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The aims of religious education in Lesotho

Ramahadi, Evangeline Dineo

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until the present day, been the only religion taught in the country.

Of central importance to the Judeo-Christian religion, that which the adherents of this religion have done fairly consistently throughout history, and which has provided them with an experience of the beyond, or the spiritual, are: prayer, liturgical celebrations and textual study.[3] Among these three textual study seems to be the most appropriate for the classroom.

Scripture reading has, in fact, always been regarded among the Jews as one of the highest forms of religious activity a person can occupy himself with. It was a well established fact among them, even in the time of Jesus, that a person who devoted his time to textual study was seeking to approach Yahweh through understanding of his word.[4] This still holds true among Jews as well as among Christians today. Otherwise Scripture reading would not be given the importance that it has in their respective liturgies. Thus textual study, whether it is done inside or outside the classroom walls, awakens a certain feeling of religion. In fact, this is precisely the reason why it was introduced into the school curriculum.

Jesus' personality, words and deeds add even more to the religious character of the text. Unlike other heroes in history and literature, he is conspicuous by his essentially religious character. Any reader if he or she admires Jesus' personality, is, for this reason also drawn toward his teaching. When describing this strong personality, Dodd says: "He spoke with authority never heard of before, and the people yielded to it. When he said 'Your sins are forgiven' they actually believed him, which was sufficiently remarkable in the religious climate

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3 Hoffman, N. Ibid.

4 Ibid.

of the time and results followed."[5] This continues in a way, even after his death. Thus St. Paul, who was a Pharisee, was so attracted by Jesus' personality, and grew to love him so much that he describes him majestically as:

> ...the first born of all creation, for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth.. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...(6)

ii) Historical Aspect

The God of the Judeo-Christian religion reveals himself in human history. Abraham was called by God at a certain period in history, and Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great. Moran describes Christianity as "a historical religion which involves Scripture, tradition, and belief in the significance of selected past events."[7] Thus Jesus is said to have suffered death "when Pontius Pilate governed Judaea, and Caiaphas was High Priest in Jerusalem". Such historical statements, which appear here and there within the mostly figurative and symbolic representation characteristic of religion, show that the writers of the sacred texts were aware of the importance of historical facts as well as of their religious significance. Thus it is important to note how for instance in that situation, when Pilate governed Judaea and Caiaphas was High Priest in Jerusalem, the cause of God was vindicated; that Jesus' ministry was conducted, and ended with his death, during one of the most difficult periods in Jewish history.[8]

Dodd also states that if the authors of the gospels did not bother themselves about facts, St. Luke would be grossly misleading his readers when he begins, as did his

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5 Dodd, C. The Founder of Christianity. New York. Fontana Books. 1970. p.58.

6 Colossians 1: 12-20.

7 Moran, G. Ibid. p. 17.

8 Dodd, C. Ibid. Chap. 8.

predecessors in the field, with the assurance 'to draw up an account of the events that have happened'. He continues his argument by noting that to the serious historian, as opposed to a mere chronicler, the interest and meaning which an event bore for those who felt its impact,is a part of the event.[9]

History is important also with regard to spiritual growth and development in religious thinking noticeable in the biblical texts. Thus the understanding of Yahweh and of his ways is more advanced in the New Testament, as well as in those Old Testament texts which bear a stamp of a later age than in the earlier writings. Whereas Yahweh appears in these early texts as God of the Israelites only, and often fights on their side, he becomes, in succeeding generations to be gradually understood as God of all nations. The Exodus God who is always ready to punish is described as 'Father' in the later writings, and ultimately, as 'Abba' by Jesus himself.[10]

History and its understanding is very important in the books of the prophets. They directed their message to a particular historical situation. Jeremiah prophesies doom before the Exile, and Ezekiel speaks words of comfort during the Exile. In this way, a particular historical situation makes their message meaningful.

Yet Religious Education is not an historical enquiry, but a study of a religion based on a revelation with an historical content.

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9 Dodd, C. Ibid. pp. 38 - 39.

10 Anderson, B. The Living World of the Old Testament 3rd Ed. London. Longman. 1978.

Senior, D. Jesus, A Gospel Portrait. Dayton, Ohio. 1975.

B. The Situation in Lesotho

1. The Population and its features

Lesotho's population of about two million approximately consists mostly of Christians of different church denominations, a small percentage of pagans, and a very small, almost negligible minority of Indian Moslems. Despite the fact that unlike many African states, Lesotho's population uses one common language, the country is only relatively homogeneous. There are significant differences within this population.

For instance, denominational differences have always been felt in Lesotho, though relations are much better than in the earlier times described in the first three chapters of this study. It can be expected, however, that a hundred years cannot have brought about a complete change in this matter. The differences are still a factor to reckon with. Then there are social ladder differences. The difference between the Basotho with a high education and those who are uneducated, between the rich and the poor, is often reflected in their respective religious attitudes and outlook. For example, there seem to be more church goers among the poor and uneducated than among the rich and learned.

Lesotho's religious outlook has also changed considerably in some respects since the days of the early missionaries. While church membership has increased, and believers are more numerous, the choice for religion is made more challenging by Western dechristianization influences and by scientific and technological developments and the resultant modern moral standards. This means that religious education has to be approached differently to suit changing situations and conditions.

As hinted earlier, in Chapter 4, Religious Education, or Religious Knowledge as it is called at post primary school level, has been an optional examination subject since the 1960s with a common syllabus based on the Old and the

New Testaments. The way of approach has, however, been left entirely to the individual teacher's judgement and beliefs.

All schools are open to all population groups. Owing to a shortage of facilities and of teaching staff, many secondary schools can offer only the required minimum number of examination subjects. If these include Religious Knowledge, a pagan child or a Moslem child has no choice but to learn the Christian Religion. Hence another reason why the teaching of religion has to be approached differently from the past, when Christianity was believed to be the one and only way to salvation.

2. Deep seated cultural beliefs:

Though there was no recognizable systematic religion prior to the arrival of the first missionaries, the Basotho had certain customs and practices which have a religious resemblance. Prominent among these, and still prevalent today, though somewhat modified, are:

a) Belief in the Spirits of the Ancestors

For the Basotho, as for all blacks in Southern Africa, the dead have another spiritual existence in the land of the spirits, believed to be somewhere in the East.[11] The ancestors are said to have certain powers and knowledge reserved for the after-life. Their powers and knowledge are, however, limited. For instance, while it is believed that they can call any of their surviving relatives out of this life, to the land of the spirits, by causing their death, this can be prevented, at least in some instances. Thus a woman who has lost her sons, one after the other, through death particularly in infancy, can prevent this continuing by giving her new

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11 Mefolo, T. Ibid. See Chap. 4 p.62 in this study.

baby, if it happens to be a boy, a girl's name, so as to deceive the ancestors.

The ancestors are always referred to in the plural, 'badimo', and never in the singular. 'Modimo' is reserved for the Supreme Being, or God. Prior to the teaching of the first missionaries, the idea of the Supreme Being was there, but vague.[12] It is found more in idiomatic expressions and in the Sotho traditional prayers. For instance, in poetic and idiomatic language, a cow is referred to as 'Modimo o nko e metsi' (a damp-nosed god); another idiomatic expression 'Modimo o mocha rapela wa kgale' (newly introduced god, worship the old god) means that new customs and ideas must not make people forget the wisdom of the past.

Cattle have always been offered to the ancestors, and never to God. The animal is never burned. It is slaughtered, the meat cooked and served at a big dinner to which everybody is welcome whether invited or not. The reason for such offerings is to appease, and sometimes to thank the ancestors for favours received.

Thus the world of the Basotho is spirit filled, and, generally it is never devoid of hope. In the past the dead were buried in a stooping position, facing the East, so as to enable them to rise quickly on resurrection day.[13]

b) Prayer for rain

The various Sotho clans seem to have had their own individual ways of praying for rain. The prayers were directed to their respective ancestors. The main purpose that this prayer serves here is that of indicating the basic attitude of the ancients towards their ancestors, an attitude which, at least partly, is still noticeable in the present generation.

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12 Mofolo, T. Ibid.

13 Sekese, A. Mekhoa le Maele a Basotho. Morija. Lesotho Book Depot. 1984

"They spoke to them as though they were speaking to ordinary human beings, thus employing prose rather than poetry."[14]

> Tsholwane, we want rain;
> Hey! Where's the rain?
> Chief, please give us rain...(15)
> (Translated from Sotho)

Apart from the purely clannish prayers, which are easy to recognize because they are always addressed to a certain major ancient chief, mentioned and called by his name in the prayer, there was also a more general prayer that does not seem to have belonged to any particular group, but which is claimed to have been used by all and embodied their common sentiments.[16] The chorus contains an ancestral injunction to the petitioners not to direct their prayer to the ancestors, but to God:

> Leader: God hear we pray
> You new gods, pray to the ancient God
> Pray to God the Father of the Saviour
> The Father of the Saviour with pierced hands
> Hands with drops of rain
> Hands with blood, drops of rain;
> Your hands are tired after creating us;
>
> Chorus: Do not pray to us
> Pray to God, the Father of the Saviour
> With hands that have holes. (17)
> (Translated from Sotho)

This seems to confirm claims that the Basotho always knew that there is a Supreme Being who transcends their ancestors and all being; and that, apparently, the people had been exposed to Christianity in the distant past, before they began their southward migration.[18]

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14 Guma, S. The Form, Contents and Technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho. Pretoria. Van Schaik Ltd. 1967. p.113

15 Ibid. p.114; and Sekese, A. Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. p.115.

18 Walker, E. The Great Trek. London. 1934

Education, especially religious education, has to be aware of this fact. Good education always begins from what is known to the unknown.

It is never too late to begin. Besides, it is still customary in the present day Lesotho for the king to make an announcement that a certain day has been chosen as the day to pray for rain, whenever there is a drought. Thus the present is linked to the past, though today prayers for rain are said in churches.

3. Education

a) The traditional circumcision school 'Dikoma' (Hymns)

'Dikoma' were sung by boys undergoing circumcision. They were, and still are, a closely guarded secret.

According to Guma,[19] the teacher 'mosuwe' starts the song, and the boys sing it after him, repeating all his lines and words. 'Far from being the coarse and sordid things that they are usually supposed to be, those dikoma that have been painstakingly collected...seem to do the Basotho real justice, in that they point to a far and distant past, in which the story of Bethlehem was apparently not unknown'.[20] Dikoma are also referred to as 'dinnete' (truths).

Though couched in secret language and tending to be obscure and unintelligible to the uninitiated, it is now agreed that dikoma were mainly intended for instruction. The boys were instructed on the virtues of communal life, the traditional love of their people, as well as decent habits of living, including what pitfalls to avoid in life.[21]

Secondly, the boys were taught some historical excerpts which deal with migrations and apparent persecutions in

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19 Guma, S. Ibid. p.116

20 Ibid.

21 A long 'koma' entitled 'Konyana tsa Leboya'.

the dim and distant past. 'The contents of this type of lesson...are strikingly reminiscent of the Biblical story of the children of Israel, including the miraculous birth of Christ, who is called Tladi in one of them...'[22]

It is interesting to note that the 'koma' hymn by which the boys are welcomed to the school on arrival is a prayer, not to the ancestors, but to God, the Father of Jesus:

Our God
God of our fathers
Thou hearest:
The boy initiates fetched
They fetched the teacher
The teacher is the firemaker (23)
(Translated from Sotho)

Thus the teacher, who is known as lgwesha or mosuwe, refers the initiates' desire to God, to whose care and wisdom he commends them.

Among the 'dikoma' that contain historical excerpts, one tells the story of a virgin who conceived without intercourse with a man. It centres around two characters, Mpoko or Mmoko, from the verb stem 'boka' (thank) and Phale, explained as one who has defeated sin. Mpoko (the one who is thanked), is said to have breathed his spirit into Phale, who then conceived a child (Shosho) who is as great as 'Lome':[24]

Mpoko breathed
He breathed in his spirit
And Phale conceived
She conceived a child
A child who is great
As great as Lome. (25)
(Translated from Sotho)

The word 'Lome' is very old Sotho, its meaning is debated. It is difficult to tell which word in the spoken language has replaced it.

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22 Guma, S.(Ibid) p. 117.
23 Ibid. p.118.
24 Ibid. pp. 125 - 126.
25 Ibid.

Since 'dikoma' and initiation rites have always been shrouded in mystery and secrecy, and because the educated Basotho, most of whom went through mission schools and hardly know these dikoma, the dikoma no longer exercise any influence on the cultural lives of the people. However, some of the educated Basotho have begun to salvage this national heritage which they begin to realize has been overlooked, ignored and even despised, through ignorance.

Evangelization and religious education would have found a good starting point in the dikoma, if it had not been for the circumstances surrounding both the circumcision rite and the initiation of Christian teaching in the country.

The initiation school offers much more training than education, and is more practical than theoretical in character. Above all else, the traditional circumcision school is life oriented.

Character formation forms the major thrust of the training. The trainees learn how, as adults, society expects them to behave. Among other things, much emphasis is laid on unfailing loyalty to the king and to the chiefs, and uncritical obedience to those in command. The trainees do everything as a group, and are not allowed to isolate themselves from the group. In fact, nothing short of conformity is expected from the trainees.[26] All this has a great significance in the education of the Basotho.

Religious education, and education in general, has to be re-examined and revised against the background of the circumcision school. Though much reduced in number, these schools still have an influence on the nation as a whole, and even more especially on the culture of the rural population.

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26 Sekese, A. Ibid.
Duminy, P. African Children and Teaching Them. Pretoria. T.L.Van Schaik. 1968.

b) Formal academic Education

Lesotho's education has to contend with the usual set-backs common in all developing third world countries, such as poor, inadequate facilities and even worse, the shortage of well trained, qualified teachers. The adverse effect on a child's mind when it has to pass through the hands of unqualified teachers year after year throughout primary education cannot be overestimated. This has been the situation in Lesotho for many years, and in many schools. Children from such schools cannot be expected to have had a normal mental development, especially when, added to this, the educationally poor home environment of most of the children is considered.

Thus, more often than not, many of the children admitted into secondary school have serious problems in learning to think, problems other than the usual, recognised handicaps. They do not fit into the traditional categories of handicapped children, and yet they are handicapped since they have not developed normally in all phases of mental growth.[27]

This is supported by Duminy, for, referring to the education of African children in Southern Africa, he points out that in teaching every subject, that which must be remembered and emphasized is not just a linkage of images on the observational level, but an insight into abstract relations and the application thereof in other areas where necessary.[28] The reason for this, says Duminy, is that African pupils seem to have a handicap in the development of thought into the more abstract levels of consciousness due to their environment and bad teaching methods in the early stages of education.[29]

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27 Durka, G. Ibid.

28 Duminy, P. Ibid.

29 Ibid.

c) The educational situation with special reference to Religious Education

Religious Knowledge, as the subject is called in Lesotho at secondary and high school levels, has always been disadvantaged, especially with regard to the allocation of trained, qualified teachers.

However, much effort has been made, recently, for interest has been given to the training of teachers for teaching religion at post primary school level. As with any other problem, an educational problem that has been over-looked for a long time becomes even more difficult to solve. An increase in the number of schools in order to provide education for the increasing population results in a greater shortage of teachers. Many schools still have to rely on untrained or unqualified teachers. It is in a situation such as this that teaching tends to be examination-oriented, and subject-centred, rather than pupil-centred. There is, apparently, also a false notion that religion is easy to teach and can be handled as one would a reading lesson, with a few explanations here and there. Hence the continuing practice of employing unqualified persons to teach it without feeling uneasy about it. A report issued by the Regional Panel contains the statement:

> Many teachers entrusted with RE have received no special training in the subject. At teachers' meetings the statement is made from time to time that there is a tendency for RE to be handed over to teachers whose academic qualifications are somewhat weaker than those of the rest of their colleagues. Consequently, in some cases, RE teachers do not have a clear idea of their task.. (30)

And, in fact, some teachers who have felt the discomfort and uneasiness of standing in front of a class without knowing exactly what to teach, have expressed their

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30 Report of the Regional Panel Meeting, Kwaluseni 1982. p.20.
Note: RE stands for Religious Education.

feelings. Thus B. Ngara who was asked to teach religion while still unqualified, and later felt obliged to get the necessary training and qualifications, writes:

> On this point, I speak from my own experience. When I began my duties as a Religious Knowledge teacher, I was totally unqualified to teach the subject. The preparation of the lessons was extremely hard work and I could not teach with confidence.. (31)

It is worth noting that there are exceptionally good teachers of religion in Lesotho, but they are only a small percentage of the Religious Education teachers and they are unevenly distributed, because they are usually found in the older 'good' schools, most of which are in the lowlands, where life is comparatively easy. Referring to these well staffed, favourably situated schools, Ngara continues:

> In the schools observed, most of the teachers were well qualified; but it is common knowledge that in some secondary schools of Lesotho, Religious Knowledge is entrusted to teachers who themselves are aware that they lack the necessary background. (32)

C. <u>The Implications for Religious Education in Lesotho</u>

Instructional Objectives:

It has been mentioned that despite the fact that there is a common non-doctrinal syllabus, the way of approach to Religious Knowledge[33] is left to the individual teacher's judgement and beliefs.[34] With this in mind, and when the spiritual and religious aspect of Sotho culture is considered,[35] it seems reasonable to opt for a moderate phenomenological approach[36] to religious education in Lesotho.

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31 Ngara, B. Ibid. pp. 53 - 54
Dlamini, T. Ibid. p.50

32 Ngara, B. Ibid. p.54

33 The name used at post primary level in Lesotho.

34 See Chapter 4 pages 67 - 68

35 See page 128m- 130

36 To be clarified in Chapter 9.

Since Lesotho is a Christian country, a common syllabus with two parts, a longer part comprising the Christian religion, and a shorter part comprising some of the other important religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as African Independent Churches, seems optimum for educational purposes. It is for such a syllabus that the following seems desirable:

i) Objectives on the Cognitive side:

a) A textual study of the Bible and of other world religions, since it involves material comprising narratives and history,[37] requires knowledge of facts.[38] This implies the ability to recognize and to remember facts.

b) History and narrative material require that events be studied in chronological order.[39] Hence the ability to recognize and recall the chronological sequence of events.

c) Since textual study contains both historical and religious narratives comprising revelation material, a Mosotho child, perhaps more than other children brought up in educationally rich environments, needs to be helped to progress from concrete to more abstract reasoning. He has to be helped to see the relevance of the religious teaching in the text to real life situations.[40] Hence the need for teachers to have this objective in mind when teaching religion to Basotho children.

d) It can be expected that it cannot be easy, for many secondary school age children in Lesotho to see the underlying pattern in the textual material. They have to be shown, through gradual learning, that all narratives and events, as well as the different books of the sacred text are related to one another, that there is an underlying

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37 See page 125 - 126

38 McEachern,W. Reading Comprehension:A key to Christian Education.in: Religious Education Vol. 75 No.1 1980. pp. 70-75.

39 Ibid; and Van Jaarsveld,F. and Rademeyer, J. Theory and Method of Teaching History. Johannesburg. Voortrekkerspers. 1960.

40 See page 134

principle. For example: the Covenant in the Old Testament demands that the Israelites live according to the demands of the Covenant, otherwise things go wrong with them. Yet, since God is merciful, he eventually raises a deliverer. For this reason, this study suggests that teachers strive to make students attain <u>the ability to see the relationship between the different parts and events in the text</u>.

e) From what has been said about Lesotho's poor primary education and its effect on the mental development of the children,[41] and also, the influence of the initiation school with its emphasis on conformity, it seems very likely that emphasis on critical judgement and appreciation would be very necessary when teaching religion. Hence the need for <u>the ability to exercise critical thinking</u> in religious matters, and on religious writings.

ii) Objectives on the affective side:

When the religious nature of the discipline is considered[42] as well as the spiritual religious aspects of Sotho life, both in its traditional[43] and cultural dimensions,[44] it seems reasonable and appropriate that teachers in Lesotho should 'educate students in religious matters' and not merely 'teach them about religion'. This means that teachers should make it one of their objectives that students <u>be able to see the good in religion and in the values it embraces</u>. The latter need to be compared, and related, to the values of society.

These include moral values, an important aspect of all education.

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41 See page 134
42 See pages 123 - 126
43 See Part I of this study.
44 See pages 128 - 133

SUMMARY

The major and general aim of Religious Education, namely, education in religious matters, has been reduced to more specific objectives, mentioned under (i) a, b, c, d, e, and (ii) in this chapter. That is, to objectives which appear to suit the educational needs of Basotho children.

These objectives, which are purely educational in character, also provide a corrective measure for the sectarian tendencies inherited from the past that have their roots in the missionary period described in Part I of this study.

They form an introduction into a more descriptive, more objective approach to religious education, which, however, still retains the subjective element characteristic of the discipline.

CHAPTER 9

DEFENCE OF SELECTED AIMS

A. A Moderate phenomenological approach

i) It helps to avoid extremes:

In the previous chapter this approach to religious education at post primary school level was suggested together with a set of aims or objectives.[1] Such an approach implies an option for a middle course between two extremes: a too confessional approach on the one hand, and a stringent unaccommodating phenomenological one on the other.[2]

As generally understood, a phenomenological approach to the teaching of any school subject is a procedure through which the teacher helps the students to achieve knowledge by presenting the material as it appears in the texts. Philosophical phenomenology does however recognize the value and importance of the experience prior to the symbolic, written statements of the text.[3] Yet, as Van Kaam has noted, there is a tendency to exaggerate by over-emphasizing certain features of a phenomenological study at the expense of other values.[4]

For instance, an exclusively descriptive and objective study of religion is unsuitable, and undesirable, because it undermines the subjective, experiential element of religion. Ninian Smart refers to such an approach to religious education as educationally absurd.[5] He bases

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1 See Chapter 8. pp. 136 - 138

2 That which is exclusively objective and descriptive and discourages any reference to experiences and subjective elements.

3 Van Kaam, A. Existential Foundation of Psychology. New York. Image Books. 1966. pp 243 - 246

4 Ibid. pp. 95 - 98 and 243 - 246.

5 Quoted in Meakin, D. The Justification of Religious Education in: B.J.R.E. Vol.2 No.2 pp.49 - 55.

his argument on an analogy which he draws between teaching religious studies and teaching the history of philosophy. He asks us to consider the problem of teaching about the Philosophy of Plato. One approach would be simply to outline Plato's arguments and philosophical positions. This would be dull, says Smart, and undesirable educationally, for the student, to appreciate Plato's importance in the history of philosophy, must critically discuss the issues which Plato raised, and this is to go beyond the descriptive and into the substantive issues of philosophy itself. Likewise, for the pupil to appreciate the importance of religion to the culture in which it figures, he must weigh the claims and debate the question of its truth and acceptability, and this too, is to go beyond the descriptive. Without this, pupils will not fully understand the religion or appreciate its role in the culture.[6]

This study shares the view of both Ninian Smart and Meakin[7] on this point.

Many advocates of the phenomenological approach to any of the existing World Religions Syllabuses also regard the suspension of value judgement as necessary in this respect. This study sees such a requirement as one of those which need to be treated with moderation, for it involves some ambiguity. It can also result in much uneasiness, uncertainty, contradiction and conflict in the mind of the student. If education is concerned with values, and religion also has a value component, why should the student be told to suspend his value judgements? John Wilson[8] also questions this suspension of value judgements, and regards it as absurd.

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6 Meakin. D. (Ibid.)

7 Ibid.

8 Wilson, J. 'Education and Indoctrination' in: Aims of Education. J. Hollins, Ed. Manchester University Press. 1964. pp.30-31.

The children, says Wilson, are well aware of the prevailing views about religion, as well as about morality. One of their chief interests, he says, will be the extent to which some views are sensible. They want to know whether they should yield to social pressure or withstand it.[9] 'They do not want to be taken for a conducted tour round a world curiosity shop; they want to know whether any of the beliefs are true...'[10]

Thus the nature of religion, and the evaluative nature of education seem to rule out an exclusively descriptive and exclusively objective approach to religious education.

ii) It is a necessary modification:

It would be unwise and uneducational to introduce into any country something designed for a particular country and situation, without first examining, modifying and adapting it to meet the needs of the existing situation.

The World Religions Syllabuses mostly used in Britain and America, and their related phenomenological approach are curriculum developments designed to meet the needs of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and mostly secularist situation. Thus one of the major reasons for adopting a strict phenomenological approach to religious education in Britain is stated by British writers in this field, as to safeguard the freedom of unbelievers, and of secularist members of society. Thus although the phenomenological approach is recommendable, like any other procedure it is necessary that it be adapted to suit various situations.

Referring to education in general, Duminy stresses this

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9 Hollins, T. Ibid.
10 Ibid.

same view, namely, the peculiarity of situations, when he says that 'the specific social situation is very important in the study of the education of any cultural group.[11]

Parlett says that the first obligation with regard to innova..ons, alternative models or anything to do with curriculum development is to see whether these are applicable to situations as they actually exist. They should not be reviewed in isolation, but as interacting with their context.[12] Furthermore, Parlett supports what has been stated above when he s. s that any procedure, development or anything new to replace the old, in education, must not be introduced into other countries or situations without fir.t tracing the background, rationale, and history of the curriculum development or innovation, and how it is accepted and assessed in the countries of its origin.[13]

For these reasons, it seems necessary to discern, and not simply to apply any innovation or approach, as it is, in a country and situation not similar to the country and situation for which it was developed.

iii) It suits the existing learning milieu

The situation in Lesotho, described in the previous chapter, and also forecast in the historical background described in the first four chapters of this study, gives an idea of what the learning milieu shoul be like in the country, especially with regard to religious education.

A learning milieu has a special educational effect, which one needs to be aware of when considering new curriculum schemes. It is important to remember that learning is a highly complicated set of experiences, of which assimilating content is only part. Pupils respond

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11 Duminy, P. Ibid. p.25

12 Parlett, M. The New Evaluation, in:Trends in Education. July, 1974. pp. 14 - 15.

13 Ibid. p.16.

to a total learning milieu, Parlett continues.[14] For this reason, an innovatory scheme, or a new approach, does not exist in abstract. Its adoption entails its being absorbed into a pre-existing milieu or context. The scheme, procedure or approach interacts with the milieu. Pupils react to both together, and their educational experience will be affected by the whole, that is the total learning milieu. Any imbalance created by something in the innovatory scheme or approach can have an adverse effect on the pupils' learning. Hence the importance of a first hand knowledge of the situation concerned, and of modifying new procedures and approaches accordingly.

Hence the importance of a moderate phenomenological approach, that is, a descriptive study of religion that takes into account the subjective and experiential nature of the discipline, and also allows the use of discreet and constructive value judgements.

It is with such an approach in mind that the recommended aims, or objectives,[15] seem reasonable to pursue. As has been explained in the general introduction to this study the word 'aim' has more or less the same meaning as 'objective'. It is appropriate however to use 'objective' in this section, for it deals with instructional aims which are more specific.

B. A set of Objectives for religious education in Lesotho

I. The cognitive side

a) Knowledge of Facts:

A good knowledge of the facts in religious studies has always been taken for granted, and can be defended as follows:

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14 Parlett, M. Ibid. p.18.

15 See the first page of this chapter, first paragraph.

to a total learning milieu, Parlett continues.[14] For this reason, an innovatory scheme, or a new approach, does not exist in abstract. Its adoption entails its being absorbed into a pre-existing milieu or context. The scheme, procedure or approach interacts with the milieu. Pupils react to both together, and their educational experience will be affected by the whole, that is the total learning milieu. Any imbalance created by something in the innovatory scheme or approach can have an adverse effect on the pupils' learning. Hence the importance of a first hand knowledge of the situation concerned, and of modifying new procedures and approaches accordingly.

Hence the importance of a moderate phenomenological approach, that is, a descriptive study of religion that takes into account the subjective and experiential nature of the discipline, and also allows the use of discreet and constructive value judgements.

It is with such an approach in mind that the recommended aims, or objectives,[15] seem reasonable to pursue. As has been explained in the general introduction to this study the word 'aim' has more or less the same meaning as 'objective'. It is appropriate however to use 'objective' in this section, for it deals with instructional aims which are more specific.

B. <u>A set of Objectives for religious education in Lesotho</u>

I. The cognitive side

a) Knowledge of Facts:

A good knowledge of the facts in religious studies has always been taken for granted, and can be defended as follows:

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14 Parlett, M. Ibid. p.18.

15 See the first page of this chapter, first paragraph.

i) Necessary at secondary school level:
Apart from the fact that the history and narrative content in religious texts requires such knowledge at secondary school level, the facts serve as a basis for reflection and reasoning. Harold Loukes, writing on religious education at secondary school level, has stated that understanding and judgement arise from knowledge, that the facts, though not the end of the process, are the indispensable means, since what is not known cannot be understood.[16]

That Religious Education teachers in Lesotho need to ensure that knowledge and recall of facts is attained by the students is proved by several examiners' reports on Religious Knowledge.[17]

Teachers are reminded, in these reports on the general performance of students, that it is important that students have a good knowledge and understanding of the contents of the current syllabus.[18]

ii) A Biblical reason:
The words 'remember' and 'forget' used in connection with the content, occur quite often in the Bible, and possibly in all the texts of the most important World Religions. It is often stated, either explicitly or implicitly, that what is written should be retained in a person's memory, and have a meaning in his or her life. Thus the Israelites had to remember Yahweh's mighty deeds, and to recount them to succeeding generations. Above all, they had to remember the Covenant made with their God.

As a reasoned reflection on the Scripture content, theology uses the facts as a basis. It follows from

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16 Loukes, H. New Grounds in Religious Education, London. S.C.M. Press Ltd. 1965. p.48.

17 The subject as it is called in Lesotho, at post primary school level.

18 Examiners' Report on the Junior Certificate Religious Knowledge Exam.for 1977,1980,1983.

this that religious education, a study closely linked to theology, should also require a good knowledge of facts.

Besides, religious education presupposes that attention be given to the learning of the facts, since they constitute the events which contribute to religious experience. Hence the reason why prominent religious figures like Jesus and St. Paul often quote from, and refer to the events in the Old Testament, which they seem to have had at their finger tips.[19]

b) The ability to know the events in their chronological sequence:

i) Argument from reason:

From practical reason, we know that a person's present behaviour can be judged and assessed correctly, more or less, if his previous experience is considered. It is a usual and sensible practice to follow happenings in their sequence before pronouncing any judgement. Hence the importance of extenuating circumstances in criminal charges. The question: 'Why did you do that?' expects a reply stating what took place immediately before, and gave rise to the situation in question. All this applies, more or less, to religion studies. It is reasonable to note the experiences that have led people to believe; otherwise it would be easy to conclude that there are no grounds for belief.

It is likely that secondary school pupils in Lesotho have some difficulty in learning events in their sequence; at least a considerable number of them. For this reason, it is not only sensible, but desirable, that there be more emphasis on the chronological sequence, and its importance when teaching religion to Basotho students at this level. For instance, a research study has shown that Swazi students, who have the same Religious Knowledge syllabus as that currently used in Lesotho, and

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19 See Luke 4:25-27; John 3:14-15;Hebrews Chapters 3, 4 and 11.

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have more or less the same rural background as their Basotho counterparts, performed unsatisfactorily on questions on the New Testament chronology, in the test used for the resear h study.[20] A well known educator, one of the early missionaries, Mabille, has also described the Basotho students as lacking knowledge of biblical chronology. The reason for this, says Mabille, is because Sotho culture does not seem to lay much importance on chronological sequence, and on time sequence, or dates, when reporting events of the past.[21]

ii) From a biblical and theological perspective:

Apart from the fact that the historical and narrative nature of the discipline demands a chronological study of the events,[22] theology also seems to require some knowledge of chronology.

Apparently Jesus' teaching would not have made much impact if it was not believed to be that of the carpenter's son, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was with the Father before the world was made. Thus Christian education would be almost impossible if no notice was made of the preceding events. The same applies to the study of the other World Religions.

It is the awareness of the sequence of events in chronological order that will make students grasp the fact that the Bible is a gradual understanding of God's purpose, and of the kingdom it envisages. Thus the later books, like the parabolic story of the prophet Jonah can be compared, and contrasted on this issue with the Exodus and other earlier books. The student comes to realize, in this way, that the earlier books, even though put

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20 Dlamini, T. Ibid. p.50.

21 Smith, W. The Mabilles of Basutoland.1939.p.200

22 See Chapter 8. pp. 125 - 126

together at a later period in the history of the Jewish nation, reflect a primitive stage in the spiritual development of the people of Yahweh.

iii) From the psychology of learning:

Religious texts are mostly composed of various stories. The Bible, for instance, contains stories of God's intervention in the history of the Jewish nation. In any story, the reader is eager to know what follows after. This interest to know what succeeds has to be aroused, and encouraged, and developed because it acts as a stimulant in learning. To emphasize the need to know events in their chronological sequence thus helps to develop the student's interest in reading, so important in all spheres of learning.

This does not mean that the Scripture text has to be read page by page, always. There are several good approaches to the textual study, e.g. the theme method, and conceptual study. Whatever approach is used, the need to know the material in chronoligical sequence still helps in understanding the content.

The material learned in sequential order helps understanding in yet another way. What is already known forms a kind of experiential background for an effective learning of the succeeding material, or succeeding events.[23]

Developmental stages:

As the child moves into the age group between eleven and twelve (the beginning of secondary school education for many children in Lesotho, nowadays) his interest is in historical sequence and historical continuity, or development in stories.[24] It is appropriate, for this

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23 Mouly, G. Psychology for Effective Teaching New York. Rinehart & Winston. 1960. p.230.

24 Carter, G. Ibid. p.165.

reason, to teach, and to insist on chronology at this stage, for the children are ready for it. Between the ages of twelve and thirteen the historical milieu begins to capture the child's attention, and he shows interest in placing realistic details in their historical framework.[25] This is important for religious education, for what obtains in history study also obtains in religious education in this respect. By the ages of thirteen and fourteen the child is capable of appreciating the continuous development of one period of history, or of one historical figure, thus historical progress becomes his interest.[26] The beginning of historical interpretation, giving motives to past activities, comes between fourteen and fifteen, according to Carter.[27]

These developmental stages, especially the last two stages, may not correspond exactly with those of Basotho children due to their mental development problems mentioned in Chapter 8. Hence the urgent need for teachers to help students to achieve the ability to learn events in their chronological sequence, and thus promote a good understanding of history and narrative.

C. Awareness of the relevance of religious material to life experience:

i) Argument from educational Philosophy and Psychology:

Students have to be helped to see the relevance of everything they learn. This is linked with the concept as well as with the philosophy of education, treated briefly in Chapter 7, in the discussions on knowledge. There is general consensus that knowledge is largely, if not absolutely, dependent on what has been experienced. Thus religious education has to make

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25 Carter, G. Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.

sure that the student sees a connection between what he knows already, and what he reads in the text. Experience and previous knowledge lend meaning to new ideas; and meaningful material, according to scientific experiments, is forgotten at a far slower rate than meaningless material.[28] The intelligence grasps, and the mind retains what is worthwhile, and useful, much more than would be the case with something useless, or nonsensical. Hence the need to help students in their learning by stressing awareness of what is relevant, and of that which has little or no relevance.

From a psychological perspective, it is important to note that direct interest is aroused whenever the subject matter has some connection with the pupil's own life and experience. Hence the need to begin from the known to the unknown when teaching anything. Thus the reason why it is often feared, and pointed out, that school curriculums in typical African setting often present a contrast from the home environment. Hence the pedagogical revolution which insists that the content of school education be brought into relation with the child's environment.[29]

With regard to religious education, it is important to note that the culture of the religion studied may be different from the culture of the student. It is important, for this reason, to differentiate religious material in the text from purely cultural material. The latter will, in most cases, be irrelevant.

ii) The situation in Lesotho demands more emphasis on relevance:

It has been mentioned that Basotho children, or at least many of them, show some inability to think, due to their lack of a good, educationally enriching environment and

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28 Carter, G. Ibid. p.222.

29 Duminy, R. African Pupils and Teaching Them 1968. p.14.

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background. Hence the need to work towards this objective, namely, to see relevance, if there is any, in what they are learning, or reading about.

Otherwise, whatever is read has no meaning for them, and they cannot have any understanding of it. The ability to see whether there is any or no relevance in the material is even more necessary to have in religious studies, because a responsible choice for or against religion depends mostly on this ability. Hence the reason why many writers on religious education seem to emphasize the importance of the ability to see whether the material has relevance or none, more than any other objective.[30] This shows that the need to teach the awareness of relevance is felt in other countries as well.

When one considers the general situation in Third World countries, that is, the political, economic and the social conditions that have led to so much dependence on the First World countries, then it becomes easier for one to understand just how important it is to stress relevancy, not only in religious education, but in education in general, in such countries, which include Lesotho. Whatever comes from abroad, whether it be commodities, or views, or ideas, seems to be accepted, and adopted, without much scrutiny. For this reason, the question whether anything is relevant or not, will, more often than not, be ignored or overlooked. Hence the need to make students aware of the need to know whether anything is relevant or irrelevant, and of the difference it makes to life in general.

D. <u>The ability to see the relationship between the different parts and events in the texts:</u>

i) Argument from education:

Education is for wholeness; a fragmented experience often results in meaninglessness. The character of the whole, as the Gestalt and Field theories say, is decisive in

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30 Elizondo,V. <u>A Bicultural Approach</u> in Religious Education. Vol.76 No.3. pp.258-270
Fueter,P. <u>Teaching the Bible in School</u>. B.J.R.E. Vol. 2. No.1. pp.5-15.
Moran, G. (1966)

a learning experience. The whole is more than the sum total of the characteristics of the parts; that is, parts viewed separately, and as individual entities, cannot give the character of the whole.

Hence the need to treat the material as a whole, or at least to get the idea of the whole, in every kind of learning. Otherwise it would be impossible to grasp the underlying principle, which is most important in all fields of study. A principle has to be found, and grasped, to illuminate the facts.[31] Thus the facts are not regarded as isolated, but linked to produce a whole, and this facilitates insight.

ii) Argument from the nature of the discipline:

In Realms of Meaning, Phenix describes religion as 'concerned with ultimate meanings, that is, with meanings from any realm whatsoever, considered from the standpoint of such boundary concepts as the whole, the comprehensive, and the transcendent'.[32] The idea here is that religion, perhaps more than any other discipline, embraces all that can be imagined, and unifies it towards wholeness.

For instance, the Bible requires that the reader carries what is central in one narrative on to the next narrative. The idea, or the theme of a constant, faithful God on the one hand and his covenanted, unfaithful people on the other hand is, for example, a recurrent tale that links all the narratives and events together, to form a whole. This link is shown in St. Stephen's lengthy discourse in the book of the Acts.[33]

The Bible is a religious experience, a continuous revelation of God in the history of Israel. For this reason, it follows that the different events and narratives are

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31 Peters, R. Ibid. p.83

32 Phenix, P. Realms of Meaning. New York. McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1964. p. 5.

33 Acts. 7: 1-53.

connected, and related to form a unified experience of God's relationship with man, which can be summed up as God's readiness to forgive and deliver whenever man turns away from evil and repents.

iii) There is need to emphasize the importance of, and to ensure attainment of this ability in the teaching of religion in Lesotho:

The Lesotho-Swaziland Religious Knowledge Panel, at its annual meeting in Kwaluseni[34] has stressed, in its report, that teachers should make sure that pupils see the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some students, according to the report, seem to regard these texts as quite separate and unrelated.

This coincides with what Dlamini's research study has revealed, namely, that a third of the students apparently considered the Old Testament as totally unrelated to the New Testament, and that the latter was regarded as a succession of isolated events.[35]

In his recommendations, Dlamini included a suggestion that teachers see to it that students are able to see the underlying principle in the Scripture text, and to relate the different parts and accounts in the text.

E. <u>The ability to use critical thinking and judgement</u>:

i) A felt need:

Many writers recommend that education in general be characterized by the ability to think critically. Writers on religious education have also stressed the need to think critically with regard to religious matters.[36]

The influence of circumcision schools has been mentioned in Chapter 8. These traditional schools insist on

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34 Report of the Regional Panel Meeting, Kwaluseni. 1982. p.13.

35 Dlamini, T. Ibid. p.47.

36 Reuter, A. <u>Ideology, Criticism and Trust in Religious Education</u>.B.J.R.E. Vol.76.No.1 pp76-81
Goldman,R. <u>Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence</u>. London, Routledge. 1964.
Cox, E. Ibid. p.88

conformity, and the resultant gregarious instinct.[37] This has contributed, as Duminy has noted, to the making of individuals who can hardly stand outside the crowd and make their own personal judgement. [38]

Hence the kind of critical thinking needed for a Mosotho child at secondary school level is an ability to adopt a cautious questioning attitude whenever it is necessary to do so. It is the ability to ask: 'How do we know? What are the facts in this case? What are the reasons for coming to this conclusion?'

The ability to ask such questions will gradually enable the student to look at religion, at his traditional customs, and his fear of witchcraft from a different perspective.

ii) Argume[illegible] from education:

An educational [illegible]erion that rules out conditioning, brainwashing and, to some extent, indoctrination, implies on the contrary, the desirability of critical thinking. Any procedure which impinges on the student's freedom is, for that reason, also against critical thinking.

Yet education is opposed to stagnation. What it desires is that students be encouraged, and urged, to be somewhat critical in order to advance progress. Otherwise there would not be any further studies and research to add to, and to extend knowledge. Religion is not excluded from education's demand for critical appraisal. Its exclusion would result in an imbalance, which, gradually, would be reflected in people's personalities. Religious persons would be critical of everything except religion.

iii) Argument from theology:

Theology is a reasoned reflection on religion, and is the basis of religious education. Accordingly, religious

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37 Duminy. P. Ibid.

38 Ibid.

education must allow for, and encourage, critical thinking. Christian theology, says Reuter 'is externally critical (of the world and its understanding) and internally critical (of the necessity for demonstrating adequate grounds for the Christian faith).' [39]

Since it is concerned with realities that cannot be proved empirically, religious education requires the use of reason. Hence the reason why Biblical studies have, especially since the last century, used a critical approach. Part of the reason for this is because the Bible uses different literary styles, and genre, and is full of symbolic expressions. Hence the need for critical appreciation in Biblical studies.

(iv) Argument from the stage of development in adolescence:

The paucity of research studies in Lesotho makes it difficult to speak with certainty, especially with regard to developmental stages. Dlamini's study may not be very reliable, as such, nevertheless, it approximates the opinion of many people in its description of the attitude of adolescents towards religion. [40]

Dlamini's finding is that in all the four schools which participated in his research study, negative attitudes towards religion develop with increase in age. Thus at Junior Certificate level he found that one in every five students expressed objections to Religious Education. At Senior Certificate level the figure rose to one in every three.[41] This shows that even in partly traditional cultures as in Swaziland and Lesotho, the adolescent stage retains its characteristic feature: Adolescence is a stage of 'transition', and turmoil, since the adolescent is not a child and neither is he

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39 Reuter, A. Ibid.
40 Dlamini, T. Ibid.
41 Ibid. p.51

an adult. He craves for self control and tends to distrust authority, thus making it clear to everybody that he is no longer a child and wants to make his own decisions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the adolescent will want to question the authority of Christian teaching; that he will tend to dislike religious education if it fails to satisfy his demand for freedom of thought and action. Hence the need for encouraging critical thinking at this stage. One should also consider the concomitant intellectual development that takes place at this stage. The adolescent is capable of understanding religious tenets and teachings, and is also capable of rational interpretation.

Yet critical thinking and judgement does not mean that people, to be regarded as educated, have to be critical of everything. As Stephens has stated, one can, obviously, go too far in developing a critical attitude. He reminds that moderation is useful here as elsewhere.[42] An attitude that is too critical, especially in matters like religion, says Stephens, can be as dangerous as an uncritical attitude, for here we are not dealing with empirical certitudes. He reminds that there are, in life, matters of great moment, when a person must accept unquestioningly the sincerity of his loved ones, otherwise, that which is most basic in life, personal relationship, could be at stake. Religion, says Stephens, seems to be more like this side of life than the other, where strict verification is called for.[43] Hence the need to be moderately critical.

Good critical judgement is always constructive. Thus students should be able to make judgements about the content read when compared with external or internal criteria. The judgement can be based upon the student's prior knowledge, experience and values. Scripture material, as hinted earlier, contains much that students, especially adolescents, cannot take at face value.

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42 Stephens, M. The Psychology of Classroom Learning. New York. Rinehart & Winston. 1965. p. 187.

43 Ibid. p.188.

II. Objectives on the Affective side:

These objectives have been summarized in this study as follows:

> The ability to see the good in religion, and in the values it embraces.[44]

i) Argument from education

Religion is a worthwhile engagement or activity, and a serious one. For this reason it is part of education; and hence its place in the school curriculum.[45] The student should be made aware of that which is worthwhile in religious education, and this awareness involves something more than mere cognition. Peters draws attention to this affective element in education when he describes education as not inert. Anyone who has gone through the process of education, says Peters, must have an outlook transformed by what he knows.[46] It is not only knowledge, that counts, but the transformed outlook.[47]

Besides, the end product of any activity or process that can rightly be called 'education' has something moral that goes with it. Thus any education could be said to have a moral aspect built into it, and apart from which education is suspect. Hence the reason why Peters says that moral education is part and parcel of school education.[48] Even other disciplines and fields of learning, such as history, literature and social studies contain a moral message in one way or another.

ii) Argument from the nature of Religious Education

It was pointed out, in Chapter 6, that though religious education is not primarily concerned with moral behaviour,

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44 See Chapter 8. page 138
45 Peters, R. Ibid. pp 45 and 164.
46 Ibid. pp 30 - 31.
47 Ibid
48 Ibid pp. 202, 175, 287 - 288.

since morality is not its principal aim, religion and morality are so closely linked that moral education will, obviously, be included in religious education. In fact, religion forms a firm support for moral conduct.[49]

Thus, even more than any other discipline apart from Moral Education, religion includes a moral message and teaching in its content. This is not surprising because religion is basically a response to a supernatural transcendent reality that has been experienced, and part of this response is shown in good behaviour. Besides, religion, perhaps more than any other discipline, involves feelings and emotions. Hence the need for affective learning, which also contributes toward understanding. In fact, both religion and education regard moral education as involving knowledge about and respect for the human person.

iii) Moral behaviour and good conduct, as a secondary objective in Religious Education, is commendable depending on the kind of approach used:

This study, for example, recommends the use of educational encounters in such education. These educational encounters, or opportunities, are for making students think, reflect and decide for themselves on moral questions, and in situations that are challenging. Students are exposed to a situation or made to experience something that is supposed to affect their feelings and emotions, but left free to express their feelings about it, and what they think should be done about it. Thus an educational encounter may be some work to be done, or a life problem which needs some solution.[50]

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49 See Chapter 6 pages 90 - 92, 103.

50 Eisner, E. Instructional Expressive Objectives: their formulations and use in Curriculum in: Instructional Objectives. J. Popham et al. Ed. Chicago. Rand McNally. 1969. p.16, and

Corbishley, T. The Prayer of Jesus. Oxford. Mobray & Co. pp. 88 - 89. and

Garrison, E. et al. Ibid. Chap. 9.

For instance, it is almost impossible to teach, effectively, that 'it is a blessing to be merciful and to be a peacemaker.'[51] Jesus made the teaching easier by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, thus describing an educational encounter parabolically. This proves that experience is the best teacher, for it was only after visualizing the experience in his mind that the lawyer could say which of the three men in the parable was a brother to the man laying half dead on the road.[52]

Similarly, an occasional visit in a casualty ward of a nearby hospital would give students a clearer idea of the evil caused by violence. Exposure to unpleasant and saddening sights such as refugee camps, or the plight of half-starved children reared in slum areas often evokes pity and a desire to help in one way or another. Writing on this theme, Martin Hoffman says: "It follows that socialization that allows children to experience a variety of emotions, rather than protecting them from these emotions, will increase the likelihood of their being able to empathize with different emotions. That is, it will expand their empathic range."[53] This is the basis of character formation which, in turn, promotes friendly relations with other people, and a desire to alleviate, rather than cause or increase suffering. Thus the student, when he or she sees gratitude in the tear-filled eyes of a person to whom he has given some help, or sympathized with, will feel rewarded, and encouraged to be kind to other people always.

Besides, teenagers have first to learn, either through a real experience or by some educational encounter arranged by the teacher, that there are many things that money cannot buy, before they can be expected to grasp the feeling and the spirit behind the words of Scripture or of any religious text.

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51 Matthew 5: 1-10.

52 Luke 10: 29-37.

53 Hoffman, M. Development of Prosocial Motivation: Empathy and Guilt in: Psychology and Religion. M.Gorman. Ed. New York. Paulist Press. 1985 p.281.

iv) Argument from Sotho Social Context

Many social values among the Basotho, like strong family ties, the extended family, team work, peace and friendly relations among villagers and outsiders, welcome to strangers and sojourners, kindness, open-handedness and mercy, coincide with what is fundamental in religion, such as brotherly love in Christianity. Sotho society in accordance with the predominantly practical character of the traditional initiation school[54] expects all education, and religious education in particular, to have a noticeable practical aspect. A few years ago, a complaint was voiced that people were becoming more and more aware of the fact that religious education in the country may have produced a certain academic knowledge of the Bible, but that there was little evidence that this knowledge is related by the students to their own lives and behaviour.[55]

This shows that in Lesotho one should not overlook the moral education aspect in religious education.

However, as shown in Chapter 6, it must be borne in mind that morality is not the principal aim of religious education.

v) Affective Objectives and Evaluation

As in all other disciplines, affective objectives are not assessable like the other, cognitive objectives. Though they do not form part of the examination material, they are part and parcel of education. They are involved in character formation, and, obviously, a person's character cannot be tested accurately with empirical measurements.

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54 See Chapter 8 page 133

55 Sr. Joan Wagner's Report from Ministry of Education at a teachers' meeting in June, 1984.

They are, however, more in keeping with the nature of religion, which also cannot be empirically tested, for it is concerned with spiritual realities more than with anything else.

It is only in a person's way of life and moral conduct that the result of his or her learning can be observed, especially when compared with people who have not had the same kind of education.

CHAPTER 10

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The need for trained teachers:

The need for trained teachers of religion was touched on in Chapter 8.

The National Teacher Training Centre (N.T.T.C.) as well as the National University of Lesotho provide for teacher training in Religious Education. There is however, a shortage of trained teachers owing to the growth of the school population, which greatly outbalances the training centres output. This is a problem that is not easy to solve. Rather than employing unqualified teachers, it is advisable to have teachers with a required minimum of general knowledge but have specialized in teaching religion. This would produce more teachers in a shorter period, than the current programme which is rather more generalized than specialized.

A good training in the teaching of religion must emphasize the knowledge of religion in its widest sense; that is, it must include the world religions, especially the most important ones, in its programme, as well as some knowledge of the African Independent Churches which have more members in Southern Africa than any of the Christian churches. This provides for a wider perspective. Thus one of the reasons for opting for an approach which recognizes the value of phenomenology in religious education. Students have to know, not only that Christianity embraces all church denominations, but also that religion embraces other religions apart from Christianity. This widens the mind, and allows more scope to freedom in religious matters.

If religious education is to be more situational, and more educational, at least some of the most salient features of religion have to be related to the culture of the people.

Sotho traditional culture should be made to bear on religious education. This cannot be achieved if it is not taken note of in teacher training. Unless this is taken seriously, there will always be a demarcation between Sotho culture and Christianity. It has been remarked that more often than not, the home culture and the school culture is not easy to bridge among Africans, including the Basotho. For this reason, the student teacher needs to be constantly reminded, in the course of his studies and training, of the culture of the people he will help educate, and of the relationship between this culture and the particular religion or religions to be taught. This helps the student teacher, and also those he will teach, to gain more insight into certain aspects of religion.

A well trained teacher knows the importance of the child's environment, of his home background and of the social situation to his education. In a geography lesson a nearby mountain is used to explain and to illustrate what is meant by topography, and by geographical features. In the same way, circumcision in the Bible should not be taught without referring to the traditional circumcision school, an important, if not the most important feature of Sotho culture. Anything in Islam or Hinduism that resembles, or is similar to the culture of the student in some respect should be taken note of. This will enable the student to see that the content of religion includes certain cultural and anthropological elements. The student will also find it helpful and interesting to compare the spiritual beliefs in his culture with those of the major world religions. This will help deepen the student's understanding of 'religion'.

2. The Syllabus Content:

Since education involves the transmission of that which is worth knowing, and because learning becomes much easier when that which is to be learned is relevant, there has to be a selection of the syllabus content in religion as well as in other school subjects. What is relevant, and worth knowing, is, in nearly all cases, that which is central in any field of learning. Relevant material is also that which the learner needs to know. Hence the importance of selection.

What is most important in religion is the history component, the symbols, the experiences and the faith component. The textual narratives to be selected are those that express the relevant material and concepts in the best possible way found in the text. Items and key ideas that are particularly representative of the text as a whole should be chosen.

The situation in Lesotho, where a great majority of the people are Christians, makes the study of the Bible text most relevant. It would be absurd to replace the Bible with the Koran, or to give equal emphasis to both. This is a question of relevancy.

Hence the suggestion that a good selection of the Scripture passages from the different books of the Old and the New Testament be made, since a secondary school pupil cannot be expected to know the whole Bible. The same applies to the other world religions. The most relevant, and the most representative material that can provide a good, basic knowledge of the religions should be selected to form another section of the syllabus.

A good selection does not distort the orderly arrangement of the material in the text. The historical development of the concepts becomes obvious if the selection made does not obscure the chronological sequence of religious experiences, but keeps to the process of ideas and events followed by the respective narrators.

A good, appropriate selection of the text material suited to the mental age group is as important in religious education as in any other subject in the school curriculum.

Certain traditional activities and customs of the Basotho have a religious significance.[1] It would help develop the idea of religion if these aspects of Sotho culture were included in the syllabus. This is not in conflict with acculturation of the Gospel, to which much importance is given recently in theological discussions and debates. It is also in line with education's insistence on relevance, which is essential for effective learning.

3. Approach to religious education:

Much depends on the approach the teacher takes to his subject material. If religious education, as the first four chapters of this study have tried to illustrate, is more of an evangelizing enterprise than educational, there is the danger of infringing on the student's freedom of choice. Examples of some secularist ideas in Chapters 7 and 9 have shown what could turn out to be another extreme, a phenomenology aimed at stripping religious education of its religious element.

Religious education can be compared to a teaching of a poem, and should be approached as a poem. It requires objectivity plus a certain amount of subjective feeling. Otherwise it loses that which is religion, or poetic, in it. There must be a concern for allowing students their freedom in religious matters, but this should not be done at the expense of religion.

Peters[2] summarizes this clearly when he states that a teacher is not employed as a missionary for any church or religion. He comes into a religion class with the

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1 See Chapter 8

2 Peters, R. S. Ethics and Education, p. 203.

independent feelings and judgement that his profession demands. It is not his duty to convert students to any religion, but to initiate them into the skills and attitudes necessary for discernment in matters of religion. His main endeavour should be the deepening and informing of a religious consciousness. A teacher of religion must have a favourable attitude toward religion, and has to approach religious education accordingly. An atheist or an agnostic can hardly have the right approach. "Obviously he cannot teach religion as religion if he is unfamiliar with or antipathetic to the form of awareness on which it is based."[3]

While presenting the material phenomenologically, the teacher's sense of wonder, and sense of beauty, and his knowledge of and sense of values, are not suppressed. He points out what deserves attention and reflection; he also points out what is of less value, and what he thinks can be ignored without losing anything. This he does without imposing his views on the students or sounding as if what he says has to be right. He encourages a sense of beauty, recognises virtue and greatness, but leaves the learner free to use his or her own judgement, and to reach his or her conclusions. While refraining from defending any doctrine, or dogma, like a good teacher of literature he appreciates, evaluates and criticises the material according to its quality, aware, at the same time, that religion is full of symbolic presentations.

While bias and unconstructive criticism should be checked by all means when studying any of the world religions, the suspension of value judgements, which some phenomenologists seem to regard as a criterion

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3 Peters, R. S. Ibid.

in the study of world religions, can be ignored. A phenomenological approach, because it allows for objectivity and is descriptive in nature, is more in line with education's criterion of non-coercive procedures; herein lies its value. An ideal approach for religious education in Lesotho is that which can reconcile a phenomenological and a subjective, experiential way of approach. [4]

Teenagers are not satisfied by a strictly descriptive phenomenological approach in religious education because they have reached that stage in life when one is curious to know whether a belief has any foundation, or is just a myth. They are no longer fascinated by anything that has the semblance of a fairy tale. They want to know, despite the fact that in religion there are no clear-cut true or false answers; whether there is, in religion, anything worth giving a second thought. [5] This presents a difficult task for the teacher for he must have the necessary discretion when dealing with any of the world religions, and consider the feelings of all the students in the class.

It would be more helpful, and easier, if teachers in Lesotho put more emphasis on the similarities between the different religions. If any religion has all that is necessary to make it a religion, it is similar, in certain basic respects, with all other religions. Hence the definition of a religion as a response to a supernatural being regarded as sacred, holy. [6] Such a response

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4 Surin, K. Can the Experiential and the Phenomenological Approaches be reconciled, in: B.J.R.E. Vol. 2 No. 3 pp. 99 - 103

Hoffman, N. Ibid.

5 Peters, R. Ibid. p.203.

6 The fact that Buddha in his opposition to Hindu metaphysics did not share this belief must not obscure the fact that later forms of Buddhism, e.g. Mahāyāna Buddhism in particular, show in actual practice that they have restored this belief in the existence of supernatural powers to whom worship must be offered.

involves organized worship and the use of symbols, and is often inspired by certain experiences. The emphasis on similarities will, by itself, highlight the differences in the student's mind. He will then find it easy to compare religions on his own, with very little help, and will be able to make his own conclusions with regard to the differences, as to which are more likely, and more tenable. This is precisely what the teenagers, or at least most of them, want to know with regard to religion.

Students must feel free to choose or not to choose religion, even in a predominantly Christian country like Lesotho. The teacher of religion has the major task to safeguard this freedom. Freedom is a criterion in education, as shown in Chapter 7. In fact, one of the reasons for teaching religion - that is for religious <u>education</u> at secondary and high school levels- is to enable the teenager to reflect upon, and to examine the belief that may have been inherited from parents, and see whether the religion handed down to him is something that he can accept consciously and of his own free will, now that he has reached the age when he can exercise his own free will in religious matters. For this reason, the presentation of the religious material must be as objective as possible so as to increase the chances of individual freedom. The student must not feel that he has to accept the teacher's subjective feelings or statements. Hence the importance of an objective approach. Yet we cannot, realistically, speak of an exclusively objective approach in religious matters. It must be borne in mind that religion involves a very strong subjective element which cannot, and should not be suppressed altogether. This subjective element, which gives rise to subjective feelings, has an important role to play in the learning process. If it were not so then students would never get an opportunity to disagree with the teacher's views. They would hardly get a chance to exercise their critical judgement. To forbid any trace

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of subjectivity in religion for the sake of ensuring the freedom of the students is self defeating because it undermines, and underestimates the student's ability to think and to reason for himself. This reminder does not, however, diminish, in any way, the need for an objective approach in religious education.

4. Education and relation to life;

In Chapter 6 of this study an attempt was made to investigate, and finally dismiss the claim, or the idea, that religious education is primarily aimed at teaching moral behaviour. Yet religion is closely related to morality. As in teaching literature, the teacher should be aware that the Scripture text contains a lot of moral teaching, and, as in teaching literature, he cannot avoid landing in moral problems and explanations in the course of his lesson. Incidentally, the secondary and high school teenager is very interested in moral issues and questions. Hence the importance of relating religious education to life situation.

It is only when the student is really sure that his freedom is respected that he can study religion and all its symbols, and all its moral teachings, without prejudice. There is much that can be learned in religion apart from its beliefs. Hence the reason why even Mahatma Gandhi, a staunch Hindu, could say that he loves Jesus Christ, but not Christianity.

Religion and many of its symbols and experiences involve moral issues which can be related to life situations. Good teaching imparts knowledge that is understandable - understandable because it is tied up with what has been experienced. It is for this reason that mention has been made in Chapter 9 of this study, of <u>educational encounters</u>, especially with regard to religious education in Lesotho, where there is so much demand and clamour for an education that is related to life, like the traditional circumcision school,whose training is totally related to practical life situations. Obviously, it is the moral,

the fellow-feeling examples in religion, and not the beliefs and the doctrines, and the dogmas, that can be educationally and profitably related to life situations and experiences. Hence the following recommendations:

Direct experience: This is important in character formation as well as in all spheres of education. This is seeing reality as it is in various situations. It includes voluntary visits to the suffering, deeds of charity and mercy, taking part in community development projects, and communal work of various kinds. These can be done either before or after the relevant teaching, or lesson, according to the teacher's choice. The most important aspect of these direct educational experiences are the discussions which must follow the experience. In these discussions the students are allowed to be free to express their impressions and feelings. It is through such encounters with reality that the student can judge whether any teaching in the Scriptures is relevant or irrelevant, and why.

Contrived experience: This can be provided through games which are directed to some Christian principle and then explained to the pupils after the game. The teacher has, as in the above example, to see to it that there is time for discussion and for reflection after the game.

Dramatised experience: By pretending to be someone, an actor gets into the world of the person acted. He becomes involved in the plot; this helps him gain more understanding. It is also therapaedic, for by it the student is enabled to express his own feelings through the medium of drama. Besides, drama stimulates co-operation among students and also develops friendship instincts.

As said before, all depends on the amount of freedom the students enjoy during classes. There should be no authoritarian attitude in teaching. On the contrary, there must be an atmosphere of freedom so that the students are able to abandon all prior negative ideas and attitudes

towards religion, and can examine the symbols and assess the moral teaching without prejudice. In this way, the symbols and the moral teaching will stand or fall on the basis of an honest, informed examination and testing by the students. If religion does have anything to offer to the modern age, whether it is an intellectual, spiritual or emotional perspective, the student must be able to discover it for himself in personal confrontation with the text and its relation to lived experience.

5. The character of the Religious Education teacher:

Martin Buber[7] has stated that for educating character, which is involved in religious education, and in education in general, we do not need to be moral geniuses, but that we need a man or woman who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself or herself directly to his or her fellow beings. The aliveness streams out to the students and influences them most strongly and purely when the teacher has no thought of affecting them.[8] A teacher of religion is dynamic in his presentation, and alert to the feelings of his students. He resolves conflicts among students peacefully but without resorting to compromise.

Confidence in the teacher is important but it is not won by strenuous endeavour to win it, but by direct and ingenuous participation in the life of the people one is working among - in this case in the life of one's pupils, and by assuming the responsibility which arises from such participation.

The teacher must be of a character respectable enough to win the confidence of the students. They will, naturally, look to him for supportive, courageous conduct, since they are exposed to an education whose moral ideals, though they agree with some of the values encouraged in

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7 Buber, M. The Education of Character in: Modern Philosophies of Education by John Paul Strain. (Ed) New York, Random House. 1971.

8 Ibid.

their society, ar , not easy to attain.

What is put forward here is that, psychologically speaking, some kind of identification has to take place between teacher and pupil so that the pupil takes into himself the values of the teacher. He must come to feel that what is being studied is important and that it matters whether the appropriate, socially accepted standards are attained. This is facilitated by the personality of the teacher, and the tone of the school.

The serious, and often boring, Scripture text can be given a little gaiety and liveliness by the teacher's sense of humour. Jesus' sense of humour is evident behind the seriousness of the sacred writ:g of the narrator - Jesus was a good teacher. Apart from encouraging a feeling of freedom, humour is a great catalyst in a classroom, for if people can laugh together, they step out of their age, sex, belief and position categories and become unified. They feel that they are participants in a shared enterprise rather than spectators at a demonstration.

6. Examinations:

Though necessary to maintain standards, and, as in Lesotho, to give Religious Education the serious attention it had lost, examinations tend to restrict some teachers, hindering initiative.

Typically, the objectives will include the acquisition of knowledge. They may also include the elimination of undesirable elements of thinking, such as misconceptions, and inaccurate or erroneous information. Thus some objectives or goals can be tested and assessed in the examination.

Examinations should help to remind the teacher of what his students should know. They are not to restrict the teacher for he often knows best what his pupils need. Any teacher intends his teachin to effect a change in his students. This change may be new ways of thinking and feeling about the facts which comprise a unit topic.

It may be new ways of acting; for instance, the teacher may decide that an important outcome of his lesson is that the students learn to act in more desirable ways toward the poor, or toward minority groups, or people disadvantaged in one way or another. The outcome may also be the ability to accept success or defeat respectably without losing one's head. All such outcomes are not easy to evaluate or assess empirically.

Teachers should not exclude the untestable aims or objectives from their teaching. This would be uneducational; education is for the whole person. Hence, examinations, especially if they tend to focus only on factual knowledge, should not be taken as the only guide for knowing what, and what not, to teach. Examinations are not the aim of religious education.

It is hoped that the time will soon come when many religious education teachers in Lesotho will have reached such professional level and the necessary responsibility with regard to the teaching of religion, as will make external examinations unnecessary.

Till then, this study advises that examinations emphasize not factual knowledge only, but ensure that the necessary knowledge and understanding has been attained by including all the other contributing, testable objectives suggested in Chapters 8 and 9 of this study. To teach, and to test, only one objective - factual knowledge - is crippling. This encourages memorization, and does not help insightful learning.

Facts are important, and a certain amount of memorization is necessary. However, facts as such are not as important as their meaningful coherence in a broader context. This entails learning with insight. The teacher who has mastery of his subject content, and only uses the textbook for the sake of his students, to train them in the use of it, will help students to attain the all important independence of thought, towards which all education is directed.

7. A Pluralistic view:

Teachers must always remember that there is nothing to lose by being broadminded and accepting a diversity of opinions, especially in matters like religion.

The early missionaries in Lesotho were great pioneers and have been very successful in many ways. This can be proved, among other achievements, by Lesotho's progress in education, which still bears the stamp of those early pioneers. Yet they attained very little, or nothing, by their sectarian methods, and sectarian views. These only led to a considerable confusion about the aims of religious education in the succeeding years.

The teacher of religion should encourage the spirit of unity. It is unthinkable that any teacher, in this age, would waste precious time in defending sectarian dogmas, and doctrines, when the most important question, all over the world, concerns the claims of religion, and not so much of this or that church denomination. There has been a great change in religious views since the time of the early missionaries. This change has to be reflected in the attitude of the teacher of religion, and in the approach to religious education.

A not too doctrinal, but educationally acceptable confessional approach is allowed only on two conditions that have been either explicitly or implicitly expressed in this study: It must be prompted by the needs of the prevailing situation, for example, in predominantly Christian countries, and where Christian religious instruction has, most of the time, been so sectarian there is reasonable fear that Christianity, as such, in its essential nature, has not been taught adequately.

Almost all teachers of religion in Lesotho are committed Christians; this is natural and normal, in a predominantly Christian country. A committed teacher is to be preferred to one whose views on religious matters are very neutral.

This is the same for all school subjects. Commitment does not necessarily imply a conversion aimed approach to religious education. A committed teacher must always remember that his teaching profession demands that he treats the syllabus content of any subject he teaches much more objectively than subjectively. His church affiliation, or membership, must not determine the way he presents Christianity in the classroom. The pupils should know much more about Jesus Christ and less about the teacher's denominational beliefs, which very often are not included in the syllabus. This will make it much easier for students of all denominations to study religion relaxed and with interest. The same consideration must be shown to the Indian minority group. These students will be edified when they see their religion treated with due respect and with real interest in a predominantly Christian country.

In the context of Lesotho, and according to the approach recommended in this study, that is, a mid-way between two extremes, the decidedly confessional and the strictly phenomenological approaches, the teacher presents the Christian religion and its belief the way it is stated in the Scripture text. He shows the foundations of this belief; he draws the students' attention to Jesus Christ and what he stood for; he admires what is admirable in him, and in his teachings. This is a descriptive way of teaching which also uses value judgement. The other religions are treated in the same way. Christianity, being by far the most important religion in the country forms the major part of the syllabus.

The world religions are introduced into the existing Christian syllabus on educational grounds, so that students may know more about them and compare them with their own religion. The reason for introducing them is not that the Christian child should begin to doubt, and abandon the Christian faith. The student is only being given scope to widen his horizon on religion.

Yet he is a free person. He can review his belief in the light of new perspectives, or correct his misconceptions. This is a personal area and does not concern the teacher.

On the other hand, the student may feel, after comparing the world religions, that he is drawn more closely toward Christianity than ever before. This is also a personal matter which does not concern the teacher. It is desirable that the student recognises the fact that religion has plural interpretations, that his own religion is not the only religion in the world. The teacher, as one who educates, attempts to create unity in diversity.

A value system is inherent in every religious tradition. This will become familiar to the student who studies religion. When students have become acquainted with the values and mores of other religions they will be able to decide for themselves whether they have found anything that is worth introducing into their own lives.

If we are to enter, as we should, upon a new qualitative phase of religious educational development in Lesotho, we must seek ways less narrow, less sectarian, less backward looking. Until those involved in religious education learn to think and act wholistically; until they acquire sufficient humility to accept the guidance of past experience and accept the new influences that are steadily encroaching into the life of society, Religious Education in Lesotho will, before long, find itself speaking a different language from that of the people.

Hence the need for religion to be taught in a non-doctrinal manner, but nevertheless reveal the subjective, experiental quality of religious life.

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Author Ramahadi E D
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