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Jesus’s Paradigm

Abstract: Exposition shows a central “reverence” and appropriate “duty” for the basic presuppositional (“religious”) values informing Jesus’s education. Jesus resisted and reconfigured the dominant reality-narrative of his time and place, developing a unique, insightful, and deeply personal approach to teaching. His “reverence” for one true God against innate human resistance to uncomfortable truths explains the “duty” of his disciples, to act from love even through suffering.

Keywords: Brother Lawrence; counter-culture; discipleship; Gospels; hegemony; historical Jesus research; intertestamental period; John, Gospel of; Judaism, second temple; Luke, Gospel of; Mark, Gospel of; Master-disciple; Matthew, Gospel of; Mentor; New Testament; Parables; Resistance; Symbolism; Tanakh; Third Quest; Wach, Joachim; Wittgenstein, Ludwig; Wright, N. T.

Each paradigm of education nurtures religious reverence and duty from its reality, for which it initiates members. Jesus—the fifth paradigmatic educator—brings out his particular reverence and duty in his learners. We bring this study of education as religious to its end with an explicitly religious educator.

**Jesus was a teacher—really?**

People in a very different society more than 2,000 years later do not see Jesus much like a contemporary teacher. He fits late modern conceptions more as “religious teacher” or “guru.” We think we know what we mean with the word “teacher.” One who instructs others is a teacher. He or she may have a classroom, a smart board, a lectern, white board markers, or other accessories, but these are peripheral. She may adopt a facilitating role or stand in a more direct position of authority with students. Jesus does not teach as modern people expect teachers to teach. He preaches, tells roundabout stories, is not afraid to hold himself up as example, and is confrontational by times. Studies of Jesus as a teacher by Dillon, Horne, and Zuck highlight how our expectations of a “teacher” can place a boundary around an investigation.

Horne firmly puts Jesus into modern perspective. He sees Jesus as a model teacher, even the ultimate teacher. His often reprinted classic *Jesus: The Master Teacher* (1920) “discusses every conceivable personal and pedagogical trait, judging Jesus to be highly accomplished on every item.” Horne’s modern definition predetermines a positive evaluation.

Zuck’s understanding of “teacher” also yields a positive evaluation of Jesus as a modern teacher. His detailed book explores twenty or more facets of Jesus’s teaching, with chapters on use of picturesque expressions, on questioning, and how Jesus used stories in teaching. Zuck then relates the specific skills to teaching tasks in modern schooling. An overall rationale for the tactics is missing. Like Horne, Zuck finds Jesus is exemplary in every category. Zuck and Horne are not alone: dozens of articles, books, and theses on Jesus as teacher from the mid-1800s to 2000 are similarly positive.

The third example, Dillon, applies modern teacher attributes to Jesus but arrives at a negative assessment. Dillon’s method is to locate 112 “isolable units” of teaching in the Gospels. He then compares each teaching event with recorded audience reaction. The Gospels themselves