is further knowledge desired, wanted?" And *second*, "*What has been done with, are about, previous light and knowledge?*"

When prophets are permitted to write what is taught or revealed to them, they often are not permitted to write "plainly." Such are the writings of Isaiah, or John's *Book of Revelations*, or Zenos' allegory of the olive tree (Jacob 5, *Book of Mormon*). The knowledge is available to others if those others qualify themselves for it.

How do they qualify? Again they must have adequate, 1)desire and 2)preparatory knowledge. (This includes adequate "searching of the revelations and scriptures.")

On the otherhand, no one can be prevented from learning what one is "qualified" to know. As Alma said,

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and toungue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.

Preparatory Learning

"*Curriculum*," when "correct principles" of education are being followed, is *whatever the learner is seeking to know, and will necessarily differ from one learner to another even if two seem interested in essentially the same thing*. Proper curriculum therefore, is whatever a given learner is interested in and is willing to study. The individual pursuit of knowledge based on interests may eventually result in all learners, learning somewhat the same things, but surely not all. Nor will all learn the same things in the same sequence. For example, the Prophet Nephi said, he ". . . desired to know the things that my father

(the Prophet Lehi) had seen (in a dream or vision) . . . while my father tarried in the wilderness . . ."⁸

Nephi was given *the same* vision his father had received, but consider what happened, And the Spirit said: Behold what desirest thou? And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw. And the Spirit said unto me: Believest thou that they father saw the tree of which he hath spoken?: (What a puzzling question to ask Nephi. Didn't he just say he was interested, wanted to know what his father knew, had seen?) And I said Yea, thou knowest that I believe all the words of my father. (Hey? *You know* I believe he saw the tree. *I believe everything my father tells me!* The Spirit was apparently satisfying himself that Nephi was *worthy* to learn what he, Nephi, wanted or *desired* to learn.)

So Nephi was shown the vision, but again, in what manner? "And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree" After Nephi told the Spirit what he had seen, the Spirit ". . . said unto me: (Now) What desirest thou?" Nephi tells what he now *desired* to know which was then shown to him. During the course of the vision/instruction the Spirit asked Nephi more questions, a series of questions. Not one right after the other however, but one at a time, and after Nephi had responded to each question in turn.

"Nephi, what beholdest thou?" "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" "Knowest thou the meaning of the book?" (He was shown a book.) "Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the House of Israel?" (Good question! What were "the covenants?" Are they still in force?) What is so very interesting here is that Nephi would be shown something and then he would be asked what *he* saw after which an explanation would be given by the angel. (Wouldn't the angel know what Nephi saw? *And*, would two different people see the same thing?)

More would be shown. Again the question, "what do you see?" Other questions raised had to do with the meaning Nephi gave to the things he was seeing.

After the vision, Nephi said,
And behold, I Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard....I have written but a small part of the things

⁸This quote and others that follow, related to Nephi and his vision, will be found, beginning in the tenth chapter of I Nephi of the *Book of Mormon*.

which I saw.

The "small part" amounts to almost *six thousand words!* So, most of what Nephi learned was for his learning alone and was not to be communicated to anyone else, at least in writing.

Has the learner acquired/applied the necessary, preceding learning? And does the learner desire more? These are the important questions. Has one *understood* and *applied* the prerequisite knowledge and now desires more? Because, "God does not satisfy idle curiosity." Curiosity must be *active!* Active curiosity utilizes, applies, and cherishes the desired knowledge when it comes. If one desires more knowledge without adequate assimilation of preceding knowledge, new learning is impossible until the deficiency is rectified.

A final reason God may be slow to teach us if we do not desire to be taught is that a learner given "knowledge" for which he does not seek and is not prepared (the learner does not *desire* the knowledge or hasn't the necessary preparatory knowledge) cannot only not "learn" the knowledge, but *may not ever be able to learn it.* Why? Because of a negative attitude toward the knowledge produced by *forced premature contact/learning.* "Give not that which is holy unto dogs." "Cast not pearls before swine." Give not that which is precious (and all knowledge is precious) to the one who does not want it, because it has not the proper value to him, and now, *may never have the proper value because it came before he was ready for it.*

Continuous Learning

The third principle of growth and development is that the learner must continue desiring and striving to learn, and making the learning part of ones life. *If one does not continue to learn one begins, immediately, to lose what one knows and regresses in knowing and understanding until eventually nothing is known.* "To him that hath shall be given more, but to he that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

Confidentiality of Knowledge

Learning is largely an individual matter and is difficult to share with another, because another might not "desire" the knowledge and may not have had the necessary prerequisite learning. Also, language itself may not be adequate to convey knowledge or understanding. Again, God does not give "That which is holy unto dogs," nor "cast pearls before swine," nor does He allow the one who receives that which is "holy" or that which is a "pearl" to be given to the unworthy, the unqualified, for, "God will not be mocked." Learning in God's system of education is highly individualized.

From Heaven to Earth

We have been considering how and why the individual's desire or interest is the major factor in what might be called a "heavenly model of education." It's what the learner wants to know, is willing to work for that controls what ultimately is learned. "Heaven" makes the learner of supreme value, and an end in himself, with knowledge a means to that end. This contrasts sharply with the worldly mode of education in that the worldly mode puts "knowledge" (what is to be learned, a curriculum) at the heart of its system. In the world's system the learner is a means to the greater end of the religious, social, or political institution which utilizes an educational system (really a school system) in its service.

God, contrary to what is commonly believed, does not use rewards or penalties arbitrarily to manipulate, to affect or influence man, for, "the sun shines on the just and the unjust."⁹ There are, however, consequences to one's choices. Whether those consequences are viewed as positive or negative, a reward or a penalty, is completely a matter of individual perception. In other words, the same consequence may be viewed as negative by one person and positive by another.

Rewards and penalties are used arbitrarily in worldly systems. They are used to control and shape observable behavior of the individual or of groups. "The world" usually makes man a *means* ("man is made for the Sabbath"), *heaven makes man an end* ("the Sabbath is made for man").

We would do well to harken, ponder, consider, and learn the principles of the "Heavenly Model" of education, of teaching and of learning. To know correct principles and to adhere to them in one's own learning, or in assisting other learners is true wisdom.

Christ and Little Children

Dr. H. H. Horne said,

A colleague of mine, a leader in the experimental study of education, Professor P. R. Radosavljevich, writes me in a letter concerning Jesus as a teacher as follows: "I think such a topic deserves thorough study in every

⁹St. Clement (One of 2nd and 3rd Century Christian Church leaders.) said, ". . . if God should pay the recompense of the righteous speedily, we should immediately be training ourselves in commerce and not in godliness; for we should seem to be righteous when we were . . . not", from *The Apostolic Fathers*, with an English translation by Kirsopp Lake, London: William Heinemann, New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, MCMXXX, p. 161.

department of education, for there is a peculiar tendency in modern times (He should be around today!) to deviate as much as possible from the greatest sources in our noble profession. Jesus Christ is no doubt one of the greatest masters of ours, (Who can compare?) and the attitude of the Great Teacher toward the children ought to be taken as a real model for all Christian and non-Christian educators. Almost all modern studies in child-study lead to the pedagogy of Jesus; for here the child is treated not as an adult, but as a child in the spirit of Love, Truth, and Freedom. All criteria of modern free schools depend upon this great triad.' So, in the judgement of this modern investigator, the attitude of Jesus toward children is the best we know in education today.¹⁰ (Emphasis added)

Such was the optimism at the beginning of this century among many Protestant Christians educators as to the direction public schooling for children was hopefully taking.

"Except ye..become as little children, ye shall not enter...heaven." (Matt.18:34) Why? For one thing, little children are champion learners. They are interested in everything and they want to do everything regardless of beginning success or failure. Watch how quickly little ones go back to attempting what they have just failed at, and perhaps even have been hurt at attempting, such as climbing stairs or riding a tricycle. They want to do, to know, to be. They readily leave behind the old for the new. The old does not cling to them, nor do they cling to the old. They run to the new, fascinated with it. They are the epitome of humility, which means to be teachable, to be willing to learn. They love to learn! They live to learn!

Little children are also tremendously trusting in those around them, especially their parents. They trust that others know and can do; however, they want to do for themselves and not to have things done for them as they become ready, in their own eyes, to do for themselves.

As the child grows older however, the more set he becomes in understandings, in doings, and conversely the harder it becomes for him to let go of what he has learned to know or to do. He becomes comfortable in what he has, what he knows, what he is. He becomes less willing to hear, to be told by another. It becomes harder for him to change.

However, Some children (few) do not lose the trait. They retain traits of humility, of teachability. Some of these have become the prophets, and some the other good and

¹⁰ H. H. Horne, *Jesus the Master Teacher* 1964 (Reprint Edition), p. 182.

great souls that have blessed mankind. The scripture says that Moses ". . . was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Num. 12:3) Jesus, the greatest of all was, ". . . meek and lowly . . ." (Mat. 11:29 And note, ". . . none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart . . ." (B. of M., Mor.7:49) (Emphasis mine) All must "become like little children" to truly learn, and to truly learn the truth it would seem.

Those who became Jesus' Apostles were undoubtedly child-like, humble men. Neander has observed,

It may appear strange that Christ should have selected as His chosen organs, men so untaught and unsusceptible in divine things . . . especially when men of learned cultivation in Jewish theology were at hand But, as He himself testifies (Matt xi:25) "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Precisely because these men, destitute of all higher learning, attached themselves to Him like children, and obeyed even His slightest hints, were they best fitted to receive His spirit with childlike devotion and confidence, and to propagate the revelations which He made to them . . . , "as compared to other," . . . men who had received a complete culture elsewhere would have been ill adapted for this. They (again other men, cultivated, educated men) . . . presented . . . the stubborn adherence to preconceived views of men who had been trained and cultivated before.¹¹

Learning and Change

Progress, improvement, truth, usually requires one to change, or modify to some degree what one is, and the nature of life is such that improvement is always possible. One can always do or know better. One cannot improve though, if he will not give up the old, the past. It's important that one be willing to recognize that what one is, or is doing, is not necessarily all one should be. One should want, even resolve, to do better. Further, one should strive to make corrections and modifications, to reconstruct, to reform oneself. Such improvement should be on going, yes, even all of one's life. As Orson F. Whitney put it, one should be,

Welcoming from truth instruction . . . Ne'er too lofty to be learning.
Hungering for facts, not fictions, unsufficed with classic nothings, ancient myths or modern fables, premature, half-fledged conclusions Waging

¹¹Augustus Neander (1789-1850), *The Life of Christ*, translated from the German by J. M. M'clintock & C. E. Blumenthal, 1892, pp. 124,5.

war on vain assumption"12

Repentance and Learning

The scriptures label such an ongoing process of learning and changing as "repentance" and puts it forth as a fundamental principle of "the Gospel." It is however, a correct principle of life as well as "salvation." The good person, in the eyes of God, is the person striving to repent (i.e. changing) to become better. The wicked person is unrepenting. The repentant person is always striving to "put off the old man and put on the new." The repentant person trusts God and has faith in Him and strives to live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" as those words are learned or realized.

Thus we see that repentance in God's scheme of things is a process of learning leading to change and is essentially at the initiative of the learner, the person. We also see that little children are born possessing this trait of teachability, of learnability, in abundance, but begin to lose it as they advance in years. We see, furthermore, that for adults to hope to learn what they must learn, or be, "to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven", they must retain or regain this trait of little children.

Why the Rise of Unteachableness?

Compare the characteristics of little children with the average adult. A little observation and reflection convinces one that adults are almost the opposite of little children as learners. Why is this so? Why, as humans grow and develop, do they seem to lose more and more of the capacity for learning? There are, of course, a number of very good explanations that could be put forward. One rarely considered has to do with the manner in which infants and even little children are "taught". How are they taught?

We discussed earlier, and elsewhere, the fact that infants and little children are not taught initially as teaching has come to be understood. They are taught in an unintentional, and seemingly unsystematic manner. The teaching of infants is mostly exhibition, demonstration, or we might say by showing, by example, as well as by learning speech, and also by responsiveness. The infant says something, does something and we respond.

¹²Orson F. Whitney, "The Educator", *Love and the Light; an Idyl of the Westland*, 1918, Pub. by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, pp 18-21.) This is a wonderful book in verse, of the meeting, and courting of two school teachers. The setting is "the valleys of the mountains" of the Western United States near the end of the Nineteenth Century. The women is an "atheist". The man is a Christian. They discuss much, especially education.

However, limited formal teaching begins for the "higher" social classes at age two-three, either in the form of a private pre-school or/and church or religion related participation. Governments have also started "pre-school" programs for the "poor" or "disadvantaged." Elementary schools in the spirit "of equal opportunity" originally were private efforts on behalf of the "poor and disadvantaged," as were kindergarten and early Montessori schools, but have become standard for all children. Today when children reach an age to begin "to put away childish things" which currently is between five and eight depending on the culture or society, conscious, formal, systematic instruction is imposed on the child. The age for formal schooling has been declining with increased "pre schooling" and early child institutional care.

Instruction of the pre-school and the primary age child, however, is more and more in conflict with how learning and teaching have occurred in the child's life here-to-fore. Could this change in children being formally taught at a younger age and for a much longer period contribute in a major way to the loss of those marvelous and powerful learning traits and characteristics that children originally possess? Does formal teaching and early schooling "Dumb Kids Down", as John Gatto says? (See *Dumbing Us Down*, John Gatto, 1991)

The Secret of Jesus' Teaching

When Jesus said to his Twelve disciples that they must become (again) as little children, did He also mean that they would have to be taught as little children and that He, Jesus, would in fact teach, and continue to teach them as little children are initially taught, i.e. largely informally and seemingly unsystematically? Was this the other side of the equation? If the Twelve must become as little children to learn then must not they also be taught as little children are best taught as well?

Did Jesus say anything about how little children should be taught and therefore how adults should be taught as well? Charlotte Mason says Jesus did just that. She said, It is worthwhile for parents to ponder every utterance in the Gospels about the children, divesting themselves of the notion that these sayings belong, in the first place, to the grown-up people who have become as little children It may surprise parents who have not given much attention to the subject to discover also a code of education in the gospels, expressly laid down by Christ. It is summed up in three commandments, and all three have a negative character, as if the chief thing required of grown-up people is that they should do no sort of injury to these children: Take heed that ye OFFEND not--DESPISE not--HINDER not--one of these little ones. So run the three educational laws of the New Testament Let us look at

these three great laws . . . to clear the ground for the consideration of a method of education; for if we once settle with ourselves what we may not do, we are greatly helped to see what we may do, and must do.¹³

Mason of course is referring to Jesus' statements,

*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones . . . Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not . . . (hinder them not)*¹⁴

According to Mason, "the chief thing required of grown-up people is that they do no sort of injury to these children"! How is injury done? How do we offend, despise, hinder? Is it in violating the proper manner in which children learn which is the effective manner of all human learning, in which the learner initiates, directs and manages his/her own learning, while those around the learner respond in some appropriate way?

The Teaching of the Twelve

Earlier, Neanders' observation regarding why Jesus chose "unlearned" men to be the Twelve was referred to. Now consider what Neander said about the manner in which Jesus taught the Twelve,

The words of Christ recorded in Luke v.33, Matt. ix. 14, throw a distinct light upon his peculiar method of training the Apostles. When reproached because he imposed no strict spiritual discipline, no fasting or outward exercises upon his disciples, but suffered them to mingle in society freely, like other men, he justified his course by stating (in effect), that "fasting, then imposed upon them, would have been an unnatural and foreign disturbance of the festal joy of their intercourse with him, the object of all their longings. But when the sorrow of separation (after the ascension of Christ) should follow the hours of joy, fasting would be in harmony both with their inward feelings and their outward life. As no good could come of patching old garments with new cloth, or putting new wine into old skins, so it was not his purpose to impose the exercises of spiritual life, fasting, and the like, by an outward law, upon his yet untrained disciples, but rather by a gradual change of their whole inward nature, to make them vessels fit for the indwelling of the higher life. When they had become such, all the essential manifestations of that indwelling life would spontaneously reveal

¹³Charlotte M. Mason, *Home Education*, 1989, pp. 12 & 13 (Originally published in 1935).

¹⁴Math.: 18:6, 10: Luke: 18:16.

themselves; no outward command would then be needed." Here we see the principle on which Christ acted in the intellectual, as well as in the moral and religious training of the Apostles.

As he would not lay external restraints, by the letter of outward laws, upon natures as yet undisciplined, so it was not his purpose to impart the dead-letter of a ready-made and fragmentary knowledge to minds whose worldly modes of thought disabled them from apprehending it. He aimed rather to implant the germ, to give the initial impulse of a total intellectual renovation, by which men might be enabled to grasp, with a new spirit, the new truths of the kingdom of God. In every relation he determined not to "patch the old garment, or put new wine into old bottles" This principle, thus fully illustrated by Christ's training of his Apostles, is, in fact, the universal law of growth in the genuine Christian life." (Neander, p. 126,7) (Emphasis added)

Jesus taught the twelve largely as infants and even as little children are taught and should be taught which means that they were taught essentially informally, incidentally, according to no particular schedule. He taught them as they inquired to know and to understand. The twelve needed to be changed inside and within as each of them managed their own personal situation. When the "inward vessel had been cleansed," had been genuinely changed, converted, then the outer expression of the self would be appropriate. The learning properly occurring would produce the right kind of person, and produce the right kind of person the only way a person can be rightly produced.

How Was Jesus Taught?

Jesus himself was taught in His childhood home very much in the Hebrew tradition according to Farrar. He said,

The schools in which Jesus learnt were not the schools of the scribes, but the school of holy obedience, of sweet contentment, of unalloyed simplicity, of stainless purity, of cheerful toil The education of a Jewish boy of the humbler classes was almost solely scriptural and moral and his parents were as a rule his sole teachers. We can hardly doubt that the child Jesus was taught by Joseph and Mary to read the Shema (Deut. 6:4) and the Hallel (Ps. cviv.-cxviii) and the simpler parts of those holy books, on whose pages His divine wisdom was hereafter to pour such floods of light.¹⁵ (Emphasis added)

¹⁵Frederic William Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, 1867, p. 80.

In fact, regarding Jesus' attendance at "higher" schools such as the Scribal and Rabbinical schools Farrar said,

Had Jesus received the slightest tincture of their technical training (the higher Schools) He would have been less, not more effectually armed for putting to shame the supercilious, exclusiveness of their narrow erudition." (Farrar, p. 79, emphasis mime)

And Edersheim says,

We have already spoken of the religious influences in the family (Jewish), so blessedly different from that neglect, exposure, and even murder of children among the heathen, or their education by slaves, who corrupted the mind from its earliest opening. The love of parents to children, appearing even in the curse which was felt to attach to childlessness; the reverence towards parents, as a duty higher than any of outward observance; and the love of brethren, which Jesus had learned in His home, form, so to speak, the natural basis of many of the teachings of Jesus. They give us also an insight into the family-life of Nazareth. And yet there is nothing somber nor morose about it; and even the joyous games of children, as well as festive gatherings of families, find their record in the words and the life of Christ.¹⁶

The Rise of Schools

God, remember, had directed Moses to direct "the Children of Israel" to teach their children The Law. (Duet. 6:7-9) The parents were to teach formal things informally. The Israelites became unique among contemporary peoples of their day as those other peoples rapidly proceeded down the road of establishing formal schools for children independent of the home and family, and those schools were very much like what the word "school" has come to stand for today: set times for study, enforced study, overly prescribed and systemized subject matter, children spending long hours with a large group of other children, a reversal of the teacher-pupil ratio, IE. rather than the child having two or more teachers (the parents and often older siblings as well as grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.), it became one teacher and twenty-five children. (This was, in fact, a teacher pupil ratio established at an early point in the rise of schools.) Putting a child in a school with a large number of other children and one adult for a teacher rather than the child remaining at home to learn in the family setting, seems contrary to the natural world of which they are a part. In the natural world man's youth was to be long, as against that of other mammals. Man was to learn most of what he was to become, animals would learn little and

¹⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. I, 1910, p. 227.

behave instinctively a great deal.

The child and the family among the Israelites were of central value, but among neighboring peoples were low in value as compared to the greater society. This really meant, however, some one individual (a King and/or his family) established the social standards and asserted them in the name of the people as a whole. It seems to be one of those laws of history that societies tend toward the dissolution of the family and the home as the central place for the nurturing and upbringing of new societal members.

While the majority of people assert the importance of the family, they many times support and favor things which contribute to the weakening, even destruction of the family. The invention and rise of schools for children has been a major contributor to the unhealthy family conditions. (See again James S. Coleman's, "Families and Schools", *Educational Researcher*, Aug/Sept. 1987, pp. 32-38 for a recent statement on that theme by one of America's most esteemed educational sociologists.)

Why does society seem often to turn anywhere but to the family for more effectively bringing up children or ameliorating society's ills? Why has it not been seen that "the home is a school of power" as Emerson (Ralph Waldo) has said? The power of the home has been seen for its potential as a destructive entity, but the solution to "problem" homes is rarely seen as the need to heal the home. The solution is usually a well meaning government program which ends up further weakening the home.

Emerson believed the solution was in the family. He said,

The natural method forever confutes our experiments, and we must still come back to it. The whole theory of the school is on the nurse's or mother's knee. The child is as hot to learn as the mother is to impart. There is mutual delight. The joy of our childhood in hearing beautiful stories from some skillful aunt who loves to tell them, must be repeated in youth. The boy wishes to learn to skate, to coast, to catch a fish in the brook, to hit a mark with a snowball or a stone; and a boy a little older is just as well pleased to teach him these sciences. Not less delightful is the mutual pleasure of teaching and learning the secret of algebra, or of chemistry, or of good reading and good recitation of poetry or of prose, or of chosen facts in history or in biography.¹⁷ (Emphasis added)

Note the natural progress of learning Emerson outlines, from the hearth to the larger world of intellectual discoveries and creations of cultures.

¹⁷H. M. Jones, *Emerson on Education*, 1966.

Emerson's educational views deserve study for three reasons. First, he was a contemporary of Horace Mann, the "father of compulsory education." Second, he has been held in higher esteem than Mann has. And third, he held almost the opposite view of Mann as to the value and workability of compulsory schooling. Emerson has not been heard. It's time to hear him.

The Correct Method is Everything

Besides the fact that the Israelites were unique for many centuries in not establishing schools for children outside the home or the family, just as important was the manner in which teaching was to be conducted in the Israelite home. It was this unique manner of teaching that Jesus displayed in His ministry. By the time of Christ, schools for children and adults had become established among the Jews due to the influence of other cultures. Consequently, the way Jesus taught publicly was somewhat unique among the Jews at that time.

It is an interesting irony that from Egyptian bondage to Babylonian captivity (about 600 years), the Israelites kept wanting to worship idols, but then gave up idol worship in Babylon and became enamoured with the schools the Babylonians had for children and then for the next five hundred plus years increasingly "worshiped" the idol of the school.

However, Jesus was not the master teacher only because of the manner in which he taught, it would appear, but because of the marvelous superiority and higher level to which He took that manner of teaching. It would seem the Israelites began with the full promise of a divinely designed teaching program, but by the time of Jesus they had lost much of that promise. Jesus "restored" to the Jews the full power of that manner of teaching in His own example.

Regarding Jesus' manner and method of teaching Farrar has said,

But this teaching of Jesus was . . . as much grander as the temple of the morning sky under which it was uttered was grander than stifling synagogue or crowded school. It was preached as each occasion rose, on the hillside or by the lake, or on the roads, or in the house of the Pharisee, or at the banquet of the Publican. . . . (Farrar, p. 172)

Boyer said, as to Jesus' methods, they,

. . . may be considered under such heads as his insight, sympathy, and skill.

Insight - In order that we humans may know how to adapt means to ends in the teaching process, it is necessary for us to study the child. Perfect knowledge of the child, all other things being correlate, is the only final

guarantee of perfect pedagogy

Sympathy - . . . Teachers who cannot feel what their pupils feel, and who do not care, cannot really know the children It was this sequential quality of sympathy with children that made such educational reformers as Pestalozzi and Froebel benefactors of the human race. In other words, sympathy, in all such cases, transmutes insight into action It is this same quality that often makes the learner, who is hard to understand, an open book to his mother This infinite sympathy of Christ, as well as the momentous fact that he "lived" what he taught, let it be reverently said, accounted very largely for the recognized propelling force of Christ's ideas.

Skill - . . . He drew his illustrations from nature and life in perfect conformity to the present and future needs of his hearers. Take for example the use which he made of "the sower that went forth to sow", the "fig tree", on which the planter found no fruit (etc.) The apperceptive relation of means to ends in Christ's parables continues to evoke the highest praise of expert opinion. The unerring aptness of his illustrations, the suggestive wealth of implied deductions, and his emphasis on lessons worth while, must forever charm and delight those who learn at his feet In him who spake as no man spake, Karl Schmidt sees embodied all "the eternal principles of pedagogy."¹⁸

Jesus taught publicly and privately. He taught individually and collectively. *He did not teach*, as far as we know, *according to a schedule*, neither of time, place nor subject. He taught as was the custom among the Jews: essentially informally, incidentally. He taught "as they walked by the way" or "sat at meat," by "the seaside," "on a hill," "at Jacob's Well." He gave no assignments as we understand the term. There were not tests nor grades. There was no graduation. However, *there was teaching and learning and study of the profoundest kind.*

Some Recent Learning Theorists

Some Twentieth Century learning theorists present to us intriguing views of what sound education, of teaching and learning, ought to be when considering the question, "How do children properly learn?" Michael Polanyi, in his important lectures and later his book, *Personal Knowledge* (1958), (Abraham Maslow said this is "the most important scientific book of the 20th century.") argues that effective teaching can occur only in an

¹⁸Charles C. Boyer, *History of Education*, 1919, PP. 108-11.

"apprenticing relationship." The apprenticing relationship, and the manner and mode of teaching Polanyi described, is surprisingly similar to what appears to have existed with Jesus and His twelve Apostles.

Caleb Gattegno, a well respected British learning theorist, argues in his book, *What We Owe Children* (1971), that the manner in which little children learn so well and so much before their entering formal schools, is set aside and replaced with a totally ineffective system when they do enter school. He urges the need for the continuation of "the powers of children" into formal schooling. He discusses how those powers would properly operate in a school.

In the early 1960's, Omar Kayam Moore, another learning theorist (from Price, Utah), demonstrated dramatically at the University of Chicago how little children (three year olds) can learn easily and quickly (in about three months) to read and write by having them learn "exactly" the way they learn to speak, and furthermore, to learn to read and write *without any human instruction*. All teaching was done by his "talking typewriter" and yet all learning was completely controlled by the child. Sound impossible? See Maya Pines' *Revolution in Learning: From Birth to Six* (1966).

The whole history of education in modern times (1500 A.D. to the present) constitutes an attempt to study the child¹⁹, to understand the child, to learn from the child how he learns even though insights derived from such study have found little admittance to a school tradition rooted in ancient times.²⁰

¹⁹The exception to this has been the Behaviorist School of learning theory, which studied animals and then extrapolated to humans. (See Polanyi's critique of Behaviorism in this regard.)

²⁰Hugh Nibley has pointed this out in a brief history of education of the West. According to Nibley all modern education (schooling) represents the victory of the Greek Sophists. Form and appearance are everything; substance is nothing. See "Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else", *Western Speech*, Spring, 1956, pp 57-79.

Richard Hofstadter in his Pulitzer Prize book on American history for 1963, *Anti-Intellectualism in American History*, argues that the United States has never valued the development of intellect. He says, "American education can be praised, not to say defended, on many counts; but I believe ours is the only educational system in the world vital segments of which have fallen into the hands of people who joyfully and militantly proclaim their hostility to intellect and their eagerness to identify with children who show

In Conclusion

The point is the learner controls his own learning. Learning is largely a "do-it-yourself project." However, the learner chooses much of what is learned from sources in the environment: language; beliefs; values; behaviors; attitudes. Therefore, if one would "teach" a child, one must be particular as to what is exhibited or modeled, and one must be cognizant of what one says and presents as "knowledge." Jesus understood all of this very well, and, consequently, is recognized as the greatest teacher of all time. He recognized that,

The great principle of pedagogy is . . . expression. . . . Christ contended (before the world was) that it was the divine right of man to express himself--that he should be given his free agency--the opportunity to develop his own powers, through freedom of thought and action. His will prevailed; but His opponents have never ceased to battle for their unholy cause. . . . Even in our systems of education their autocratic hand is frequently shown. As a result, our schools are often institutions of repression and suppression rather than expression. Too many teachers dominate rather than direct the minds of their pupils. Children are constantly being driven, not led, to learn. This was not the method of the Master. His teaching was ever characterized by the spirit of true democracy. He was always one with His pupils. He did not force the minds of those who came to be taught by Him; but He opened up the truths He would impress, and left them free to work out the problems in their own way. He taught them the eternal principles of the Gospel by stimulating precept and shining example, but He let them prove the wisdom of His words and of His ways by their own spiritual expression. Without such expression there can be no growth.²¹

the least intellectual promise. p. 51.

²¹From, *The Art of Teaching*, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, 1919, pp. 16 & 17.