

## THE CHALLENGE TO ORIGINALITY -

**As encountered in the methodological approach of Christian religious education courses developed in Africa**

J C Malan  
University of the Western Cape

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### **Astract**

*After Jesus had brought a surprisingly original message, and had stressed the importance of understanding his invitation to a changed life-style, the Christian church too often reverted to traditional content teaching and indoctrination. Honest, critical reasearch was rejected and educational developments were ignored.*

*Against such a background the recovering of Christian originality in the Christian Religious Education courses developed in Eastern Africa is to be welcomed. In these courses a life-related method is duly justified and effectively used. Jesus' message and method were indeed original, in the dual sense of being first and being frêsh.*

*This challenge to implement life-related originality instead of abstract traditionality should definitely be taken seriously in Christian Religious Education. But a similar life-approach should also be propogated in all education.*

### **1. The originality brought by Jesus**

#### **1.1 The way in which Jesus uprooted religious traditionality**

The religious scene on which the Founder of Christianity appeared, was apparently one of extreme traditionality. Laws and ritual customs, regarded as the revelation of the one and only God to the one and only chosen people, were painstakingly observed by the religious establishment. Not only were these traditions handed down carefully from generation to generation; they were also augmented and embellished by numerous and impressive additions. The experts in Scripture study and interpretational debating had constructed an imposing system, and kept on further elaborating it.

Jesus, however, surprised the people. He shocked the religious leaders. He was not preoccupied with studying and discussing the then existing Holy Scriptures (cf Jn 5:39f, and Grollenberg 1979:28,30).<sup>1</sup> He disregarded their stipulations for keeping the Sabbath day holy (cf Mk 2:23-3:6). He ignored regulations about ritual purity (cf Mk 7:1-13). He pointed out the absurdity of their taboos regarding 'unclean' foods (cf Mk 7:14-23). He reinterpreted the Law which they regarded as the core of their religion (cf Mt 5:17-48). He condemned their superficial religiosity, calling their Teachers of the Law 'hypocrites' and 'blind fools' (cf Mt 23:1-36). He predicted the termination of the Temple which they venerated as God's dwelling place in the midst of his elect people (cf Mt 23:37-38).

Like the prophets that had preceded him, Jesus apparently exercised a divine authority to uproot and to plant (cf Jer 1:10). He repudiated the infrastructure of traditional Jewish religiosity. But then he propagated a strikingly, originally new way of believing and living.

## 1.2 The original, life-related message proclaimed by Jesus

Jesus invited people to submit themselves to be guided by God. He indicated how such a yielding of one's self in genuine faith could liberate one from domineering ways of thinking, talking and acting (cf Mt 5:3-10, and Boff 1979:158,164<sup>2</sup>). And how it could lead to love in one's relationships with others (cf Mt 22:37-39 and Gutiérrez [1974] 1985:6<sup>3</sup>) and to justice in one's dealings with others (cf Mt 7:12,21, 23:23).

It could therefore be said that Christianity had its origin not in a doctrinal or ritual structure, but in an uncomplicated message of a radical change of mind (cf Grollenberg 1979:31-33,38). Both the condensed quotations (Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15, Lk 24:47, Jn 13:34f) and the more extensive reports of Jesus' teaching (cf Mt 18:3f, Lk 5:32, 15:7,10, 17:3f, Jn 3:1-21, 4:7-29) clearly indicate how the essence of his message could be summarised in either of the Greek event words *metanoein* (the 'verb') and

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1. 'Jesus did not give the impression of being constantly preoccupied with the Torah and the other sacred texts. What emerges from the sayings of his that have come down to us is an intense interest in the people around him, and in their daily life and experience' (Grollenberg 1979:28).

'He was quite different from the scribes. They presented texts from the Torah, and interpretations given by authoritative rabbis. Jesus seldom quoted scripture, and never used others people's (*sic*) interpretations' (Grollenberg 1979:30).

2. 'Something in human beings is altered. The whole complex reality of human beings is penetrated by divine grace, turning them into creatures ...

... faith is basically a radical attitude of openness to the supreme mystery of our existence and of loving acceptance of it so that our human course is altered. To believe in God is to live life as a confident surrender into his hands' (Boff 1979:158,164).

3. '... a more biblical view of faith as an act of trust, a going out of one's self, a commitment to God and neighbor, a relationship with others' (Gutiérrez [1974] 1985:6).

*metanoia* (the 'noun'). In the semantic dictionary the meaning for which these words were used is described as follows:

... to change one's way of life as a result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness. ... the emphasis ... seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act. (Louw & Nida 1988:510)

### 1.3 The necessity of fully understanding Jesus' teaching

This message must have challenged everyone in Jesus' audiences to a fresh understanding. The notion of such a life-transformation was apparently foreign to all current cultural and religious views. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus more than once, or perhaps quite often, asked people whether they understood what he was communicating to them.

When he explained (to a crowd) the crucial difference between ritual 'purity' and genuine, inner purity, he began by saying:

Listen and understand! (Mt 15:10).

His own disciples, however, needed a further explanation, which Jesus introduced by the question:

Don't you understand? (Mt 15:17).

So also, with reference to his parables, Jesus asked his followers:

Do you understand these things? (Mt 13:51, cf Mt 13:34).

If Jesus unequivocally stressed the importance of understanding his invitation to a changed life-style, one would expect Christian Religious Education, from its earliest beginnings, to have had this insight at its very centre.

Unfortunately, however, this was not the case. The temptation to follow the less challenging line of teaching biblical content and church doctrine proved to be almost irresistible.

## 2. The reversion into traditionality

### 2.1 The backsliding to content teaching and indoctrination

The history of the Christian church (or churches?) incorporating the history of the interpretation of the Bible and the history of Christian Religious Education, includes any examples of the suppression of understanding. Since the early centuries of Christianity new generations of Christians were subjected to an authoritative indoctrination of the 'mysteries' of dogmas and sacraments. The 'mystagogical catecheses' of St Cyril of Jerusalem (cf Cross 1951:53-80) provide almost incredible (in more than one sense!) examples.

For centuries, especially up to the Middle Ages (but in some circles up to the end of the 20th century!), questioning was forbidden or strongly discouraged. Teachers took

refuge in allegorical interpretations, and students in a fear-ridden docility. Well intended efforts to 'defend' Scripture against critical 'onslaughts' often bordered upon dishonesty (cf Smart 1970:85-87). But then, as recent as the 19th century, honest critical research ventured onto the scene and began playing a liberating role. It opened the way to understanding biblical books as having originated from real life-situations as they were experienced by believing people and authors. Such an understanding obviously precludes any 'conviction' that the Bible is to be venerated as an oracle dictated from heaven.

## 2.2 The rejection of honest, critical research

The main stream of Christian Religious Education was still dominated by traditional syllabuses, methods and fears. Little, if any, use was made of the liberating and meaningful insights derived from critical research (cf Grollenberg 1979:91). Regarding the cause and effect of this encrustedness, Smart (1970:67) says:

... the peace of the church was valued more highly than truth. The consequences of leaving a twentieth-century church with a seventeenth-century mind were ignored.

Only eleven years ago, at a conference on Religious Education in our Changing Society, the Director of Religious Education in the Transvaal Department of Education and Training stated that

... the content of the prescribed matter for State school syllabus cannot be other than the Biblical content, pure and simple' (Greyling 1980:59).<sup>4</sup>

A year later, at the second conference on Religious Education in our changing Society (held at UWC), a guest speaker from the University of Cambridge outlined and criticised the extent to which 'Agreed Syllabuses' in Britain were made up of 'Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Doctrine: the simplified theological students' course' (Holm 1983:5).

## 2.3 The ignoring of educational developments

Failing to keep up with the findings of biblical research was not the only shortcoming of traditional Christian Religious Education, however. Another unfortunate drawback was that it did not keep in step with educational developments. In a book with the significant title, *Education for Christian living*, first published in 1956, Randolph C Miller already emphasised the importance of

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4. In the opening address of the same conference, however, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of a 'secular' university said: 'I share the view with many others that the young people are taught religion, but they do not see it in action and do not experience it themselves - hence irrelevant activity' (Du Plessis 1980:5).

... new developments in psychology, including child and developmental psychology,<sup>5</sup> the psychology of learning, the psychology of religion, and psychiatry (Miller 1963:6, cf 30-32)

as well as the meaning derived from

[t]he study of the social process as the medium in which education takes place (Miller 1963:6, cf 9f).

He showed how

... the emphasis shifted from the content to the child (Miller 1963:6)

and stressed that

[t]he curriculum is both God-centered and experience-centered (Miller 1963:7).

He highlighted the 'supreme importance' of John Dewey's insights,

... that education is based on experience (Miller 1963:7,40)

and that we

... teach not so much things as the meaning of things (Miller 1963:44, quotation from John Dewey, *How we think*, 1933:236).

Although Miller did not repress his criticism of some of Dewey's views, he frankly admitted how with regard to the social process

John Dewey's educational insights and the truth of the Gospel come together (Miller 1963:71).

But so much (if not most) of Christian Religious Education simply kept following traditional lines as if there had been no John Dewey and no Randolph Miller (to name only two of many innovators).

It may be noteworthy (without offering any excuse, though) that this conservative carelessness to implement new insights is found not only in the field of Religious Education. One may expect that an assessment of teaching in any subject in any school might in many cases lead to a finding similar to that of a recent investigation in Los Angeles:

According to these students, classroom learning

... appears to stand alone, having little relationship to their lives, other studies, or the larger community (Wilms 1990:248).

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5. About 'special cognitive development' as a recent area of research in the field of developmental psychology, Yuill (1990:961) says: 'It concerns the child's developing ability to understand and explain properties of the social world: characteristics of individuals - their motives, dispositions, beliefs and feelings - of relationships between individuals - friendship and conflict - and of social systems - social norms, moral rules, and obedience to authority'.

### 3. The recovering of Christian originality

#### 3.1 The appearance of strikingly original Christian Religious Education courses in Africa

It is against such a background of rigid traditionality that the methodology of the Christian Religious Education courses developed in Africa is to be welcomed, implemented and propagated. More can obviously be utilised than just the method. At more than one occasion I have already appraised the entire approach, contents and method of these courses (e. g. Malan 1984, Malan 1991). At this occasion, however, I wish to focus our attention mainly on the method. But since aims, method and content are obviously interrelated, some references to aims and content, both in the text and in notes, will inevitably be necessary.

The courses I am referring to are *Developing in Christ (DIC)* and *Christian Living Today (CLT)*. Both are copyrighted under the name of the Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa, Eldoret, Kenya. The dates of first publication are as follows: CLT, Book 1 - 1974, CLT, Book 2 - 1975, DIC - 1981. Since the *Christian Living Today* course is described (on the back cover of the DIC books) as:

... an excellent follow-up for the *Developing in Christ* programme ... ,

it seems best to discuss them in school level sequence rather than in order of publication.

On the title pages of the DIC Teacher's Handbooks (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1981a, 1981b) the following, very significant authorship details are given:

Prepared by teachers throughout Africa and written at the AMECEA Pastoral Institute, Box 908, Eldoret, Kenya.<sup>6</sup>

And on the inside of the front cover of the CLT books (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974, 1975) the following, equally significant, explanation is given of

... how this syllabus was created: A committee of Catholics and Protestants from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, under the title 'Rubaga Workshop' (so called because of its first meeting place in Kampala) prepared the syllabus for this course during three one-week workshops in 1970, 1971 and 1972.

#### 3.2 The life-related method proposed in these courses

The method is directly related to the aims, which are formulated as follows:

The *Developing in Christ* course aims to provide the student with the opportunity to explore his experience and the experience of others, to examine relevant biblical passages and decide how he will act as new insights confirm,

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6. A 1983 version of *Developing in Christ* was published in Zimbabwe under the sponsorship of the Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe, with due recognition to the AMECEA Pastoral Institute, Eldoret, Kenya.

deepen or challenge his experience. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1).<sup>7</sup>

And the general aim of the Christian living today course is to educate

... the student in an awareness of his life in relation to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, in the changing and developing society of which he is a member (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1975:142).<sup>8</sup>

The centrality of life-experience in the contents and method is justified as follows:

Religious Education earns its right to a place in the curriculum because of the contribution it makes to the development of the whole person, seeing him as a person in community. For this to be so, we need to take people seriously and be in touch with the dynamics of our changing society. This was the way of Jesus of the Gospels. He did not perpetuate the formal content of the Scriptures, but invited such contact with Himself that would lead to transformed relationships with God and with others. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1.)

The basic method used throughout the Developing in Christ course is outlined in two ways. It is stated in four brief paragraphs in the teacher's resource book. It is also summarised (with apt illustrations) on four of the 150 posters available with the course, implying that the teacher may indeed show the students what method they are using.

In the following quotations the wording on the posters and in the paragraphs is given in combined form:

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7. In this syllabus the theme and sub-themes are as follows: 1) My personal freedom (how people develop; ambitions and how we achieve them; how people can find Jesus Christ today; people's choices and the choices of Jesus). 2) My work and relationships (how people discover their talents; how people use their talents together; developing through guided learning experiences; fellowship; creating fellowship). 3) My power to live (hope; disappointment, failure, suffering, death; the resurrection of Jesus and life through the Spirit; prayer - saying 'yes' to God through life and worship). 4) My responsibility in community (desire for freedom; how to use freedom; living in the community; forming values and attitudes; the Christian's role in the community). 5) My search for values (respect for authority; respect for the gift of life; respect for friendship; respect for human sexuality). 6) My response to values (respect for truth; respect for justice; understanding sin, guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation).

8. The major and sub-themes of this course is as follows: 1) Man in a changing society (living in a changing society; working in a changing society; leisure in a changing society). 2) Order and freedom in society (justice in society; service in society; loyalty in society). 3) Life (happiness; unending life; success). 4) Man and woman (family life; sex differences and the person; courtship and marriage). 5) Man's response to God through faith and love (man's quest for God; man's evasion of God; Christian involvement in the world).

**STEP 1: EXPLORE WITH THE STUDENT** an experience of his own life. The student sees himself at a particular point in life, now, with his background, anxieties, desires and hopes for the future.

**STEP 2: HELP HIM BROADEN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THIS EXPERIENCE** by studying similar experiences of other people. The student assesses whether these facts are particular to him only, as a student or adolescent, or are interests and problems common to mankind. He may find general conclusions, common attitudes and wider horizons.

**STEP 3: HELP HIM TO INTERPRET THESE INSIGHTS IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S REVELATION** 1. in the Bible, 2. in the Church's faith. The student, understanding his life is like that of other humans, now explores the Christian significance of the truly human in this life. He looks to Christ in the Gospels and how He reacted to life and its challenges. He looks to the Risen Christ and His influence in the early Christians. The search will lead to a deeper understanding of the quality of the human life that Jesus enables those who believe in Him to live.

**STEP 4: HELP THE STUDENT TO EVALUATE HIS EXPERIENCE AND LIVE ACCORDINGLY.** The student takes another look at his own life and what Christ is saying now in the present situation. As he sees the meaning of what Christ did and said, it may change his own attitudes. The awareness of God present and acting in life will call for a response of faith in the Risen Christ and a more truly human living of life. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1.)

In the Christian living today course the method is embedded in the sub-themes according to which each of the major themes is covered.

The sub-themes are developed in five dimensions for the student, in such a way that:

1. He may see himself in his present situation. (Present Situation)
2. He may understand himself as a product of this traditional African milieu, formed in African culture and values, and influenced by the technology, ideas and value systems of the rest of the world. (African Tradition)
3. He may understand himself as a product of Christian history, influenced by various Christian traditions in Africa. (Church History with Emphasis on Africa)
4. He may look at himself in his own situation in this changing world, seeking its meaning for himself in the light of God's revelation as mirrored forth in the Bible, of which the fullest expression is in Christ. (Bible)
5. Having fully considered the experiences and circumstances of his life, he may give an enlightened response to God. (Synthesis) (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1975:142)

### 3.3 An example of the implementing of this method

The CLT sub-theme Justice in Society may serve as a telling example (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974:80-103):

1. Present situation



Newspaper headlines from all over the world

Several photos (e. g. a student talking in a library where others are quietly studying).

Several anecdotes (e. g. senior pupils bullying newcomers).

At the end of this section we find a list of present-day injustices and aspects of the search for justice (printed in capital letters), as well as the following paragraph (printed in a contrasting colour):

It is because of human suffering, our own or someone else's experience of injustice, that we begin to see what needs to be changed in our relationships. We saw in *Living in a changing society* that we need a change of heart, which involves not only an inner conversion, but also a decision to work for proper social relationships. (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974:83.)

## 2. African tradition

Traditional ideas of justice (the idea of harmony in the community illustrated by a brief summary of a novel).

Injustices in men's dealings with one another, and in the structures of society, past and present (e. g. witch-hunting, favouritism towards own tribe).

### 1. Present situation (cont)

An exercise in decision making (an agricultural extension officer who can grant only one loan after he has interviewed the three farmers who have applied).

An informed vision - of human rights and human development (with extracts from a Declaration of Human Rights, and a chart of the various levels of human development).

Examples of the opposing of injustice (e. g. Gandhi, Luthuli).

## 3. Church history

Slavery (in biblical times, in the early church, the African slave trade, the abolition of slavery).

Minorities and oppressed groups (in the early centuries of Christianity, in the Reformation period and thereafter, various forms of oppression).

## 4. Bible

Eight passages, plus further references, from the Old and the New Testament, arranged under the following captions:

Called to human relationships (Ex 23:1-8, 22:21-27)

People before piety (2 Sm 12:1-15, Is 58:1-12)

A new vision (Is 11:1-9)

Power to relate (Mk 2:1-12, Lk 18:9-14, Mt 5:17-48)

The kind of discussion may be illustrated by a few sentences from this last section:

The religious leaders, those who prided themselves on being learned in the Law, were the least open to the new power at work in Jesus ... Luke uses this story of Jesus to show the failure of the Law to bring people to suitable relationships, and also to give another example of God's mercy ... He [Jesus] came to replace the Law as the one and sure means by which a person can maintain good relationships with God and his fellow men. (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974:100.)

### 5. Synthesis

Firstly, an effective summary of the foregoing sections (1-4);

secondly, the synthesis part (captioned Finding our way);

here we find ten assignments, all related to actual life-situations (at home, at school and in the community);

finally, under the heading Reflect, there are three paragraphs printed in red, with the following as central section:

As Christians the Gospel urges us to be concerned about those who have the greatest needs: the oppressed, the poor, the captives, the blind. We need to find out who these people are, in our particular situation, and go further to see why such situations exist and try to prevent them.

Christ has told us that justice cannot be separated from love of neighbour for love demands justice but goes beyond justice. (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974:103.)

### 3.4 A threefold justification for the use of a life-approach

There can be no doubt about the main reason for the dynamic, interest-arousing, meaningful relevance of these courses. It is nothing less than the life-experience approach.<sup>9</sup>

Seen from the traditional, content-oriented perspective, this approach may appear to be a surprising novelty. The authors of the Teacher's Resource Book for the DIC course realised that the life-approach might cause some anxiety. They therefore frankly mentioned such a possibility:

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9. Interestingly enough, a similar tendency away from traditional content memorising and towards experience exploring is found in other fields of study as well. In a book on *Teaching Economics in African secondary schools* Henderson (1980:viii) says:

'I have under-emphasized traditional approaches and stressed the need to develop a strategy for economics teaching based on the selection of questions, materials and methods that directly involve students in considering simple economic issues drawn from their own society. ... an aim of this book ... is to assist ... teachers ... to explore in the everyday world for examples that can be used in the class to develop and communicate economics understanding.'

For some people it is a new idea to recognise that human experience belongs to the very content of Religious Education (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1).

At the same time, however, they gave a threefold justification for the use of this approach.

It is, after all, in line with the 'basic principle to proceed from the known to the unknown, which 'means starting where the students are with their own experience and the experience of people who matter to them' (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1).

It is also in line with the way in which the Bible originated:

First, people experienced an event. Then, through reflection, they realised that God was at work in that event. It taught them much about themselves and the meaning of their life and relationships, so they recorded it, first orally, then in writing. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:3).

And it is precisely the method Jesus himself used:

He helped people to explore an experience of their lives, to really think about it, then he would bring a new dimension of truth to their consciousness and enlighten their understanding; always leaving the response open as an invitation, because faith is free. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:3).

### 3.5 The priority of the life-related message of Christianity

By using this method we are therefore unleashed from peripheral traditions and brought back to the original core of Christianity. Jesus was indeed original - in both senses of the word. He brought a message which was first of its kind and which was astonishingly fresh (cf Malan 1983:28-33). His message was so life-related that it could hardly be encapsulated in written form. Although we are grateful about the written records we have of Jesus' words and works, we should keep these records alive by studying them from a life-approach.

We should take Jesus' words as recorded in Jn 5:39f seriously:

You study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! Yet you are not willing to come to me in order to have life.

In order to grasp the full impact of these words, we may also take note the following illuminating comments:

He [Jesus] liberated God from his imprisonment in the tradition. He left behind no writings of his own, for he himself had bitter experience of how Scriptures could become a tyrant and a barrier against the living presence and power of God (Smart 1970:146).

He did not perpetuate the formal content of the Scriptures, but invited such contact with Himself that would lead to transformed relationships with God and with others. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:1, cf Mesters 1984:132).<sup>10</sup>

And in order to remember our inevitable responsibility of using the original Christian life-approach, we may add another crucial sentence:

If we are not willing to explore our own existence and our own relationships, we are not prepared to listen to God's living Word. (Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe 1983:2).

### 3.6 Original ways of understanding the New Testament

Although this implies that Christianity was not meant to be a book religion, it does not imply that the studying of the relevant New (and Old) Testament books can be ignored. The well-known simile Jesus used according to Mt 13:52 may point in this direction. In the context of teaching in parables he compared a traditional religious teacher who has submitted him or herself to God's guidance with a house owner taking new and old things out of a storeroom. Could this not mean that under God's guidance traditional material may be used in original ways? And is this not another case where original should be understood in its dual sense of initial and novel? Are we, as Christian religious teachers, not precisely called to follow Jesus' example? We may not have his unique power of creating parables, but we do have the facilities for practising the same life-approach. We may do it modestly but also assertively. We have after all been gifted with the powers of observation, imagination and meditation.

### 3.7 The truly Christian character of the life-related method

To me it seems clear that the challenge to originality we encounter in these courses from Africa is an endorsement of the method used by Jesus himself. Is it not obvious that these courses are calling us to use the original Christian method in the original way it was intended to be used? Do we need stronger motivation from the Christian perspective?

There may however be Christian teachers who are reluctant to use this method. Such a reserve may stem from a quite meaningful but very traditional Christian upbringing and teacher training. It may also be based on a long experience of the relative ease of preparing a content-oriented Bible lesson (reading the passage concerned, adding some background information, explaining difficult concepts by means of dictionary or reference Bible techniques, and indicating any obvious application to

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10. 'Finally, the common people are putting the Bible in the proper place, the place where God intended it to be. They are putting it in second place. Life takes first place! In so doing, the people are showing us the enormous importance of the Bible and, at the same time, its relative value - relative to life' (Mesters 1984:132).

life). But all teachers who are still adhering to such traditionality, however well intended, should be recommended to take Jesus' originality seriously.

### 3.8 The importance of the life-approach in all education

Moreover, they, and all of us, should realise that the life-approach is not only genuinely Christian but also genuinely educational. It seems as if most contemporary and recent publications in the field of education either emphasise or assume this type of approach. A few examples should suffice to indicate the trend. Anyone who is still not convinced may easily find many more.

... a growing emphasis on looking at learning from the perspective of the learners themselves (Entwistle 1990:663, cf Malan 1984:1-6).

In real life, knowledge has to be put to use to solve problems or to deal with new situations ... (Entwistle 1990:663).

... it is essential in education to put more emphasis on meaning. And this is true, not just in the later stages of education, but right from the time when children first enter school (Entwistle 1990:664).

Courses will have to be designed in ways which make understanding a core learning activity (Entwistle 1990:677).

Experiential learning is not just to do with personal learning: it also concerns relating to others in the process of learning ... Education which is experiential is essentially social (Sharp 1990:761).

... the central feature of discussion is the opportunity to learn through the expression and exploration of diverse ideas and experiences in co-operative company (Cowie & Rudduck 1990:803).

'The educational objectives [of People's Education are] to be reached through the stimulation of critical and creative thinking, analysis and working methods ...' (Kallaway 1990:238, quotation from K Hartshorne, 'Post-apartheid education', unpublished paper, UCT, 1986).

With regard to moral education:

... development through the stages [of moral reasoning] can be accelerated not by direct instruction, which is ineffective, but by exposing the subject to argument and discussion which exhibits elements of reasoning from the stage which is one higher than his or her present level ... [T]he higher one proceeds up through the stages, the more likely one is to act upon one's moral judgements (Straughan 1990:979).

In a chapter on Education in Africa the traditional education is described as informal, experience-based, comprehensive and communal (Farrant 1981:30). And in a chapter on Innovation in education, where 'educational innovations of relevance to Africa' are discussed, more relevant education is strongly advocated:

... all our efforts are largely wasted unless what we teach is relevant to the aims and objectives of our pupils, the values of our culture and the resources at our disposal (Farrant 1981:45).

Regarding the future:

Teaching and learning models for the future must integrate learning and living, the personal and the political (Werdell 1974:285).

While cognitive learning should continue to have high priority, the problem of integrating learning and living for the future clearly demands new emphasis on other kinds and styles of learning, as well. Specifically, the curriculum must offer experiences in creative and speculative uses of the intellect as well as analytical uses (Werdell 1974:290).

On the one hand I wish I had the opportunity of elaborating on these brief extracts. On the other hand, however, I am optimistically hoping that it is unnecessary to do so. I am, in other words, trusting that anyone who hears or reads such arguments in favour of life-approach teaching, coming from educationists across the world, and from Christian religious educationists in Africa and elsewhere, and from the origins of Christianity itself, would need no further persuasion.

#### **4. Conclusion: a model and a challenge to remember**

In such faith I therefore wish to conclude by briefly doing two things.

The first is to share with you an easily remembered outline of the method recommended in these excellent courses developed on our continent:

My experience  
Our experience  
Discover the Christian perspective  
Evaluate these insights  
Live accordingly

And the second is to remind all of us of Jesus' parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28-32).

If we have to admit that the advantages of the life-approach are well-known, but that many of us, especially in the field of Christian Religious Education, do not really make use of it, we need the message of this parable. We should not promise to do it and then leave it undone. If we have objections against it, let us rather frankly discuss them. I do hope, however, that as many adherents of traditionalism as possible would change their minds (cf Mt 21:29,32) and accept the challenge to life-related originality.

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