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ENDANGERED MAN
AND THE SOLUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EDUCATION*

In this paper we are going to deal with a number of concepts and problems: endangered man and the Christian solution – from the viewpoint of education. The theme in its entirety is qualified by the contextual approach from the educational angle. The paper will thus deal specifically with those aspects of great significance for the science and practice of education.

1. Conceptual delimitations

1.1 Endangered man

That man is endangered has been a current truth for all centuries, as the threats confronting man had their roots in the fall of man in Paradise. Through sin, evil entered creation and will persist until the last day. But God has also called upon his chosen to combat evil and thus also the threats.

Man is threatened on all levels of existence: his physical survival – through disease, pollution, famine and terrorism; but also psychologically and spiritually – by mental disorders, ideologies, “evil spirits”. And because man is a transcendental being, the battle for his soul contains the strongest threat.

Endangered man is, generally, the prey of Satan, and would be totally vulnerable without God’s great mercy. For the purpose of this paper I want to be more specific and define “man” as the South African, and in some cases more particularly the Christian Afrikaner, as this is the subject taught by the teacher of the Christian faith trained by us at the PU for CHE.

1.2 The solution of the Christian

A catalogue of threats is neither possible nor desirable, as that would im-

* Translation from the original Afrikaans lecture.

ply the provision of survival recipes. On the other hand all aspects of the threat to man are presently of significance, as these all implicate both the science and the process of education: the child in the totality of its being is the object of these two fields, and the Christian parent and Christian teacher have to reply to the threats and educate the child to assume a responsible and viable position.

The reply or solution of the Christian in this respect is that of the parent as primary educator, but specifically the reply of the teacher, as educationist and professional educator.

However significant the threats on the level of physical survival might be, the greatest threat is to be found on the level of man's soul and spirit. It is in this field where Education can make its greatest contribution in the identification of threats to the world view we hold and in creating a viable response in our youth. The threats will be approached from two angles, viz. of world view and of the educational, social and cultural spheres.

2. Threats based on world view

2.1 Materialism

The West has become to a large extent the exponent of the free, democratic civilization and as such has become the example since the middle of this century also as regards education and teaching. World views have crossed international frontiers and in this fashion materialism has become rooted in South Africa too. Duvenage (IAC Study no. 34) claims that in the "American Way of Life" stress is laid on a pragmatistic, materialistic oriented striving for efficiency, utility, progress and equality. This approach has, since the Russian Sputnik in 1957, been disseminated also in education, where stress has since been laid on the pragmatic, on knowledge for the sake of knowledge, and progress.

According to Christopher Dawson (1962, pp. 32-33) powers in Western civilization nowadays are shaped more by the dollar sign than by the Cross. The way in which moral values are at present being stretched in the international political game in personal interests is felt particularly keenly by South Africa. Justice is not just any more meted out according to moral standards but according to what is most lucrative — be it oil or potential markets.

2.2 Humanism

For the humanist man occupies the centre. An exaggerated vision of freedom and the right of the individual engenders the fact that man is put on a pedestal. Add to this the smugness of the miracle man of the technological age (Viljoen, 1973, p. 19), his “natural sinless state”, his “inherent goodness”, and it becomes clear that this man, who has declared God dead along with Nietzsche, does not need God any more. Sometimes Humanism presents itself subtly clothed in Christianity in its absolutization of man (Duvenage, IAC, No. 34). The World Council of Churches is a good example of this; “Social Gospel” has replaced real religion, because Humanism places man at the core. This is the great danger of Humanism: it subtly disengages man from God – the “adult”, emancipated individual is so flattered that in his idolization of the self he does not need God any more.

2.3 Communism

Of the Communist one can at least say that one always knows where one stands with him (Krasnopevtsev & Pimenov, 1970/71, p. 92):

“We orient the Komsomol activists toward incisive, energetic, and emotional propaganda and toward the explaining of the Leninist thesis that the notion of God has always dulled and blunted the social feelings of the individual and has substituted decay for life. Religious morality is the morality of the weak. It is a morality oriented toward conciliation, meekness, and all-forgiveness, and therefore it is a morality which debases human dignity and dulls its most important aspect – its creative foundation. This is our most important, guiding principle in our work, and we constantly emphasize the passivity of the religious moral ideal”.

“In all our atheistic propaganda and in all our ideological work, we strive to indoctrinate every young boy and girl in the spirit of our communist world view” (p. 93).

Communism is always revolutionary. They recognise only two kinds of people: those who exploit their fellowmen, and those who are exploited. In its strategy of revolution Communism accentuates each element which might promote the polarising of exploited and exploiter. The revolutionary anarchy resulting from this is exploited by Communism for its own purposes. Ultimately Communism then dissolves all dividing lines among people: nationality, race, ability and intelligence (De Villiers, 1976, p.24), and the diversity of created reality is negated to allow ultimately only of an anonymous mass obedient only to Communism.

2.4 Liberalism (and Internationalism)

Liberalism, with its absolutization of human freedom, has a long history and various accents can be distinguished in this field of thought which then links up with other philosophies such as Humanism, Communism, Existentialism and Neo-Marxism. The Liberalist regards the total sovereignty of the individual as of crucial significance. For the application of this philosophy it is essential that all men be made equal – diversity has to be eliminated. Minority groups, such as the whites in South Africa, have to be sacrificed to attain the ideal of Liberalism.

Meyer (1968, p. 19) discusses the progression of dechristianization and says that “the third phase of the dechristianization of Western man amounts to his being uprooted from family, nation and country; from his traditions, the norms contained in his confession of faith – all this is demanded to act as basis for the establishment of an integrated spiritual world unity...”. It starts with Humanism, goes on to Communism and ultimately goes on to the logical conclusion of international Liberalism.

Goetzee (1973) declares that Liberalism, with its stress on absolute freedom for the individual, manifests itself on many fronts. Man, come of age, does not need God any more; the “dignity” of man supposes a horizontalism with a horizontal dimension. The negation of national differences leads to internationalism, the ideal of a great cosmopolitan state with cosmopolitan citizens. In our age the absolutization of man’s freedom manifests itself in total permissiveness – each individual has the right of choice to what he wants to do. Christian principles, norms and values have no place left in art, literature, and other fields; immorality is revealed in a blunting of conscience; that which is sinful is condoned as entertainment for “adults”.

Liberalism, which at present is manifesting itself strongly as internationalism (specifically of the American brand), has exacted a heavy toll from South Africa too. It would seem as if the West, in an overcompensatory spirit of committed war crimes of the past and a history of imperialism now strives to rid itself of a guilt complex and seems to need a scapegoat. A new ideological imperialism means that South Africa has to carry the burden of the sick conscience of the West.

2.5 Existentialism, Horizontalism and Secularism

Duvenage (IAC No. 34) declares that the revolution of the twentieth century was instigated by the philosophy of Existentialism which, in its atheist form, prepared the way for secularism with nihilism and totalitarian-

ism as its concomitants. Existentialism, focussing as it does on man's earthly existence, has uprooted man and left him high and dry, feeling threatened and anxiety-ridden in this world. The order of God's creation evades him. He has not been placed in a specific environment and situation by God – rather does he feel himself washed up on an alien shore. It is thus no wonder that he feels a need for a "Social Gospel" which preaches socialist horizontalism.

Existentialist individualism was initiated by the philosophical writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Herbert Marcuse. The political resistance emanating from these philosophies is exploited fully by the communists for their own purposes (Botha, OCA 68). Botha stresses Christopher Dawson's analysis of the crisis of Western civilization in which he distinguishes two tendencies: A totalitarian type of revolutionary ideology (Communism and Neo-Marxism) and the liberalist form of dechristianization. It is to the latter specifically that existentialism contributes. In many Afrikaans writers' work the existentialist vision is exemplified: read Brink, Leroux and Breytenbach to get to know man in his forlornness, his self-determination and his quest for real meaning in existence (Duvenage, IAC, 34).

This view of life has infiltrated South African national life and is also undermining South African youth. It is subtly aided by the gap between the Christian world view and the neutral view of life (Botha, IAC 68). Add to this the tremendous influence of modern technology and the result is man bound by a temporal ("diesseitige") existence. I would suggest also that existentialist influences can be discerned in educational theory in South Africa. Man who has declared himself emancipated from God is horizontalized and secularized man. Kroeze (1979, p. 208) warns against this when he points out that the continuing process of world uniformity has become very insistent today.

2.6 Neo-Marxism and the New Left

The New Left is the exponent of the new revolution and aims at the total disintegration of Western Culture; it would subjugate the existing democratic structure and substitute for it a perfect society in which the individual is absolutely free (De Villiers, 1976, pp. 103-5).

Neo-Marxism to a large extent can be seen as being similar to the fundamental religious pattern of Humanism. This also emerges in the educational theory of Neo-Marxism: education aimed at achieving an emancipated personality, critical rationality, liberation from norms and religious convictions,

from achievement and authoritarian education, education towards resistance to the State and to sexual freedom (Van Wyk, 1973).

The New Left, as a carrier of Permissive Liberalism, concentrates on moral degeneration, exploitation of sex, especially by means of pornography, and an undermining of authority. This new revolution is directed particularly at the young and at intellectuals as agents (Viljoen, 1973, p. 19). To achieve their goal, Neo-Marxists use music and art in particular. The extent to which this conditioning has already progressed in South Africa is clear from the extent to which certain so-called art forms and especially rock music have been accepted by the young.

3. The threat from the educational, social and cultural spheres

Onslaughts from the ranks of the philosophies discussed above often find fertile ground among the young as a result of broken family realities and also what can be regarded as broad secondary educational influences.

3.1 The family as the primary educational situation

The endangered being within the educational situation of the family is the child who is vulnerable as the result of all sorts of corrosive factors in the context of family education; the immature child then inevitably one day becomes a derailed adult. A few aspects of family education regarded as threatening the child in its being will be briefly looked at.

The increasing incidence of family disintegration is leaving children increasingly confused emotionally. Often there is little possibility of religious education so that the young person, under these circumstances, falls an easy prey to social-pathological phenomena such as drug abuse and sub-cultural groupings.

Professional demands on parents are becoming stronger so that parents have less and less time to devote to children. Social and other obligations lead to the disintegration of the tight family structure. The father, who has to determine the status of the family, is often so intensively committed to his profession that he becomes alienated from his children. This phenomenon has the result that the father-figure is becoming increasingly vague. Together with the influence of especially Liberalism and Neo-Marxism this is leading to a subtle negatory process of sexual identity.

The modern family is becoming more and more democratic, even permissive, so that Christian principles, norms and values are not deliberately inculcated in children any more, so that in this too they become the prey of

secularism.

Today's child is often not granted the time to be truly a child: the parent overloads the child's curriculum with all sorts of activities, knowledge is expanding and syllabi are becoming accordingly crowded, so that scholastic demands on children are at present exceptionally high. In this manner children are forced to become mature, but their years of dependence are increased because of long periods of study.

As far as living space is concerned, urbanization demands a heavy toll in terms of a child's mental health. It is calculated that by 2000 AD plus-minus 95 percent of all whites in the world will live in cities. The modern child has greatly lost contact with nature because he has become a city and flat dweller. At the same time the average white South African has an excess of material goods, which in many cases leads to a superficial materialism and a pathological pursuit of progress and status, usually at the cost of personal contact in the family; something which might aid the adaptation to the rapid changes. Present-day man, even in the context of the family, has fallen prey to Alvin Toffler's concept of future shock.

3.2 Secondary educational influences

Here we include influences which do not belong exclusively to the family situation, even though they may be linked with it. A few brief references should suffice.

Modern man has become largely self-sufficient as a result of his technological achievements. He does not need God any more. At the same time he has become degraded, a depersonalized robot, part of a mass, without individuality (Van der Westhuizen, 1974, p. 5).

Man's closed individual milieu has been effectively invaded as a result of effective communication – modern traffic, the press, radio and television. Isolation and the maintenance of our own principles have become very difficult as normlessness, superficiality and fatalism have become the hallmarks of modern internationalism.

Van der Westhuizen (1974, pp. 5-7) also mentions the increasing religious uncertainties of confused, anchorless youth – young people who cannot perceive any aim or purpose in life. Neutrality, uncommitment and psychological isolation are hallmarks of modern man.

4. What is the solution of the Christian educationist and educator to these threats?

For the purpose of this paper we regard the responding Christian as in the first place the parent as primary educator and secondly as formal educationist — the teacher and his assistants in the wider context of education.

4.1 The task of the parent

The Christian (faithful) parent gives his child the love, security, fear of God and Christian principles he needs to become a dignified human being. This he can only do if he puts down sturdy and worthwhile foundations: a healthy family life, where father and mother are available; education based on the principles of the Word of God, and no humanist or laissez-faire attitude; use of the privileges of civilization, but no slavish dependence on these; and, above all, a healthy world view, based on the unfalsified truths of the Word of God (Kruger, 1975, p. 115).

The parent has to educate the child towards preparedness, especially spiritual preparedness and viability. The family, as the source of society, is ultimately responsible to educate the child in the fear of God, because only the truly faithful is able to take up a position against the dissenting views discussed above. De Villiers (1976, pp. 172-197) stresses the educational task of the parent as regards the child's emotional security based on parental love; education aimed at acceptance of authority by parental example also; and religious education, as the most important aspect of the child's education as it encompasses all other facets.

4.2 The task of the school

According to Dawson (1962, p. 32) education is always in the service of the underlying philosophy of the relevant state or government. John Dewey's outspoken democratic educational theory has culminated, in contemporary America, in a total absolutization of the liberty of the individual, which is fundamentally a form of Liberalist Humanism. The same phenomenon is perceptible in Marxism. The ranks of the faithful, therefore, should protect Christian civilization by means of Christian education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Christian education has to re-initiate the possibility for the promotion of religious truths again: art, architecture, music, poetry, drama, philosophy and history (Botha, IAC 68). Education is after all the most powerful means to render us prepared and viable in the

struggle against the cultural revolution and to deepen our awareness of our own Christian cultural heritage (De Klerk, IAC 69).

In South Africa, Act No. 39 of 1967 enables the Christian teacher to educate children according to the tenets of the Christian faith. Just as the parent may not abdicate his responsibility towards the education of his children, so the teacher may not ignore his vocation, which is to inculcate in the child a Christian world view which will render him spiritually prepared and viable for the future.

Seen from national and Christian focal points, education towards preparedness and viability for the South African (and more particularly the Afrikaner) child implies:

Firstly, education towards loyalty to principles, to national identity, acknowledgement of authority and discipline and an unshakeable belief in the Holy, trinitarian God, "from Whom, by Whom and to Whom" all things must ultimately be.

Secondly: knowledge of the threat, uncompromising moral standards and acceptance that the light will be visible only in the light of God's Word.

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