

**AS LORD (“consubstantial with the Father” YHWE),  
JESUS is DIDACTIC (*THE DIDASKALOS*—“I AM THE TRUTH”)  
“One is your Teacher, the Christ” (Mt 23:8)**

**Mt 4:23; Mt 5:2; Mt 7:29; Mt 11:1; Mt 22:16; Mt 23:8; Mt 26:55; Jn 14:6; Acts 1:1**

- I. APPROPRIATE ATTRIBUTE: DECLARING TRUTH: “God said” (Gn 1), “Word” import**
- A. Defining Didactic: Gk *didaktikos*, fr. *didaskein*—to teach: “to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment;” “making moral observations”
  - B. Rightly attributed to God: dictating Word on Sinai, to prophets; through Jesus (oft called “teacher”)
- II. IMAGO DEI & RATIONALITY—i.e. Wisdom, Knowledge, Intelligence**
- A. Central affirmation re YHWE: **DIVINE/RATIONAL MIND**—contrary to pagans & Muslims & Naturalists, God intelligent/rational/Supernatural Mind
  - B. Contemporary irrationality cause for concern—thus Benedict XVI’s *Regensburg Lecture*; Dennis Prager’s *Rational Bible*; George Weigel’s warning re faulty (and lethal) metaphysics
  - C. Education a perennial, pivotal concern for Church as well as family, society
- III. OT: YHWE TEACHES HIS PEOPLE—N.B. HIS THREE BOOKS**
- A. His *Works* (Ps 19:1-7)—“for by Him all things were created” (Col 1:16)
    - 1. *Doxa*: “heavens declare the glory of God”—beauty’s divine dimension
    - 2. *Logos*: “day unto day utters speech”—reason-shaped cosmos; “ask the beasts, and they will teach you” (Job 12:7)
  - B. His *Word* (Ps 19:8-11)—“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe” (Dt 4:1); “listen to me: Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom” (Job 33:33); “I am the LORD your God who teaches you” (Is 48:27); Leon Kass stresses “education” of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; Moses great lawgiver, attuned to Lawgiver; Wisdom literature bulks large in OT;
  - C. His *Witness* (Ps 19:12-15), “the Holy Spirit teaches” (I Cor 2:13), illuminating Christ the Word
    - 1. Law written on the heart (Ro 1-2)
    - 2. Convicting of sin, righteousness, judgment
- III. NT: JESUS TEACHES DISCIPLES**
- A. Central to His Vocation
    - 1. His Habit: “Jesus went about Galilee, teaching” (Mt 4:23); “He opened his mouth and taught them” (Mt 5:2); “I sat daily with you in the temple” (Mt 26:55)
    - 2. His Authority: “He taught them as one having authority” (Mt 7:29); “I am the truth” (Jn 14:6)
    - 3. His Pedagogy: parables; pronouncements; personal example; Sermon on the Mount
    - 4. His Ultimate Reference/Source: “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God” (Jn 3:2)
  - B. Early Christian Theologians’ pronouncements (injecting instruction into emergent Tradition)
    - 1. Apostolic Fathers: *Didache*; *Shepherd of Hermas*
    - 2. Post-Apostolic Fathers: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (student of St. Polycarp, who knew St John the Apostle): *Against Heresies*; Clement of Alexandria: *Christ the Educator*
  - C. Essence of His Message
    - 1. Revealing **Truth** re God & Man
      - a. God Triune: Father; Son; Spirit
      - b. Man *Imago Dei*—fully Incarnate, Jesus Christ perfectly human & perfect human
    - 2. Revealing **The Way**: Salvation
      - a. Salvation through Grace: belief/faith fundamental
      - b. Elements of Discipleship: Sermon on Mount core
      - c. Devotional Life: Lord’s Prayer model
      - c. Ethical life: Golden Rule; numerous precepts
    - 3. Revealing **Life Everlasting**—“he who believes in Me has everlasting life” (Jn 6:47)
- IV. CHURCH SUSTAINS EDUCATIONAL EMPHASIS**
- A. Ancient endeavors: books, schools (e.g. Alexandria), councils (Jerusalem, Nicea)
  - B. Medieval universities (Paris; Oxford); cf. Walsh’s *The Thirteenth Greatest of Centuries*
  - C. Reformation & “learned” ministry (Luther at Wittenberg; Calvin at Geneva; Increase Mather at Harvard; Jonathan Edwards & John Witherspoon at Princeton)
  - D. Evangelicals (Robert Raikes) establish Sunday schools, colleges (on frontier) & universities

## ***EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS***

For a substantial discussion of education, consider Jacques Maritain's *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c. 1943). Could we better understand human nature, he thought we might more effectively design healthy educational systems. "The task of moral re-education is really a matter of public emergency," he said. "That teachers in public schools may not face unruliness and violence, moral authority must be recognized; and there must be a serious teaching of moral principles, I mean as grounded on truth rather than as suitable to social convenience" (p. 93). The "present agony of the world," he believed, is "a supreme crisis of the Christian spirit, which for a long time has been neglected or betrayed in democracies, and which totalitarian states are now determined definitely to abolish, then it is obvious that a revival of Christian conscience and a new work of evangelization are the primary and unquestionable conditions for the moral re-education that the man of our civilization needs" (p. 107).

Maritain insisted we set forth coherent "aims of education" which give order and direction to our endeavors. "Education is an art," he says, "and an especially difficult one" (p. 2). So we must craft artful designs with clear objectives (or ends) in mind. It is an "ethical art" which seeks to free persons to attain the end for which they are created. As practitioners of the art of teaching, teachers are more like farmers or doctors than sculptors. There must be an attentiveness to the nature of the person, an *ars cooperativa naturae* (art cooperating with nature), the ministering to the learner which characterizes good teaching. At this point he cites some wise words from his master, St Thomas Aquinas, who urged students to: "Always make sure that you actually understand what you read or listen to," and to "avoid speechifying on anything whatsoever." To both teachers and students, Aquinas said: "never leave behind him any difficulty unsolved." Aquinas "also warned teachers"—giving timeless advice—to "never to dig a ditch that you fail to fill up." St. Thomas "knew that to raise clever doubts, to prefer searching to finding, and perpetually to pose problems without ever solving them are the great enemies of education" (p. 50).

Above all, education should encourage the development of moral reasoning and virtuous living—qualities of mind and character which, we early discover, cannot be mechanically inscribed in the young. Facts can, at least momentarily, be poured in. Data can even be embedded in computers. Youngsters easily absorb facts. But they know little about the soul, the life of the spirit, the moral dimension to life, the life of freedom. (Moral persons, of course, are necessarily free persons who make moral decisions and become persons of character.) As persons, we long for *freedom*. Most deeply, we long for an inner spiritual freedom, the freedom which St Paul described as freedom of the Spirit. Our social world, our vocational world, have worth, but they lack the eternal dimensions our heart craves. "Thus the prime goal of education is the conquest of internal and spiritual freedom to be achieved by the individual person, or, in others words, his liberation through knowledge and wisdom, good will, and love" (p. 11). The love we need comes not from mental training. It comes from strong family ties and religious life. It is, ultimately, a gift from God, a gift of grace. The liberation we all need is freedom from self-centeredness, egoism, sin. Thus there is, in a profound sense, an essentially religious component to genuine education.

Ultimately, Maritain says, "our chief duty consists, according to the profound saying of the Greek poet, Pindar, in *becoming who we are*; nothing is more important for each of us, or more difficult, than *to become a man*. Thus the chief task of education is above all to shape man, or to guide the evolving dynamism through which man forms himself as a man" (p. 1). Importantly, "education is not animal training. The education of man is a human awakening" (p. 9). But what is man? What is the nature of human nature? To answer this question is the most important of educational inquiries. The failure of socialistic systems reveals their flawed definition of man—*homo faber* (a worker, a tool-using animal). Where man is so defined, education becomes a variant of animal training. And since animals, such as bees, are maximal specialists, such education seeks to mass-produce specialists who can methodically work in the factories of mass production.

But surely this behavioristic, materialistic, socialistic approach is wrong. If, in fact, the Greek, Jewish, and Christian understanding is correct, we best understand "man as an animal endowed with reason, whose supreme dignity is in the intellect; and man as a free individual in personal relation with God, whose supreme righteousness consists in voluntarily obeying the law of God; and man as a sinful and wounded creature called to divine life and to the freedom of grace, whose supreme perfection consists of love" (p. 7). And this definition of human nature leads to distinctively different educational strategies.

As educators, we are probably always at some "crossroads." Clearly that's the case today. And I know of no better consultant as to which direction to take than Jacques Maritain!