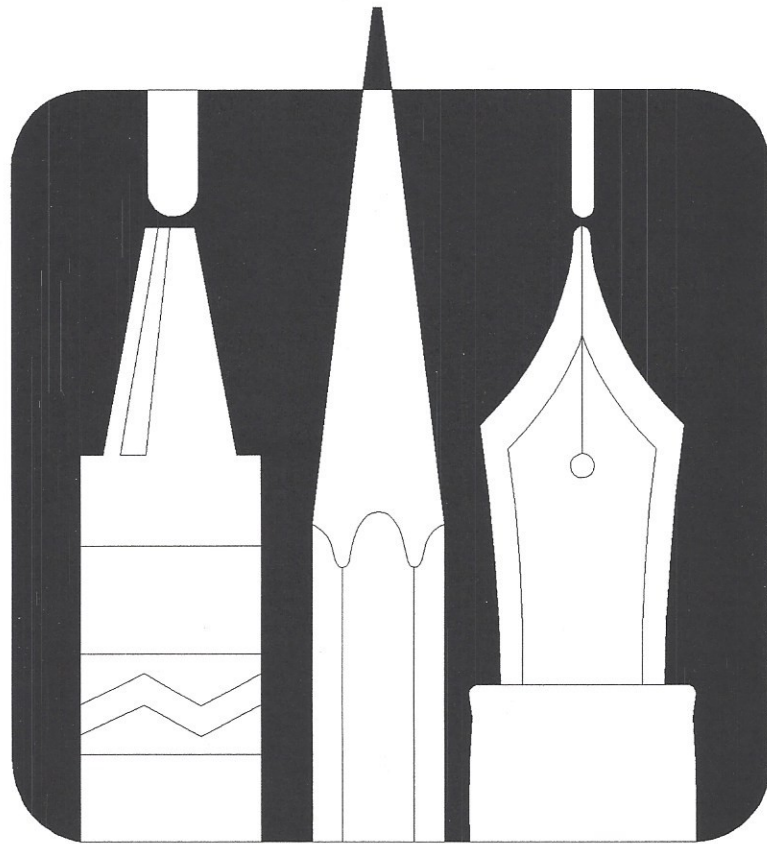


Education

in Transition:

From Judaism to Christianity

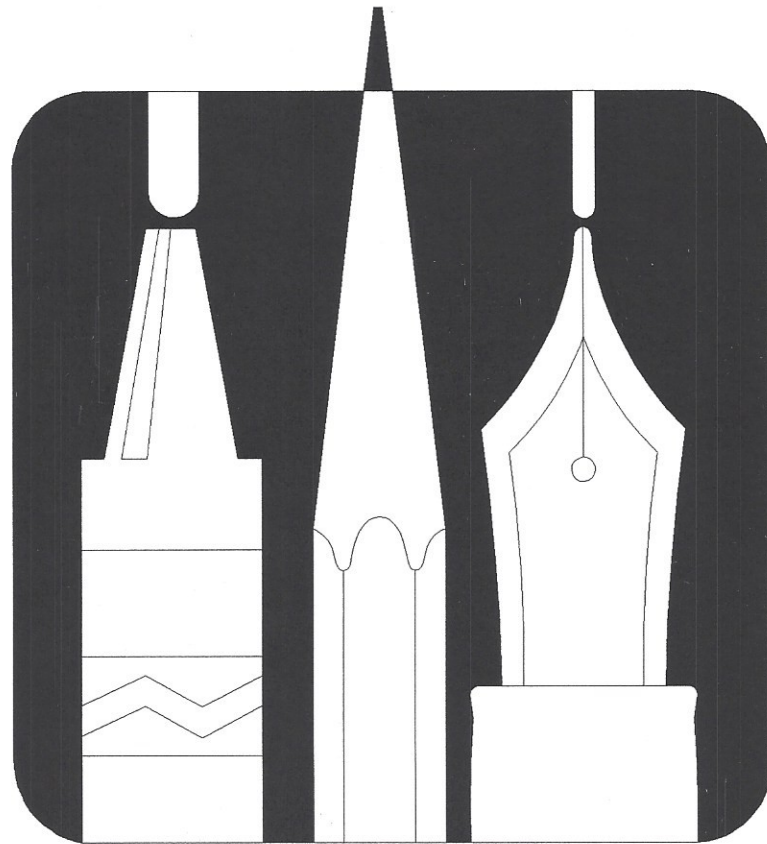


By Daniel L. Segraves

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Section 1

INTRODUCTION

General Introductory Statement

It is commonly asserted that one of the primary factors contributing to the survival of Judaism through centuries of persecution and Diaspora has been the Jewish commitment to education.

Judaism ... [is] dependent for survival upon a strong teaching, educational ministry. Without their loyalty to and their teaching of the Torah, Israel could not have survived as a people.¹

It has been precisely that educational system which has kept the Jewish race in existence. . . . Their educational system was nothing less than the instrument by which their existence as a nation, and their fulfillment of their destiny, was ensured.²

Swift, in a discussion of the retention of Israel's identity after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, remarked, "This wonderful people managed through their system of religious education to preserve their nationality."³

¹James Walter Carpenter, "The Jewish Educational System in Palestine During the Time of Jesus" (Ed.D. diss., The American Univ., 1958), pp. 2-3.

²Leo Baeck, The Essence of Judaism, rev. ed. (N.p.: Schocken, 1961), 279.

³Fletcher H. Swift, Education in Ancient Israel (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1919), 44.

The remarkable ability of this ancient ethnic minority to preserve its cultural distinctives in the face of unprecedented attempts to wipe it from the face of the earth would certainly seem to be directly related to its success in communicating these distinctives to its young. The ancient Shema required not only a commitment to monotheism; it also demanded of parents that they diligently instruct their children in their written law.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, NKJV).

Though Judaism survived the emergence of Christianity, primitive Christianity was clearly an extension of Judaism. All of the early Christians were Jewish.⁴ The Christian experience continued for several years before the apostles began to recognize that it was a faith equally available to and acceptable by Gentiles.⁵ Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), pointed out that Christianity was first Jewish, then Gentile (Romans 1:16). The early preaching and teaching of Christianity occurred in the

⁴See Acts 1:13-14; 2:5-11, 14, 22, 36, 41.

⁵See Acts 10; 11:1-18; 13-15.

Jewish synagogues, centers of Jewish social, educational, and religious life.⁶

Education was fundamental not only to Jewish thought and culture, but to the early Christian community. Though Christianity expanded its canon to include books not acceptable to Judaism, it did continue to hold the Hebrew scriptures as inspired of God and thus authoritative. Thus the ancient books which demanded of Israel a high commitment to the education of their children made the same demands upon Christianity. In addition, the new books of the expanded canon made similar requirements.

The somewhat sporadic but frequently vicious persecution of Christians during the first and second centuries A.D. would suggest that the survival of the new movement was due in no small part to a commitment to education similar to that which assured the survival of Judaism. Indeed, Jesus identified the Shema as the greatest commandment of all (Mark 12:29-30). This meant Christianity would share with Judaism a commitment not only to monotheism, but also to the diligent training of children in the precepts of the religion.

⁶See Acts 9:20; 13:5, 15, 42; 14:1; 17:1-5, 10-12; 18:4-8; 18:19; 19:8.

Statement of the Problem

Two major schools of thought exist as to the origin of elementary schools in ancient Israel. The first, which finds its origin in the Jerusalem Talmud, asserts that Simon ben-Shetach, who lived in the first century B.C. and was the brother of Queen Alexandra who reigned in the early part of the century, declared "the children shall attend the elementary school."⁷ Jewish elementary education is thus dated by some scholars from the early first century B.C., although these tend to think that ben-Shetach may simply have encouraged use of a system already in place.

It is to be noted that it is not said that Simon instituted elementary schools; he is said to have enacted that children should attend them. . . . Simon lived in days when the tide of Hellenism was threatening Judaism, and when the Pharisees were strongly resisting it; and the likelihood is that Simon urged the Jews to a careful observance of the educational facilities which were already there.⁸

The Babylonian Talmud, however, generally considered the more authoritative of the two talmuds, credits Joshua ben-Gamala, high priest about 63-65 A.D., with enacting a similar law. Barclay credits both traditions with influencing the subsequent shape of Jewish elementary education.

⁷William Barclay, Train Up a Child - Educational Ideals in the Ancient World (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 33.

⁸Barclay, 33.

There was some kind of educational organisation in Palestine before this Joshua [ben-Gamala], but . . . he reformed it, and made it much more effective, and universalised it over the whole country. As to when elementary education first began as an organised public service, we are still in doubt. . . . What we can say for certain is that it received a new impetus from Simon ben-Shetach, and it received a new and more efficient shape from Joshua ben-Gamala.⁹

Crenshaw has argued that "a school certainly existed some 250 years earlier [than Joshua ben-Gamala's decree in 63 A.D.], although its proprietor, Ben Sira, restricted his teaching to those who could afford to pay for it."¹⁰

Resnikoff sees the development of a "system of universal, compulsory elementary education for boys, starting with the age of six, [as being] initiated by about the middle of the second century."¹¹ The elementary school was housed in the synagogue, supported by an administrative structure, and financed by taxes.¹²

Regardless of which of these opinions is to be preferred, it seems clear that some kind of elementary education was firmly in place in the Jewish community during

⁹Barclay, 34.

¹⁰James L. Crenshaw, "Education in Ancient Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 104, no. 4 (December 1985): 612.

¹¹Moses Bernard Resnikoff, "Social Aspects of Jewish Elementary Education in the First Centuries of the Christian Era" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia Univ., 1966), 2.

¹²Resnikoff, 2, 32.

first century of the Christian era, even if it was in the home.

What is not so clear is whether first and early second century Christians emulated the Jewish elementary school system following their break with the synagogues, or whether -- if their children had previously been taught in elementary schools outside the home, perhaps in the synagogue -- Christian parents now taught them at home, or whether they consigned their children to the prevailing educational institutions which may have existed in their communities.

Statement of the Purpose

While an abundance of research has been done concerning the educational practices of ancient peoples, until the work of Drazin in 1940 the specific field of ancient Jewish education before the time of Christ was not systematically treated.¹³ Since that time, others have added to his study.¹⁴ Considerable attention has been given to the

¹³Nathan Drazin, History of Jewish Education, from 515 B.C.E. to 220 C.E. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1940).

¹⁴For example, James Walter Carpenter, "The Jewish Educational System in Palestine During the Time of Jesus" (Ed.D. diss., The American Univ., 1958); James Leon Marsh, "The Philosophy and Practice of Hebrew Education From the Post-Exilic Era Through the Tannaitic Period" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1959); Haya Rachel Greenberg Fried, "Education in the Bible, the Talmud, and the Prayer Book" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ., 1981); James L. Crenshaw, "Education in Ancient Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 104, no. 4 (December 1985): 601-615.

development of Christian education.¹⁵ But there remains a paucity of research on the specific subject of elementary education among first century Christians after the synagogues were no longer available to them. This research project attempts to make some contribution to this neglected field of study.

Limitations

Historical research of this nature must rely almost exclusively on the extant literature contemporary with the era under consideration. In this case, primary sources are limited to the Scriptures, the Mishna, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, Josephus and the Ante-Nicene Fathers. This literature is now being complemented by archaeological research which offers insight on the manner in which Judaism, Christianity, and paganism existed simultaneously both in Roman Palestine and throughout the Diaspora.¹⁶ Another possible source of information is the Palestinian inscriptions. Andre Lemaire has done the most complete analysis to date of inscriptional evidence as it may possibly relate to the existence or

¹⁵For example, Homer Hughes Hawes, "A History of the Early Church and Christian Education from the Birth of Christ to the Council of Nicea: A.D. 1-325" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, n.d.); William Emmett Collins, "The Beginnings of Christian Education" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette Univ., 1973).

¹⁶Eric M. Meyers and L. Michael White, "Jews and Christians in a Roman World," Archaeology, March/April 1989: 27-33.

nonexistence of schools.¹⁷ Crenshaw's assessment of Lemaire's assertions is that "although impressive, [it] is less persuasive than Lemaire admits, and the elaborate system of schools among the Israelite and major neighboring cities that he envisions may never have existed."¹⁸ Another possible source of information about schools in ancient Israel is parallelism from the Hellenistic world. That is, if "schools played a vital role in major cultures of the time, specifically in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Ugarit",¹⁹ they must have done so in Israel as well. But even here, the evidence is not convincing.²⁰

¹⁷See Crenshaw, 601, 605-607.

¹⁸Crenshaw, 607.

¹⁹Crenshaw, 607.

²⁰Crenshaw, 607-612.

Section 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Scriptures

While the Scriptures were not written to chronicle a history of Jewish or Christian education, they obviously provide a rather complete glimpse of the practice and rationale for education as it was woven through both communities. Both Judaism and Christianity are, at their root, educational movements. The process of teaching, of imparting to succeeding generations the essence of the religion, is central to each philosophy. A study of the Scripture is therefore essential to this research project.

The Hebrew Scriptures

Fried has pointed out that "despite the importance placed on education in the [Hebrew] Bible, the Bible does not have any one text devoted exclusively to the philosophy, methodology or curriculum of education."²¹ It is possible, however, to piece this information together from various references to education in the Hebrew Scriptures. We have already mentioned the Shema, which included the commandment for parents to teach their children the law of God, which

²¹Haya Rachel Greenberg Fried, "Education in the Bible, the Talmud, and the Prayer Book" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ., 1981), p. 4.

included the history of the world and of the nation, the unique place of Israel among the nations of the world, their relationship with God, their personal conduct, and their relationship with others, both within and outside of Judaism.

The study of the law was to be "a continuous occupation regardless of age, status or time."²² But specific references relate to the education of children.

The education of children. The Book of Proverbs is the one section of the Hebrew Scriptures which could most accurately be described as a treatise concerning the education of children. It is specifically written "to give ... to the young man knowledge and discretion" (Proverbs 1:4, KJV). The format of the book is that of a father instructing his son (e.g., 2:1; 3:1, 11; 4:10; 6:1; 7:1). There are occasional appeals to children, an apparent reference to both sons and daughters (e.g., 4:1; 5:7; 7:24; 8:32). "Both Hans-Jurgen Hermisson and Bernhard Lang have argued that the book of Proverbs is didactic in form and therefore functioned as a textbook for students in school."²³ In addition,

Margaret B. Crook thinks that the description of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is a sort of academic catalogue for a school that trained wealthy young women in home economics, which

²²Fried, 5.

²³Crenshaw, 610.

includes household administration and instruction in the arts and crafts.²⁴

The fact that Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic, with the first letter of each verse listing the entire Hebrew alphabet from beginning to end, may lend some credence to the idea that the passage was purposefully arranged as a mnemonic device for usefulness in teaching.

But regardless of the original purpose and use of the Book of Proverbs, in it the education or training of children is given high priority.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6, KJV).

It is expected that this training will require corporal discipline.

He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:24, NKJV).

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying (Proverbs 19:18, KJV).

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him (Proverbs 22:15, KJV).

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (Proverbs 23:13-14, KJV).

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (Proverbs 29:15, KJV).

²⁴Crenshaw, 610, n. 41.

Corporal discipline was not to be the first recourse, however. It was recognized that a verbal reproof alone could be more beneficial in some cases.

Reproof is more effective for a wise man Than a hundred blows on a fool (Proverbs 17:10, NKJV).

A fool despises his father's instruction, But he who receives reproof is prudent (Proverbs 15:5, NKJV).

The ear that hears the reproof of life Will abide among the wise. He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds reproof gets understanding (Proverbs 15:31-32, NKJV).²⁵

Even when corporal discipline was necessary,

the parent has to be judicious in his choice of discipline and take into consideration the nature of the person to be punished. . . .

The discipline should arise from positive feelings not from negative intentions. The results to be gained by the punishment should always be kept in mind and not punishment for its own sake.

. . . The administration of discipline is a sign of love not of hatred. [God] is compared to a father who corrects his son out of love.²⁶

Although the more common theme of Proverbs is that of a father instructing his son, the mother is not excluded from the responsibility of teaching her children.

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Proverbs 1:8, KJV).

The father is said to give instruction, while the mother is said to give the law. Similarly, Proverbs 6:20-23

²⁵See also Proverbs 1:23, 25, 30; 5:12; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18.

²⁶Fried, 20.

says that the father gives the commandment and the mother gives the law. Perhaps a distinction between the two can be made on the basis of Proverbs 6:23: "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." A lamp is the source of light; it is an object that emits light. The light is the product of the lamp. In the family relationship, the father was responsible to give the commandment -- the ultimate object or purpose in view. The mother was to give the law -- the outworking of that purpose, the practical means by which the objective was to be achieved. The child, led by his mother's law, would accomplish his father's commandment.

Proverbs 31:1-9 records the instruction given to King Lemuel²⁷ by his mother. Her instructions included warnings against immorality, destructive behavior, and intoxicating beverages, and the importance of righteous judgment.

The founder of the Hebrew nation, Abraham, was held responsible to teach his children and his entire household.

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him (Genesis 18:19, NKJV).

The Hebrew Scriptures have no reference to formal elementary education, religious or secular, occurring outside the home. Even though parents are held responsible

²⁷Possibly Solomon. The name means "devoted to God." If not Solomon, we have no knowledge of Lemuel's identity.

for the teaching of their children, no structure is given as to how or when this is to be done. Instead, the instruction of children is seen to be a way of life. Every natural opportunity is to be used to teach the children, including the weekly Sabbath and the regularly scheduled holy days and feasts. The children were to be encouraged to ask questions to provide opportunities for instruction.²⁸

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. . . . And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 20-25, KJV).²⁹

The elaborate rituals of the various holy days, while significant in themselves, were no doubt designed to elicit questions from the children which would in turn create

²⁸See Fried, 36, 53-55.

²⁹See also Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

opportunities for instruction. This is seen in the institution of the Passover:

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses (Exodus 12:26-27a).

Moses planned that this instruction within the family would be supplemented by a public reading of the law every seven years. The audience for this reading was to include the men, women, children, and strangers currently dwelling with Israel. The purpose included the education of the children of the strangers.

And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deuteronomy 31:13, KJV).

The importance of imparting their heritage to the children was underscored by Asaph.

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments (Psalm 78:2-7, KJV).

When Israel under the leadership of Joshua crossed the Jordan River, they took twelve stones from the river in order to build a memorial to the event. The purpose of this was to provide an opportunity to teach their children the history of the nation (Joshua 4:6,7,21,22). After the conquest of Ai, Joshua built an altar of stones upon which he wrote a copy of the law of Moses. After he had finished the writing, Joshua read all the words of the law aloud. Both the writing and the reading were done in the presence of all Israel, including the "little ones."³⁰

Swift declares that in the pre-exilic period, education of children in Israel was almost exclusively the responsibility of the parents and that it occurred in the home.

Upon settlement in Canaan the family became the fundamental social unit and the training and instruction of the children became almost entirely a matter of parental responsibility. . . .

As there were no schools whatever for the masses, any instruction children received in the three R's must have been given in the home by the parents or by private teachers. . . .

Throughout the entire history of the Hebrews the family was regarded as the fundamental educational institution.³¹

Crenshaw, who doubts that even royal schools can be documented during the monarchy, agrees:

Parents instructed their children in their own homes. . . .

³⁰See Joshua 8:30-35.

³¹Fletcher H. Swift, Education in Ancient Israel (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1919), 22, 29-30, 50.

. . . the bulk of education may very well have taken place in the family setting, where practical instruction in daily life was provided for boys and girls according to the opportunities open to them.³²

In the fifth century B.C., the Prophet Malachi predicted the arrival of Elijah, who would come on a specific mission.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:5-6, KJV).

This may have indicated that many fathers were failing in their responsibilities to their children, with the result that many children were also failing in their responsibility to honor their fathers and to receive their instruction. The coming of Elijah would then be seen as returning Israel to their fundamental home-centered parental responsibilities. In other words, there could be no national revival until families were willing to embrace anew their essential opportunities and obligations.

The Prophet Joel, in the ninth century B.C., spelled out specifically the responsibility of each generation to communicate knowledge to the next:

Tell your children about it, Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation (Joel 1:3, NKJV).

³²Crenshaw, 614.

The New Testament

The purpose of the New Testament is obviously not to provide a manual for the education of children. Only glimpses may be seen of the educational climate of the day. But from the first, Christians embraced the Hebrew Scriptures as inspired and authoritative.³³ Their view of the importance of training children was not diminished with the coming of a new era.

Though there are allusions to formal elementary education outside the home or at least to teachers other than parents, there is also clear evidence that children were still being taught by parents. The Apostle Paul claimed that Timothy had been taught since childhood.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 3:15, KJV).

Apparently his education in this tradition was at the hand of his mother and grandmother.

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (II Timothy 1:5, KJV).

Timothy's father was Greek³⁴ and would presumably have had little ability or interest to teach his son the Hebrew Scriptures.

Collins has asserted that

³³See II Peter 3:2.

³⁴Acts 16:1

the first Christian schools are understood to be: first, the catechetical schools³⁵ which arose and developed in the Church within the first three centuries; and second, the first theological school, the Didaskalion at Alexandria, sometimes known as the Catechetical School of Alexandria, which emerged toward the end of the second century and attained its zenith early in the first half of the third century.³⁶

It may be true that the catechetical schools were the first exclusively Christian schools, but the New Testament gives evidence that some kind of educational system existed outside of the family. Paul assumed in his readers an acquaintance with elementary education outside the home when he compared the Law of Moses to a schoolmaster.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Galatians 3:24-25).

The schoolmaster (Greek, paidagogos) was not himself a teacher of academics. He was rather the family servant of noble families in Greece and Rome in whose charge the sons were placed. The paidagogos supervised the moral conduct and general behavior of his charges. He was also responsible to see that the boys reached school daily, as well as for their behavior while going to and from school.³⁷

³⁵Schools for the purpose of training new converts to Christianity in preparation for baptism.

³⁶William Emmett Collins, "The Beginnings of Christian Education" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette Univ., 1973), pp. iii-iv.

³⁷Walter A. Elwell, ed., Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 2085-2086.

It may be that the common man was unable to place his son in an elementary school, but Paul's use of the term paidagogos to describe the relationship between Christ and the Law suggests the practice of sending children to school was not uncommon.

Again, Paul used the example of a minor child to illustrate the authority of the Law over man until Christ's coming:

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father (Galatians 4:1-2, KJV).

These "tutors" and "governors" were apparently household servants who were given responsibility for the children until a time predetermined by the father.

In Ephesians 6:4 Paul directed the fathers to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Nurture describes a loving environment; admonition speaks of the actual teaching content and process. So even if it were common to assign the academic education of one's children to others, the father retained an important responsibility for the teaching of morals, values and religion.

It may be that some children of the time were subjected to education at the hand of unqualified and unstable teachers, for Paul compared spiritual immaturity with the immaturity of children who are "tossed to and fro, and

carried about with every wind of doctrine [teaching], by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14, KJV).

One clear reference to the involvement of women in teaching is made by Paul in Titus 2:3-5:

The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things -- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

The older women were expected to educate the younger both by example and by word in the specific things having to do with family affairs and household management.

In a discussion of the support of widows by the church, Paul required among other things that she had brought up children (I Timothy 5:9). Concerning younger widows, he wanted them to "marry, bear children, manage the house, [and to] give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (I Timothy 5:14).

Apparently, while the father bore first responsibility in the care and training of children, the mother was expected to share intimately in these things.

The Talmud

The Jewish Talmuds (both Babylonian and Palestinian [or Jerusalem]) are drawn from the Mishnah and Gemara. The Mishnah is the most ancient of these documents, traditionally believed to be the oral law given at Sinai and

transmitted orally until committed to writing by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch toward the end, or at the very end, of the second century A.D.³⁸ The date of its actual origin is uncertain, but it may be during the earlier half of the second century B.C.³⁹ It is, at any rate, a very early work. Portions of it, specifically the tractates Kelim and Uktzin, are thought to predate Rabbi Judah by a generation, while Yoma, Tamid, Middoth and Kinnim are said to date back nearly a century before him.⁴⁰ The time frame in view, then, could precede the time of Christ, but it would definitely be at least in the general era of the first and early second centuries A.D.

The Gemara is a later development, based on the Mishnah. The Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud incorporate both the Mishnah and the Gemara, the Jerusalem Talmud being compiled around A.D. 400 and the Babylonian Talmud around A.D. 500.

Fried points out that "there is an evolutionary progression of educational ideas, beginning with the Bible and extending through the Talmud to the Prayer Book."⁴¹ The nature of the Talmud is, of course, to expand on the

³⁸Herbert Danby, trans., The Mishnah (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), xvii, xx-xxi.

³⁹Danby, xiii.

⁴⁰Danby, xxv.

⁴¹Fried, 1.

Scripture or, in its own words, to "make a fence around the Law" (Aboth 1:1).⁴²

The reverence due one's teacher is said by the Mishna to exceed that due one's father. If one's father and one's teacher have both lost property, the student is to search for his teacher's first, "for his father did but bring him into this world, but his teacher that taught him wisdom brings him into the world to come" (Baba Metzia 2:11). Likewise, if one's father and one's teacher are each carrying something, the student must first relieve his teacher and afterward his father. If his father and his teacher are both taken captive, his teacher must be ransomed first. The only exception to these rules is when one's father is also a Sage. In that case, he should be given priority.

A student should give his teacher the same reverence he would give heaven (Aboth 4:12).

The father was still, however, considered to be his children's first teacher. Even when elementary school attendance became compulsory, the father's duties as a teacher did not end.⁴³ The father was held responsible by the Talmud to circumcise his son, to redeem him, to teach

⁴²All quotations from the Mishnah are from Dabney's translation.

⁴³Fried, 115.

him Torah, to take a wife for him, and to teach him a craft.⁴⁴

The Mishna describes the manner in which the father was to take advantage of the national holy days to teach his son:

On the eve of Passover ... the son asks his father (and if the son has not enough understanding his father instructs him [how to ask], 'Why is this night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned food once, but this night twice; on other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat flesh roast, stewed, or cooked, but this night all is roast'. And according to the understanding of the son his father instructs him. He begins with the disgrace and ends with the glory; and he expounds from A wandering Aramean was my father ... until he finishes the whole section (Pesahim 10:1, 4).

A teacher of children outside the home had to be a married man.⁴⁵

School children are highly valued in the Talmud. It is said that an angel goes out daily to destroy the world, but when he thinks of the school children, his anger is turned to mercy. Indeed, "The world endures only for the sake of the breath of school children."⁴⁶

Learning as a child is superior to learning as an old man:

He that learns as a child, to what is he like? To ink written on new paper. He that learns as an old

⁴⁴Fried, 116.

⁴⁵Kiddushin 4:13.

⁴⁶Fried, 120.

man, to what is he like? To ink written on paper that has been blotted out (Aboth 4:20).

The Mishna classified learners in four categories:

There are four types among them that sit in the presence of the Sages: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sifter. 'The sponge' -- which soaks up everything; 'the funnel' -- which takes in at this end and lets out at the other; 'the strainer' -- which lets out the wine and collects the lees; 'the sifter' -- which extracts the coarsely-ground flour and collects the fine flour (Aboth 5:15).

Steinsaltz in his recent work on the Talmud holds that the Jewish people lacked an organized educational system until the time of Joshua ben-Gamala in the generation immediately preceding the destruction of the Second Temple. At this time there was an educational system established, especially in the large centers of population, which continued for centuries. In each community, the leaders would take responsibility to see that a schoolteacher was available at least for primary studies. The parents provided the financial support for the teacher, who worked under the supervision of the Rabbinical Court or of the community scholars. The teacher answered to them in matters of his professional competence, the number of pupils under instruction and their age.⁴⁷

Sometimes the children were taught in the teacher's home, but more often in the synagogue, where special rooms were set aside for this purpose. Only boys were sent to school, but in certain places some girls, at least, received a

⁴⁷Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition, A Reference Guide (New York: Random House, 1989), 17.

basic education at home from private teachers. The size of a normal class was twenty-five children, and if there were more the teacher was provided with an assistant ... until the size of the class reached forty. Studies started at the age of five or six. Sometimes even younger children were sent to school to spend time in class and to absorb something by listening to the lessons. . . .

. . . This elementary period of study lasted about five years, and afterwards the majority of children do not seem to have continued to study in any organized way.⁴⁸

The Apocrypha

The earliest undisputed reference to a formal school occurs in Sirach⁴⁹. The book was written sometime before 180 B.C. and includes an invitation by the author to attend his school:

Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction (Sirach 51:23).

It is promised that the instruction will be free, but that it will enable the learner to acquire silver and gold. (See Sirach 51:25, 28.)

The author of Sirach describes his profession as a teacher:

He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. He serves among the great and appears before rulers; he travels in foreign lands and learns what is good and evil in the human lot. He sets his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and to petition the Most High; he opens his mouth in prayer and asks pardon

⁴⁸Steinsaltz, 17-18.

⁴⁹Or Ecclesiasticus

for his sins. If the Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge, as he meditates on his mysteries. He will show the wisdom of what he has learned, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant. Many will praise his understanding; it will never be blotted out. His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. Nations will speak of his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise. If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him (Sirach 39:1-11).

But even in this context, the parents are still seen to have primary authority over and responsibility for children and their basic education:

Listen to me your father, O children; act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety. For the Lord honors a father above his children, and he confirms a mother's right over her children. . . . Those who respect their father will have long life, and those who honor their mother obey the Lord; they will serve their parents as their masters (Sirach 3:1-2, 6-7).⁵⁰

Perhaps the most striking example of the father's authority over his son appears in Sirach 30:1-13:

He who loves his son will whip him often, so that he may rejoice at the way he turns out. He who disciplines his son will profit by him, and will boast of him among acquaintances. He who teaches his son will make his enemies envious, and will glory in him among his friends. When the father dies he will not seem to be dead, for he has left behind him one like himself, whom in his life he looked upon with joy and at death, without grief. he has left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one to repay the kindness of his friends. Whoever spoils his son will bind up his wounds, and will suffer heartache at every cry. An

⁵⁰Indeed, those who honor their father are said to atone for their sins! (See Sirach 3:3, 14-15.)

unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out headstrong. Pamper a child, and he will terrorize you; play with him, and he will grieve you. Do not laugh with him, or you will have sorrow with him, and in the end you will gnash your teeth. Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors. Bow down his neck in his youth, and beat his sides while he is young, or else he will become stubborn and disobey you, and you will have sorrow of soul from him. Discipline your son and make his yoke heavy, so that you may not be offended by his shamelessness.

Even though Sirach has a great deal of pride in his profession and offers formal instruction in his school as a means of personal advancement, he still recommends that a father teach his son. One reason for this is that a father may achieve a kind of immortality by reproducing himself.

The Pseudepigrapha

The Letter of Aristeas purports to have been written by an officer in the court of Ptolemy, king of Egypt. If this were true, the date would be placed at 285-245 B.C. The contents of the letter suggest, however, that it was actually written somewhere around 100 B.C. in Alexandria.⁵¹ The letter claims to give an account of the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek⁵², and it describes the king of Egypt as questioning the prospective translators to determine their wisdom. Though the account is fictional, the exchange between the king and the Jewish Sage is revealing

⁵¹H.T. Andrews, An Introduction to the Apocryphal Books (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964), 83-86.

⁵²This is known as the Septuagint, or LXX.

for what it indicates about the Jewish attitude toward the education of children during the first century B.C.

The king asked the next man, "What is the grossest form of neglect?" And he replied, "If a man does not care for his children and devote every effort to their education" (Letter of Aristeas 9:22-23).

The implication seems to be that the father himself is to be involved in educating his children. At the very least, he is to be diligent to see that their education is successfully accomplished.

Josephus

Josephus was born in A.D. 37 and died sometime after A.D. 100. His massive history of the Jewish people is considered generally reliable, but he did not have much to say on the subject of education.⁵³ He did, nevertheless, recognize the importance Moses placed on children hearing and learning the Law:

When the multitude are assembled together unto the holy city for sacrificing every seventh year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, let the high priest stand upon a high desk, whence he may be heard, and let him read the laws to all the people; and let neither the women nor the children be hindered from hearing ... for it is a good thing that those laws should be engraven in their souls, and preserved in their memories, that so it may not be possible to blot them out; for by this means they will not be guilty of sin, when they cannot plead ignorance of what the laws have enjoined them. . . . Let the children also learn the laws, as the first thing they are taught, which will be the best thing they can be taught, and will be the

⁵³James Walter Carpenter, "The Jewish Educational System in Palestine During the Time of Jesus" (Ed.D. diss., The American Univ., 1958), p. 9.

cause of their future felicity (Antiquities of the Jews 8:12).⁵⁴

Josephus also records Philo as describing the Jews as "having been instructed from their earliest infancy."⁵⁵

In his Against Apion, an apology for Judaism which evaluates the ideals of Hellenism, shows its deficiencies, and points out the excellencies of the Jewish religion,⁵⁶ Josephus described the education of children as a primary concern of Israel:

Our principle care of all is this, to educate our children well; and we think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life, to observe the laws that have been given us, and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us (Against Apion 1:12).⁵⁷

It is significant that in a work designed to promote Judaism as a superior way of life, Josephus would place such emphasis on the education of children. Especially during the era of the Roman Empire, when children were undervalued⁵⁸ and there was no systematic elementary education,⁵⁹ Josephus' comments would have presented a stark contrast.

⁵⁴William Whiston, trans., Josephus (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1960), 97.

⁵⁵Carpenter, 23-24.

⁵⁶William Whiston, trans., Josephus (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1960), ix.

⁵⁷Whiston, 610.

⁵⁸Infanticide through "exposure" was not uncommon. See Barclay, 149.

⁵⁹Barclay, 148.

The education of Jewish children was to him bound up in the preservation of their traditions and was for the purpose of preparing the children for a life of service to God.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers

The Ante-Nicene Fathers are those early Christians who lived and wrote prior to A.D. 325, at which time the first ecumenical church council convened in Nicaea under the direction and leadership of the newly converted Roman Emperor Constantine. Though none of their works are treatises on the educational practices of the day, they do provide some interesting glimpses into the high esteem in which children were held and the fact that education was still considered primarily the responsibility of the parents.

Clement of Rome was born in A.D. 30 and died in A.D. 100. His First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians is believed to be the earliest authentic extant Christian letter besides those appearing in the New Testament. He wrote:

Let us train up the young men in the fear of God . . . Let your children be partakers of true Christian training; let them learn of how great avail humility is with God -- how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him -- how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind (The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians xxi).⁶⁰

⁶⁰Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

The education recommended by Clement of Rome is training in theology and character. The implication is that this training will be accomplished in the environment of the home and family. As in the Judaism out of which it grew, early Christianity continued to see the education of children as preparation for a life of service to God.

Ignatius lived from A.D. 30 to 107. On his way to martyrdom -- which he joyfully anticipated -- under Trajan in Rome, he wrote seven letters, six to churches and one to an individual. His encouragement to fathers in the education of their children draws from the Apostle Paul and the Book of Proverbs.

Fathers, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;"⁶¹ and teach them the holy Scriptures, and also trades, that they may not indulge in idleness. Now [the Scripture] says, "A righteous father educates [his children] well; his heart shall rejoice in a wise son"⁶² (Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians iv [longer version]).⁶³

The debate continues to this day as to whether the shorter or longer versions of Ignatius' letters are original, though the majority of scholarship identifies the shorter as older. The shorter version of Ignatius' letter to the Philadelphians contains no reference to the training of

Publishing Co., 1979), 11.

⁶¹A reference to Ephesians 6:4.

⁶²An apparent reference to Proverbs 23:24.

⁶³Roberts and Donaldson, 81.

children. But until the issue is finally settled, it is possible that Ignatius does give us a bit of insight into the continuing responsibility of fathers to educate their children, not only in theology, but also in a trade. This comports with the Talmudic idea that if a father did not teach his son a trade, he taught him to steal.⁶⁴ For Ignatius, education was to prepare the student for a life of service to God and personal productivity so as to avoid idleness.

Polycarp, who was born about A.D. 69 and martyred in 160 under Antoninus Pius, ministered in Smyrna. He was an acquaintance of the Apostle John and wrote a letter to the Philippians. His letter provides interesting insight concerning the role of women in the education of children.

Next, [teach] your wives . . . to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God (The Epistle of Polycarp iv).⁶⁵

Though Polycarp's emphasis on the role of the wife in the training of the children is somewhat unusual,⁶⁶ he -- like Clement of Rome and Ignatius -- sees education as preparation for a life of service to God.

Barnabas of Alexandria lived during the late first and early second century. He wrote the Epistle of Barnabas,

⁶⁴Barclay, 16.

⁶⁵Roberts and Donaldson, 34.

⁶⁶He says nothing of the father being involved in the teaching of the children; the father's responsibility is to teach the mother to perform this task.

reflecting the allegorical methods of Philo. He was probably an Alexandrian Jew. In any case, his remarks about children and their education clearly reflect Mishnaic ideas about the importance of children.

Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born. Thou shalt not withdraw thy hand from thy son, or from thy daughter, but from their infancy thou shalt teach them the fear of the Lord (The Epistle of Barnabas xix).⁶⁷

Later, Barnabas condemns those who are "murderers of children, destroyers of the workmanship of God" (The Epistle of Barnabas xx).⁶⁸

Barnabas sees children as having great value because they are God's handiwork. Not only does he oppose abortion and infanticide, but also neglect of their education. The purpose of their education is to prepare them for a life of service to God.

Another early Christian work is the Didache, also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, which has been variously dated as originating not long after A.D. 80, 100, or somewhere between 120 and 160.⁶⁹ Because of some parallels with the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, it is also a matter of debate as to whether the

⁶⁷Roberts and Donaldson, 148.

⁶⁸Roberts and Donaldson, 149.

⁶⁹Brent Walters, ed., Didache (San Jose, CA: Ante-Nicene Archive, 1991), 64, 72, 80.

Didache draws from them, or they from the Didache. The best scholarship seems to favor the latter.⁷⁰

In a passage parallel with that of Barnabas previously quoted, the Didache reads:

Do not take away your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from youth up teach (them) the fear of God (Didache 4).⁷¹

Like Barnabas, the Didache later condemns those who are "murderers of children, corrupters of the image of God" (Didache 5).⁷²

While the Didache omits any reference to abortion or infanticide, it does view children as being in the image of God and thus as worthy of high regard. To fail to teach them the fear of God is to neglect them. Like all of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, the Didache views the education of children as a home-based responsibility of the parents for the purpose of preparing the children for a life of service to God.

The Synagogues

The earliest Christians continued to worship in the Temple in Jerusalem.⁷³ In his early days of ministry, Paul

⁷⁰Walters, 53.

⁷¹Walters, 95.

⁷²Walters, 96.

⁷³Acts 3:1; 5:12.

continued to frequent the Jewish synagogues⁷⁴ to preach Christ.⁷⁵ In addition to this, the first Christians also met in private homes for worship, fellowship, and instruction.⁷⁶ Eventually, however, it became clear that Christianity was more than a sect of Judaism; it demanded recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. This began to force a separation between the Jews and the Jewish Christians, a separation which was first manifest in the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues.⁷⁷

The formal severance of Christians from the synagogues came somewhere between A.D. 80 and 90 when a letter was circulated among the synagogues identifying Christianity as a false religion.

It contained a formal denial of the truth of the Christian account of the teaching and resurrection of Jesus. Christianity was a denial of God and of the Law. It was based on the teaching of Jesus, who was a deceiver, and who had been put to death by the Jews. His disciples had stolen His body, and then pretended that He had risen again from the dead and was the Son of God. It was therefore impossible for Jews to have anything to do with such teaching, and His followers should be

⁷⁴The synagogue developed during the exile when the Jewish people were without a temple. Even though they could not sacrifice, they could study the Law. Thus the synagogue became primarily a place of instruction. Later, with the advent of elementary education, the synagogue -- already the center of social and religious activity -- was the natural place for the teaching of children to occur. (See Barclay, 24-25.)

⁷⁵Acts 9:20; 13:14-44; 14:1; 17:1, 10; 18:4, 19; 19:8.

⁷⁶See Acts 2:46; 20:20; Romans 16:5.

⁷⁷See, for example, Acts 18:4-8; 19:8-9.

formally excommunicated. Jews were to avoid all discussions of any kind with the Christians.⁷⁸

There was during this same era an insertion into the daily Blessings recited in the synagogue a declaration about heretics worded in such a way that Jewish Christians could not say it. It is probable that this statement, the Birkath-ha-Minim, was included in the letter circulated to the synagogues, with instructions to include it in the Eighteen Benedictions. The statement was composed by Samuel the Small, who lived during the second half of the first century. While we do not know the exact original wording, it did contain a specific condemnation of the "Nazarenes" and amounted to a daily cursing of Christ.⁷⁹

This would indicate that up until that time some Jewish Christians, at least, were still worshipping in the synagogues. Otherwise it would have been unnecessary to compose such a test statement to detect their presence.

The Apostle Paul, in recounting his attempt to eliminate Christianity before his conversion, said,

And I punished them [Christians] oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities (Acts 26:11, KJV).

At least until that time, apparently, Jewish Christians had enjoyed the full rights of synagogue membership.

⁷⁸James Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (1934; reprint, New York: Hermon Press, 1974), 80.

⁷⁹Parkes, 77-78, 80.

The parents of a man healed of blindness by Jesus refused to commit themselves to identifying the source of their son's healing,

because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22, KJV).

Their reluctance indicates there were social and religious benefits to synagogue membership. These benefits must have been significant to persuade these parents to keep silence in view of the great miracle which had been performed on their son.

Since Jewish Christians were later, at least for a time, welcomed in the synagogues, this ban on confessing Jesus as the Messiah must have been lifted or at least ignored for a time. Perhaps this was done in those cases where the leaders of the synagogues themselves believed on Jesus.

Archaeology

Recent archeology supports the New Testament suggestion that the church often met in houses of believers. But the most significant discovery for our purposes is that Christian and Jewish meeting places existed side by side as early as the end of the first century.

Following a discussion of discoveries in Capernaum beneath the Church of St. Peter and a reconstructed Jewish synagogue, Meyers and White report that if these finds are accurately interpreted,

then in Capernaum a Jewish synagogue and a Jewish-Christian church existed side by side from the end of the first century on. The grander structures above both the early synagogue and the house of Peter in Capernaum suggest that Jewish and Christian communities lived in harmony until the seventh century.⁸⁰

If indeed a church and a synagogue existed at the same time this early, it would indicate that whatever social and religious benefits had accrued to the members of the synagogue would have been replaced by membership in the church. While we cannot be positive of this, even the external similarities of the earliest churches with the synagogues would indicate a similarity of purpose and function:

Distinct architectural differences between them [churches and synagogues] did not begin until the fourth century. In other words, if we were following Paul through Ephesus or Corinth, we would not be able to distinguish Christian or Jewish meeting places from the exteriors of the buildings.⁸¹

Among the Jewish people, houses were frequently converted into synagogues. The same was true of the first century Christians. In most of the congregations founded by Paul, meetings were held in the houses of individual members.⁸² But the evidence suggests that these houses were soon converted into full-fledged churches.

⁸⁰Meyers and White, Jew and Christians in a Roman World, 29.

⁸¹Meyers and White, 31.

⁸²Meyers and White, 31.

One of the most impressive discoveries . . . comes from Dura-Europos, a Roman garrison on the Euphrates River in what is now Iraq, dating to before 256 C.E. On one street was a house that had been renovated, in three stages, into a sanctuary of Mithras, a Persian god whose cult spread throughout the Roman empire from the second half of the first century C.E. onward. Farther down the same street, another house had been converted, in two stages, into a synagogue. Its assembly hall contained one of the earliest datable Torah niches, and on its walls were elaborate frescoes depicting stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. Farther down the same street was a house that was renovated to become a Christian church, with a small assembly hall and a room set aside for baptism.⁸³

Rome also offers evidence of houses or apartments being adapted for use as churches.

More evidence of religious pluralism in the Diaspora can be seen in Rome. Excavations beneath several basilicas, such as those of St. Clement and SS. John and Paul, reveal earlier buildings -- houses or apartment complexes -- that were being renovated for religious use as early as the first century.⁸⁴

These discoveries tell us nothing about the existence of elementary schools in the synagogues, early churches or elsewhere. But they do indicate that the early Jewish Christians found a replacement for whatever was lost in the synagogue. If elementary schools were available to Jewish children in the synagogues at the time, it would seem reasonable to assume that they would have continued to be available to Jewish Christians, and Gentile Christians as well, in the churches. The evidence, however, does not seem

⁸³Meyers and White, 32.

⁸⁴Meyers and White, 33.

strong enough to be certain such schools existed. At most, they would have just been introduced or reorganized and strengthened by the order of Joshua ben-Gamala, and it seems doubtful that they would have become universal so quickly.

Summary of the Literature

The Hebrew Scriptures place a high value on children and command their training in the theology and practice of Judaism. This education is to be accomplished by the father with the assistance of the mother. The New Testament continues the theme of the importance of children and the necessity of their being taught Christian theology and practice. The father continues to be seen as primarily responsible for this training, but the role of women in teaching girls is also recognized. Paul expects his readers to be familiar with the school system of the day as practiced among the nobles at least in the Roman empire. But his description of the Law as a paidagogos (schoolmaster) does not necessarily mean that most first century Christians actually had the services of such a household slave.

The Mishna, the Gemara and the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds advance the idea of the education of children to a level beyond that of the Hebrew Scriptures. The student is to reverence his teacher, but the father was still held responsible for the education of his son, including teaching him a trade. The mother was to provide her daughter with training in home management. An elementary educational

system was established in Israel at least during the era immediately preceding the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70. While the children were sometimes taught in the home of the teacher, the school was more commonly located in the Synagogue.

The Apocrypha offers the earliest mention of a formal school, that of Sirach. This indicates some kind of education outside of the home was available at least as early as 180 B.C. There is no indication, however, as to how widespread formal education was or how much use was made of it by the Jewish people. Sirach holds the father responsible for the upbringing of the child, but he also demands that the child give both the father and mother the highest reverence and obedience. Indeed, the father is responsible for the corporal discipline of the erring son. A father achieves a kind of immortality by teaching his son, in that he reproduces himself in his offspring.

The pseudepigraphal Letter of Aristeas declares that the greatest form of neglect occurs when a man does not care for his children and fails to devote every effort to their education. This indicates that during the first century B.C. the Jewish community placed a high priority on the training of children.

Josephus underscored Moses' command that the Law be read publicly, not only to the men, but also to the women and children, including the Gentiles and their children who

may have been dwelling in Israel at the time. He sees education as occurring from the infancy of the child and as being the primary concern of Israel.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers continue the New Testament theme concerning the value of children and the importance of fathers bringing up their sons for a life of service to God. In addition, the father is to teach his son a trade so as to make him a productive citizen. The father is also to teach his wife so she may help him in the education of the children. To fail to educate one's children is seen as a form of neglect similar to abortion and infanticide.

The synagogues welcomed Jewish Christians during the early days of Christianity, but toward the end of the first century a required confession was introduced which forced out those who believed Jesus was the Messiah. Archaeological evidence suggests synagogues and churches existed side by side from the end of the first century on. The physical similarities between the buildings and the fact that the church was replacing the synagogue suggests that whatever social, religious and even educational opportunities may have been available in the synagogues were also available in the earliest churches.

Section 3

METHODOLOGY

This research project took the form of an historical survey. The primary sources were located. The author conducted research in the libraries of the University of the Pacific, Christian Life College, and San Joaquin County. He also researched materials from seminary and university libraries in various parts of the United States through the inter-library loan system. He took a membership in the Ante-Nicene Archives to have access to specialized materials dealing exclusively with the first three centuries of the Christian era. In addition, his personal library contains well over 1,000 volumes, many of which deal with themes related to the research. After he enrolled in the Doctor of Education program, he completed New Testament Greek Grammar I with Moody Bible Institute and Elementary Hebrew and Hebrew Exegesis with Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in order to make his research in Greek and Hebrew documents more meaningful.

The author followed closely the guidelines for historical research in education suggested by Cook:

Modern historical research is based on scientific method. . . . a primary concern is factual objectivity . . . since the historian is dealing with events that have occurred in the

past, he cannot be a witness to the facts that he seeks the way an experimentalist can. He must rely on the silent witnesses of documents and other remains or relics. . . . the collecting of source materials is a fundamentally important step in historical research.

When source materials have been collected they must be subjected to criticism to establish their authenticity. Two lines of evidence must be pursued. First, is the document or relic what it appears to be? . . . This is called external criticism.

The second line of criticism is that designed to establish the meaning and trustworthiness of the data contained in the document itself. . . . This is internal criticism.

. . . the third major process of historical research is the formulation of hypotheses.

. . . the historian develops hypotheses . . . as he sifts through his evidence and proceeds to examine the evidence for possible signs of support for his hunches. If he does not find support, he discards the hypothesis and tries to formulate another one that will make better sense.⁸⁵

The author has formal education in textual criticism of the Scriptures. His Doctor of Ministry dissertation was on this subject.⁸⁶ He is acquainted with the issues concerning textual criticism as it relates to the Talmud and the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

The formulation of hypotheses based on this historical research will be found in the next chapter.

⁸⁵David R. Cook, A Guide to Educational Research (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), 17-18.

⁸⁶The author's 325 page D.Min. dissertation, The Search for the Word of God, was published in 1982.

Section 4

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

There is no doubt that ancient Judaism stressed the education of children for a life of service to God. But it seems evident that no elementary school outside the home developed until at least during first century B.C. It is more probable, however, that such a system was not introduced until just before the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70. When the system did develop, it was associated closely with the services offered by the Jewish synagogue. Even at this time, the father continued to bear the primary responsibility for the education of his children.

Near the end of the first century, when the Jewish Christians were expelled from the synagogues because of their confession of Jesus as the Messiah, they developed house churches which apparently offered whatever services were lost with their exclusion from the synagogues. It is not certain that these early churches offered elementary education to the children, but we can be virtually certain that if they did not, it was because the synagogues did not. If ben-Gamala's edict in A.D. 63 was the first concerning the establishment of elementary schools, it is extremely

doubtful that they would have spread universally as quickly as A.D. 80-90. Some synagogues, especially those in or near Jerusalem, may have developed schools, but nothing requires us to believe that they were widespread. It is most probable that Jewish fathers continued to accept responsibility for the education of their own children, although some fathers may have received assistance from specialists in Torah or trade, either in the home or in some short term school.

If the first century Jewish Christians had not become accustomed to having their children in elementary schools, it seems certain that the fledgling house churches would not have offered elementary education and that the fathers would have continued to teach their children or to gain the assistance of those they could trust to educate them in harmony with Christian theology and practice. It would seem improbable that the new house churches, with the political and religious pressures they confronted, would have seen the establishment of elementary schools as a high priority when there already existed a system of education which had proven workable for centuries: the home.

It also seems certain the Christian fathers would not have consigned their children to whatever non-Jewish or non-Christian educational opportunities which may have existed in the Roman empire. The education of Christian children was definitely seen as preparation for a life for service to

God, and this would not have been accomplished in a pagan setting.

Christian parents were confronted with serious problems respecting the education of their children. The pagan school constituted an unavoidable situation of conflict with paganism for the church and the Christian home.

An irreconcilable difference existed between the Christian and the pagan cultures in respect to the purposes of education.

. . . These differences in the nature and purposes of education could have led to conflict and to the withdrawal of the Christians from the pagan schools.⁸⁷

If there had been some Jewish elementary school system in existence before A.D. 63 and some Christian elementary school system in existence before the end of the first century, it seems strange that there is no mention of it or allusion to it in the New Testament. Children are frequently the topic of discussion by Jesus, his disciples, and Paul, but none of them make any reference to schools except Paul's comment about the paidagogos. **Even this could be understood in terms of what was widely practiced by non-Christian Roman citizens.** Many Christians may not have had such a household slave who would take their sons to school, but they would have been acquainted with what was going on in society around them. Their familiarity with the paidagogos would have been sufficient cause for Paul to use the term.

⁸⁷Homer Hughes Hawes, "A History of the Early Church and Christian Education from the Birth of Christ to the Council of Nicea: A.D. 1-325" (Ph.D. diss., School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, n.d.), 183.

Wherever the paidagogos appears in Greek or Roman history, he is seen taking the children to the pagan schools. It is never suggested that he took Jewish children to synagogue schools, and of course there is no suggestion that he took Christian children to schools in house churches.

Summary

At least by the end of the first century, Christians apparently educated their children at home. The father accepted responsibility to teach his sons and possibly his daughters the Scriptures. This would have been an education in history, ethics, character, and theology. The father also taught his son a skill or trade so he had a means of earning a living. In most cases, this was doubtless the trade the father himself practiced. The father received help from the mother in the education of their children, and she accepted the responsibility to teach her daughter matters of household management.

There may possibly have been an occasional house church which offered to its members an elementary education for their children, but this is doubtful.

Section 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

By definition, both Judaism and early Christianity were educational movements. Their practice and survival depended upon the training of their children in theology and praxis. There could be no fulfilling of the terms of their faith without diligent efforts to communicate it to their offspring. Since each faith required a defined lifestyle, this education of the young could not limit itself to mere rhetoric. It embraced every aspect of life. Even one's vocation must reflect his faith. For this reason, both Judaism and Christianity directed that the father teach his son a trade. Life in the home must reflect one's faith, and to this end the mother taught her daughter skills in household management.

Jewish parents could not consign their children to pagan schools and be obedient to the commandments of the Torah and Talmud. Neither could Christian parents be faithful to the New Testament.

The very content of instruction in the pagan school was reprehensivle [sic] to the Christian faith and morals. Pagan learning was inseparably bound up with heathen religion with its false gods and impure morals to such an extent that it was intolerable to the Christian. Christian youth were continuously embarrassed by the biting criticism

of Christianity coming from pagan teachers of grammar and rhetoric.

. . . the children were taught reading out of books saturated with the old mythology. . . . He [the Christian student] ran the danger of imbibing ideas clean contrary to those which he had received at home. The fables he had learned to detest in his own home were explained, elucidated, held up to his admiration every day by his masters.⁸⁸

This problem eventually led to the establishment of a Christian elementary school system, the first of which apparently originated at the close of the second century at Edessa in Gaul. The school was established by Protopogenes with a curriculum including reading, writing, the study of texts of Scripture and psalm singing.⁸⁹ The Jews had established an elementary school system prior to this, probably around A.D. 63.

But the problems of Christian children in pagan schools would have been limited to Gentile Christians. Some of them would have already had their children enrolled in pagan schools when they embraced Christianity. The first Jewish Christians would not have had their children in pagan schools under any circumstance. However they had been teaching their children -- whether in early synagogue schools or at home -- they would have replicated in their new Christian faith. There is a high degree of certainty that Jewish and Christian elementary education before the

⁸⁸Hawes, 183-4.

⁸⁹Hawes, 188.

end of the first century were similar in form and purpose. The education was the home-centered responsibility of the parents with perhaps occasional assistance from teachers outside the family who could be trusted not to violate the theology and practice taught in the home.

These findings could be useful in an assessment of the current trend for Protestant churches to establish private Christian academies for the education of their children.⁹⁰ This approach is not novel; it finds its roots in earliest Christian tradition. Jewish communities in today's world tend to provide considerable educational opportunities for their children through the local synagogue. Though, in general, this supplements rather than replaces other sources of elementary education, it continues the tradition of providing Jewish children intense training in their theology and praxis. The Christian Sunday schools which have operated since the eighteenth century have been much more limited in scope than the education accomplished in homes during the first century or in the first Christian elementary schools which originated in the late second century. They also tend to offer a more limited education than that available to Jewish children through the synagogues.

The trend to establish private Christian academies is actually a return to the educational philosophy of

⁹⁰Roman Catholic churches have traditionally offered parents an alternative school system.

Christianity at its root. This should be considered in view of the tension which often develops between the home schooling/Christian academy movement and public educators. A nation such as the United States of America which prides itself in religious pluralism should recognize that historically pluralism has extended to the privilege of parents to determine the religious and philosophical climate in which their children will be educated.

With archaeology currently unearthing first century house churches, it may be possible that some future discovery will confirm the existence of elementary schools in those churches. Or it is possible that inscriptions could be found which would shed further light on education among early Christians. But until and unless these things occur, available evidence suggests first century Christianity saw the education of children as the responsibility of the home.

Christian parents and educators should evaluate current educational opportunities available to Christian youth in view of these findings. Is education today to be considered training for a life of service to God? Should even one's vocation be performed as being integral with one's faith? Should churches enhance the educational opportunities to supplement what children are receiving elsewhere, or should they offer a full alternative? What support should be provided for Christian parents who have chosen to educate their children at home?

At the very least, the practices of the forefathers of both Judaism and Christianity should provide thoughtful reflection for those today who confess these traditions as their roots.

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Interview

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