

BIBLICAL STUDIES: ITS FORMATIVE VALUE  
IN THE EDUCATION OF THE ADOLESCENT

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*Abstract* - The paper represents an apologetic for the formative value of Biblical Studies, based on a working description of the nature of education in the context of the school. The focus, therefore, is on matters *educational*. After a section on the nature of education and the task of the school, the scope of Biblical Studies and its formative value in the education of the adolescent is discussed, concluding with a perspective on the challenge presented by this subject.

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I INTRODUCTION

This paper represents an *apologetic* for the *formative* value of Biblical Studies in the education of the adolescent.

The implicit apologetic is based on a working description of the *nature of education* in the context of the *school*.

The statement which defines the concern of the present discussion namely, *Biblical Studies: Its formative value in the education of the adolescent*, represents a statement of educational intent, that is, it intends to address itself to matters *educational*. It is a statement that is not primarily concerned with the science of Biblical Studies or even theology as such. Rather its concern is directed at education. The intent of this paper is, therefore, *educationally* orientated.

In discussing the formative value of Biblical Studies in the education of the adolescent, attention must, therefore, first be directed at the question as to the nature of education itself.

The nature of education is an area of philosophical and pragmatic concern which has occupied man throughout the ages (Smith, 1965: 23-51). The intention of this paper is not to enter into debate about the nature of the education phenomenon as it is encountered in life, but rather to provide a working description of the nature of education - a description that will in turn define the parameters of concern and involvement for Biblical Studies as a subject in the school curriculum.

## 2 THE NATURE OF EDUCATION AND THE TASK OF THE SCHOOL

The educative task of the school can be enunciated with reference to the concepts of teaching and education, as well as to their inter-relationship in the educational situation.

Although a distinction is made between the concepts of teaching and education, they are in fact inseparable activities. Consequently, the distinction between teaching and education is made mainly for the sake of the formulation and workable demarcation of concepts.

### 2.1 Teaching

Viljoen defines teaching as an activity by which a human being, usually a child or youth, is taught by another person, usually an adult, to know and do certain things (Viljoen and Pienaar, 1976:63-64). Teaching is thus always concerned with helping a pupil to acquire knowledge and skills.

The aim of teaching is, therefore, the acquisition of knowledge and skills by the pupil. This acquisition of knowledge is accompanied throughout the entire range of teaching and learning, by the development on the part of the pupil of the power of independent and correct thinking and the application of his acquired knowledge to new problems. In short, *teaching* is specifically aimed at the development of the intellect and the hand. (Gunter, 1979:10-11).

Teaching is thus a part of education, being directed only to one aspect of man, namely, his intellect. It is, therefore, a practical and *limited* process which aims at the imparting of *factual knowledge*, abilities and skills. (Cilliers, 1980:37).

## 2.2 Education

While teaching is more specifically concerned with the development of the intellect and the hand, *education* is aimed at the development of the pupil in his totality. (Gunter, 1979:11).

As such, education represents the moulding of the person (Landman e a, 1982:95). In this context, education is the deliberate, purposeful, systematic and planned guidance provided by the adult with the intention of forming or moulding the adult-to-be (Cilliers, 1980:36).

In other words, *education* is concerned not only with the development of the head and hand, but also with the will and emotions. It is concerned with the pupil in his totality as an indivisible spiritual-physical unity in his total existential situation (Gunter, 1979:11).

Education, therefore, aims at more than just knowledge, skills and independent thought. It is especially concerned with the positive formation of the moral character and the development of the entire personality of the emerging adult.

Education is thus goal directed (Landman e a, 1982:72-9). In focussing its attention on the individual's physical, intellectual, creative, aesthetic, moral, emotional, social, affective and religious development, it aims to furnish the individual with a meaningful existence in the totality of his existence (Oberholzer, 1979:176-9).

## 2.3 Educative teaching

Education is a much broader concept than teaching. Teaching, however, constitutes a very important component of education. Education cannot occur without teaching.

The acquisition of a certain amount of basic knowledge and certain fundamental skills and the development of the intellect are an essential pre-requisite for education which is aimed at the positive formation of the pupil's moral character and his behaviour in accordance with specific norms and standards (Gunter, 1979:19).

Education, therefore, includes teaching, while teaching is an essential and inseparable aspect of education and as such it is an essential means of education. As an essential component and means of education, teaching is a very important mode of peda=

gogical help, support and guiding accompaniment of the child or youth on their way to responsible adulthood.

Teaching, therefore, serves the purpose of education, but in this regard efficient and effective teaching will always be *educative* teaching.

Educative teaching is not merely concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills, that is, with the development of the intellect and the hand, but rather seeks to educate the youth as a person in and through the entire teaching and learning activity, by paying attention to and emphasizing certain concomitant by-products of learning in the form of good intellectual and moral habits, positive attitudes, fine ideals and individual and social virtues that must gradually be cultivated (Gunter, 1979:119-20).

#### 2.4 *The educative task of the school*

Gunter claims that the school's work is primarily of an intellectual nature, for it is above all else its function to uplift and guide its pupils to intellectual self-reliance as an essential constituent of adulthood (1979:167). The task of the school is, therefore, to teach pupils to acquire certain basic knowledge and to develop their ability to think independently, correctly and critically. In this instance the development and discipline of pupils' intellectual faculties are, by nature of their specific function, central to the concern of the school.

However, the very nature of education prohibits the task of the school being exclusively confined to the pupil's intellectual development. Rather the *educative task* of the school finds expression in the educative teaching of the individual teacher whose concern is not only the imparting of factual knowledge but also the cultivation of good habits, positive attitudes, inspiring ideals and basic intellectual and moral virtues.

It is recognized that formal school teaching which aims at the intellectual development of the pupil is an important part and means of the child's education. But at the same time, it must be noted that education itself is concerned with the development of the pupil in his totality. *Educative teaching involves the pupil in his totality.*

The pupil is an indivisible unity and for this reason his intellectual talents and needs cannot be abstracted from his total personal development so as to receive all the attention of

his educator. The school is, therefore, compelled to direct its attention to the pupil's advancement as a subject in his totality by providing not only for his intellectual needs, but also for his physical, moral, aesthetic, social and religious needs. This does not mean that the school is responsible for a pupil's whole education, but rather it is responsible for the education of the whole pupil, that is, the pupil in his totality by its teaching and secondary activities.

The task, therefore, of the school is educative teaching for the purpose of its pupil's satisfactory progress towards responsible adulthood. Insofar as the task of the school is educative teaching, which in turn is concerned with the development of the pupil in his totality, it might well be stated that the school seeks to direct its efforts at *character education*.

As such, character education represents in essence the educative task of the school.

### 3 THE NATURE OF EDUCATION AND THE SCOPE OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

Biblical studies is often referred to as an academic or scientific study of the Bible (Kitshoff and Van Wyk, 1983:72). These definitions, however, limit the scope of Biblical Studies within the context of the school and its educative task.

The teaching of Biblical Studies in school context can never be purely intellectual and objective.

This is not to deny Biblical Studies the right to apply the tools of scientific investigation and in so doing to accumulate, differentiate and systematize its information. That the quest of Biblical Studies is to ascertain what the Bible says for itself is not disputed. That Biblical Studies should seek, through what is written, to assist pupils to establish what actually occurred, and ascertain how events occurred and why, and how and why these events or words were recorded is not under question. It is clear from the syllabus for Biblical Studies that an academic approach is intended. Pupils are examined, as in any other discipline, to provide sound reasons for the views they express on questions of interpretation, application and insight.

But, in terms of the educative task of the school and by implication the teacher and the subjects in the school curriculum, in this instance, Biblical Studies, such an academic approach cannot

and must not be allowed to do away with the formative value of the subject.

Biblical Studies is a subject of undeniable formative value. Consequently any academic approach to Biblical Studies as a subject in the school curriculum must take into account and seek to actualize the subject's formative value if it is to be educational in intent.

In this regard, the actualization of the subject's formative value will be a product of study, rather than the direct product of some form of moralizing.

The scope then of Biblical Studies as a subject in the school curriculum is best defined not as an *academic* study of the Bible, or as a *scientific* study of the Bible.

Rather, in the context of the educative task of the school, Biblical Studies should be referred to as an *educational* study of the Bible.

#### 4 THE FORMATIVE VALUE OF BIBLICAL STUDIES IN THE EDUCATION OF THE ADOLESCENT

Having sought to establish the formative value of Biblical Studies on educational grounds, it now remains to identify the manner in which the formative value of Biblical Studies actualizes itself in the education of the adolescent. With due regard for cultural influences, it can be said that adolescence takes up the years from 12 to 22; early adolescence from 12 to 15, middle adolescence from 15 to 18 and late adolescence from 18 to 22 (Vrey, 1979:165).

The pupil taking Biblical Studies as a school subject is therefore located in early and middle adolescence.

Compared with childhood, significant physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual changes are evidenced in adolescence. These developmental changes represent the focal point for the actualization of the formative value of Biblical Studies in the education of the adolescent. Briefly these developmental changes can be identified as follows:

##### 4.1 Cognitive development

The adolescent tends to think more critically and more abstractly.

He is more rational in his approach and, therefore, often takes a critical stance.

In adopting a more rational and critical stance many adolescents become aware of the tension between the biblical view of reality and the scientific interpretation of existence which they encounter in other subjects (Kitshoff and Van Wyk, 1983:87). It is, therefore, important that pupils in the adolescent stage of development should learn that knowledge comes to man through more than one perspective on life, that both scientific research and the biblical narrative provide a perspective on the truth in man's seeking after knowledge. In adopting such an approach, Biblical Studies will enhance and enrich the critical faculties of the adolescent and thereby allow him to grow in his encounter with knowledge and truth.

The pupil, as an adolescent, also increasingly develops the ability to understand and appreciate the formative meaning conveyed in the content of the biblical narrative and this has far-reaching consequences in terms of his development towards responsible adulthood.

#### *4.2 Affective development*

The years of adolescence are marked by an intensity of emotional experiences.

In this regard Biblical Studies might well prove to be a stabilizing factor in the emotional turmoil which often threatens to overwhelm the individual.

#### *4.3 Social development*

Social relationships are extended during the period of adolescence. The individual now emerges from his home environment and experiences the need to form a new style of relationships - relationships with peers, friends, members of the opposite sex, parents, adults and the many people whom he encounters in his ever-expanding world.

The biblical narrative represents the perennial drama of human relationships and their effect on individuals. In this instance Biblical Studies can address the adolescent at his point of need - his need to relate more extensively and more meaningfully to people.

#### 4.4 *Moral development*

One of the aims of education is to bring the pupil to a point where he supports the norms of his society as a result of his personal convictions.

But today the adolescent is confronted by a society which is marked by double standards, changing morals and shifting norms.

On what then does the individual base his personal convictions?

Biblical Studies can introduce the adolescent to moral norms that may well assist him to establish a personal morality based on principles which taken together constitute those personal convictions that make for moral self-reliance and responsible action.

#### 4.5 *Religious development*

The period of adolescence is characterized by an intense searching after answers to certain basic questions concerning the meaning of life. The questions are addressed to issues such as the origin and destiny of man; the existence of God and his relationship with his creation; the possibility of life after death; suffering and man's quest for meaning in his experience of life.

The Bible is a book about man and the manifold nature of the predicament he encounters in his existence. It is a book which addresses the human situation in its total encounter with life.

Biblical Studies can, therefore, provide the individual with a perspective within which he can examine these fundamental questions in a manner which fosters an insight into, and an understanding of the meaning of life.

#### 4.6 *Personal development*

The adolescent's whole life is a complex maze of several factors interacting simultaneously. He is a developing person who is approaching a new stage of life. As such he is often misled, misunderstood, lonely, confused, perplexed and tempted.

The Bible addresses these very real human experiences and consequently Biblical Studies will expose the adolescent to relevant information, and thereby make a significant contribution towards leading the adolescent to a fuller and more meaningful personal



self-realization.

Taken as a whole, these developmental changes indicate that the adolescent strives towards the attainment of security while at the same time seeking for an identity which will invest his life with meaning. In short, adolescence represents a period of dynamic restlessness and searching.

Biblical Studies as an *educational study of the Bible* is eminently suited to address this lack of security and self-identity, this dynamic restlessness and searching which characterizes the adolescent.

Insofar as *educative teaching* recognizes the formative value of Biblical Studies, Biblical Studies as part of the education situation can assist the adolescent to acquire self-knowledge and security by attaining a degree of mental, emotional, social, moral and spiritual balance.

##### 5 BIBLICAL STUDIES - ITS EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

The presence of Biblical Studies as a subject in the curriculum of our schools runs counter to the spirit of our day. Ours is an age marked by increasing secularization, technological advancement and industrial-agricultural revolution.

In and outside the school the cry goes out for vocationally orientated subjects to supply the needs of a commercial and technologically orientated society.

But *life itself is a vocation* - this it would seem is the forgotten factor in present day planning for the demands and challenges of tomorrow. In this climate, Biblical Studies must remain true to its *educational* challenge - a challenge which finds expression in the formative value of the subject in the education of the adolescent, the adult of tomorrow.

In view of the *formative value* of Biblical Studies in the education of the adolescent, alarm is expressed at the relatively small numbers, and the forecast decline in numbers, taking Biblical Studies as a matriculation subject. The demand for Biblical Studies is on the decline.

The ever increasing demand for vocationally orientated subjects is leading to the demise of Biblical Studies as a subject in the secondary school curriculum - so much so that Biblical Studies as a subject is in danger of a "no demand" situation.

This "no demand" situation needs to be addressed urgently by Congress if Biblical Studies as a subject is to survive in our schools.

*DIE WAARDE VAN BYBELKUNDE AS VORMENDE VAK  
IN DIE OPVOEDING VAN DIE ADOLESSENT*

Die referaat verteenwoordig 'n apologie vir die vormende waarde van Bybelkunde in die opvoeding van die adolessent.

Die implisiete apologie is gebaseer op 'n werkende beskrywing van die aard van die opvoeding binne die konteks van die skool.

Die stelling wat die strekking van die huidige bespreking definieer, naamlik Bybelkunde: Sy vormende waarde in die opvoeding van die adolessent, verteenwoordig 'n stelling van 'n opvoedkundige opset, d w s dit wil sig rig tot opvoedkundige sake.

Dit is 'n stelling wat nie primêr betrekking het op die wetenskap van die Bybelkunde of selfs die teologie as sodanig nie. Dit het eerder betrekking op die opvoedkunde.

Die doel van die referaat is derhalwe opvoedkundig georiënteerd.

In 'n bespreking van die vormende waarde van Bybelkunde in die opvoeding van die adolessent moet aandag derhalwe eerstens op die vraagstuk van die aard van die opvoedkunde self gerig word. Die aard van die opvoedkunde is 'n terrein van filosofiese en pragmatiese bemoëienis wat die mens deur die eeue heen in beslag geneem het.

Die bedoeling van die referaat is nie om te debatteer oor die aard van die opvoedkundige verskynsel, soos dit in die lewe teëgekome word nie, maar eerder om 'n werkende beskrywing van die aard van die opvoedkunde te voorsien - 'n beskrywing wat op sy beurt die parameters van die bemoëienis en betrokkenheid vir Bybelkunde as 'n vak in die skoolkurrikulum sal definieer.

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