



SUBJECT  
DIDACTICS OF

# BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Subject Didactic  
Biblical Studies

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA  
PRETORIA

**Subject Didactics of**  
**Biblical Studies**

**C B Borst**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA  
PRETORIA

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*Teach me in your truth  
lead my wandering thoughts;  
for you are my salvation, O Lord!  
I rely on you.*

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# Foreword

The appearance of a new publication in Subject Didactics is a memorable occasion indeed. In this important part-discipline of Education, student teachers as well as teachers get to grips with the essence of education - the interaction between tutor and pupil.

The subject Subject Didactics, as a component of the curriculum of the secondary school, is a challenge to teachers in more ways than one. A sound theoretical foundation, together with proven practical advice, makes this work a useful textbook for those interested in Subject Didactics. The author - an experienced educationist and capable academic - is an authority on his subject.

*Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies* is a welcome addition to the science of teaching. This book should make a valuable contribution to the training of teachers.

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March 1991

## Section A

# Orientation

## INTRODUCTION

In this work it is assumed that students who study Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies already have sufficient knowledge of Biblical Studies to master the learning content of the subject that has to be taught at school. Accordingly no attempt is made to instruct students in Biblical Studies. Where examples are needed, schemes that are widely applicable in Biblical Studies are used. Broad examples such as these remain applicable regardless of syllabus changes.

This book attempts to lead students to apply their existing knowledge of Biblical Studies when teaching the subject at school. It is thus divided into two main parts:

- *The structure of Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies:* This structure provides the theoretical substructure for planning instruction in Biblical Studies.
- *Planning instruction:* This is a theoretical reflection on how the learning content of Biblical Studies is presented according to a definite structure. In planning instruction it is essential to reflect on the preparation for instruction. Teaching preparation is the junction between theoretical reflection and the practical presentation of a Biblical Studies lesson.

The book also suggests ways of presenting lessons in Biblical Studies.

## DIDACTICS TERMINOLOGY

This section deals briefly with the terminology of Subject Didactics to enable readers to understand the term more precisely, particularly with reference to Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies.

### A CURSORY EXPLANATION OF THE TERM "DIDACTICS"

The term "didactics" can be defined as a theoretical reflection on education in general, in which a variety of theories are considered. This variety of theories enable us to place Didactics in a Christian perspective, the particular distinctions and characteristics of which give a Christian content to the theoretical reflection on education.

Didactic reflection focuses on the way in which pupils become involved in a particular relationship with reality by means of educative teaching. The relationship that is established between pupil, world and reality results in a spe-

cial relationship between Didactics and reality. Since this relationship can only be actualised by a process of clarification, this process forms the basis of any reflection on Didactics. Didactic reflection from a Christian perspective reflects on educative teaching that opens the pupil to a belief in God, his Creator.

Obtaining success with Christian-based unfolding of pupils is paired with the Christian perspective present in learning content. If there is no Christian theme in the prescribed learning content of a subject, the teacher cannot make pupils receptive to the Christian faith (irrespective of church affiliation). The following serve to illustrate this:

- A syllabus for a natural science subject which has evolution as its base will unfold only this particular school of thought.
- A Biblical Studies syllabus that is compiled in such a way that it negates revelation will not be able to uphold the Christian perspective.

From a Christian point of view, Didactics is a reflection on education by which pupils gain insight in two directly related ways. Knowledge that the pupil acquires opens reality to him. This reality leads the pupil to an awareness of the Christian religion. Stone (1972:45) points out that faith has an unfolding and a directive function in realising pupils' potential. The Christian disposition of this direction is dependent on the faith that controls the process of unfolding.

The Word of God forms the essence of the opening-up process in the education occurrence, without the Bible being made an educational book. Scripture, which is revelational-historical by nature, offers guidelines and norms for Christian education. Heiberg (1975:182) admonishes Christian educators to allow room in education for that which God wishes to unfold in the pupil. Here, knowledge of the Word of God is essential. Accordingly, a subject like Biblical Studies, which enables pupils to acquire knowledge of the Word of God, deserves a place in the curriculum. Heiberg (1975:183-184) points out, moreover, that man (i.e. the pupil) is given the choice between serving God or an idol in his life.

It is against this background of a didactic reflection on teaching and education that Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies is reviewed.

#### **AN INDICATION OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIDACTICS AND SUBJECT DIDACTICS WITH REFERENCE TO BIBLICAL STUDIES**

It was mentioned above that Didactics is a reflection on teaching. The term "Subject Didactics" circumscribes the main concept "Didactics" by the addi-

tion of the word "subject", which in this case is Biblical Studies. The question of the nature and structure of Biblical Studies as an academic subject is dealt with cursorily in chapter 7. This demarcation, which limits the reflection on teaching in general to reflection on Biblical Studies as a subject, attempts to link the science of Biblical Studies with the science of Education. The relationship between Didactics and Subject Didactics implies primarily that Didactics contains a broad reflection on the possibilities of unfolding. Subject Didactics contains the same reflection, but on a more limited scale. While Didactics thus reflects on the clarification of reality in general, Subject Didactics reflects on a partial opening up of reality in so far as this is made possible by the subject concerned (Biblical Studies). Subject Didactics is dependent on Didactics since subject-directed teaching is an extension of the general act of teaching. It is impossible to even start Subject Didactics without first taking Didactics into account (Schmiel 1975:18-19).

Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies cannot do otherwise than reflect on the basis of Didactics, which upholds a Christian point of view. A Christian-based unfolding, founded on the Christian perspective of the Bible, should therefore take place in pupils. Only in this way can Biblical Studies do justice to the teaching of the Bible.

#### **THE PLACE AND PART OF DIDACTICS, SUBJECT DIDACTICS AND METHOD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BIBLICAL STUDIES**

The author agrees with Duminy (1980:12) that Didactics and Method are often confused. It is essential to distinguish between Didactics and Method, but also to indicate their relationship with each other and also with Subject Didactics.

Without distinguishing between Didactics and Method there can be no uniform didactic reflection on teaching. As a result of this lack of uniformity Didactics does not form the desired basis for Method, and this leads to a synthesis taking place under the term "method". This synthesis prevents reflection on the underlying principles of Method as a unity.

Duminy (1980:12) points out that Method, which is particularisation in didactic thinking, is aimed at reflecting on methods that can be applied in education. In view of this, it is clear that Method is an application of didactic thinking. This application has a bearing on didactic method, which is only a facet in the field of Didactics and not Didactics itself. Method is thus an application of didactic thought.

Method is a particularisation of a didactic and more specifically a subject-didactic reflection, because it is a reflection that is aimed at considering

methods by which a subject (Biblical Studies) can be taught. Method makes use of subject-didactic reflection, which is based on specific didactic principles. It is clear then that Method is a particularisation of Didactics in so far as it can be applied in Subject Didactics. The following are some didactic principles that come up in a subject-didactic reflection on Method.

- *Motivation* (Degraeve 1975:68) is one of the didactic principles that can be used in Method when teaching Biblical Studies. Aarts (1965:67) points out that learning is an activity which has its starting-point in the need experienced by a pupil. The pupil's desire to fulfil that need motivates him to learn. Method reflects on those methods that can be applied to motivate pupils to engage in learning on the basis of their needs. Methods aimed at motivation facilitate pupils' active participation.
- The principle of *activity* (Aarts 1965:167-168) flows from motivation. Method also reflects on those methods by which pupils are led so that their activities will be meaningfully related to the teaching. On the basis of subject-didactic reflection on Biblical Studies it is possible to devise and apply methods that are linked to the special nature of Biblical Studies.
- The didactic principle of *individualisation* (Duminy 1980:26-33) must be taken into account in pupil activity. Aarts (1965:67) is of the opinion that learning is an activity that comes to the fore as a result of pupils' particular needs. Their urge to satisfy those needs motivates pupils to learn. Particular needs which pupils experience should be linked to their individual abilities.

When devising subject-oriented methods it should be taken into account that general methods are particularised to meet the demands of Biblical Studies teaching. For the same reason general didactic principles are particularised in order to meet these demands. In subject-oriented teaching methods such as those used for teaching Biblical Studies, subject-didactic reflections are applied to create the possibility of successful teaching. Particularisation of Didactics in subject-didactic reflections takes place when Subject Method reflects on methods that can be applied in teaching Biblical Studies.

## SUMMARY

Like Subject Didactics, Method is distinctively a particularisation of didactic reflection. General Method applies didactic teaching principles in such a way that general methods can be devised from them. Subject Method of Biblical Studies reflects on specific methods for presenting Biblical Studies lessons. In

the course of this reflection subject-didactic outcomes are used for devising methods which can be applied to teaching Biblical Studies.

## **BIBLICAL STUDIES TERMS APPLIED IN SUBJECT DIDACTICS OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**

In teaching Biblical Studies certain terms are used which are peculiar to instruction in this subject. These terms, which are often peculiar to the Bible, are discussed here to familiarise aspirant teachers with them. Failure to use these terms in Biblical Studies lessons means that teaching in this subject is not taking place within its general sphere.

### **PERICOPE**

Within a chapter of the Bible there is frequently a group of verses dealing with a separate topic or expressing a specific thought. Such a group of verses is called a pericope.

Examples of a pericope are the following:

- Mark 4:30-33, a pericope dealing with the parable of the mustard seed
- Proverbs 6:6-8, a pericope holding up the diligence of the ant to the reader.

When the Biblical Studies teacher asks pupils to look up a number of verses, he ought to say, "Find the pericope in Romans 12 that deals with love." Pupils should then know immediately that they have to look up a number of verses and not just one verse.

### **DECALOGUE**

The literal meaning of "decatalogue" is "ten words". It refers to the Ten Commandments. Instead of always saying - and particularly writing - "Ten Commandments", decatalogue is a meaningful and accepted alternative term. When talking about the Ten Commandments, the teacher has the opportunity to teach pupils the alternative term "decatalogue".

### **ISRAEL**

Israel is a name with different meanings in the Old Testament. The literal meaning of Israel is "God struggles". The name Israel has the following meanings:

- After the struggle (wrestling) between God and Jacob at Pniel, God gave Jacob the name "Israel" (Genesis 32:28). After this event Israel and Jacob became alternative names. The name Israel is used especially when referring to Jacob's descendants.
- The region where the people settled and established themselves after their return from Egypt is present-day Israel. The name Israelites came to refer to the inhabitants of Israel.
- David, and later Solomon, ruled over the whole of Israel. Jerusalem was its capital.
- After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided into two parts:
  - The Northern Kingdom became Israel, with Jeroboam as its first ruler. In 718 BC Hosea, the last monarch of Israel, was defeated by the Assyrians and practically the whole nation was carried off.
  - The Southern Kingdom became Judah, with Rehoboam as its first king. In 597 BC the existence of this kingdom was terminated by Nebuchadnezzar and practically the whole nation, too, was carried off (the exile). Judah thus continued to exist for about one hundred years longer than Israel.
- In about 538 BC a small section of the Jews returned to their fatherland (Israel). At this stage Israel was only a small area around Jerusalem. The exile came to an end in this way.

When reading and using the name "Israel" in the Old Testament, the exact period should always be carefully noted. The period in which the name is used is an important indication of its meaning. Pupils must be taught to use the name "Israel" in its correct context.

## PROPHET

"Prophet" has become synonymous with "forecaster, foreteller" in the vernacular. So, for instance, the weather forecaster is referred to as the "weather prophet", the one who forecasts (or foretells) the following day's weather conditions.

The prophet of the Old Testament was the "mouthpiece of God". The task of the prophet was to convey the true Word of God to his fellow men. In some cases this communication from God gave a vision of the future and in so doing contained an element of foretelling. However, this was by no means a characteristic feature of the task or the message of the prophet. The prophet "foretold" in the sense that what he announced about the future he was sure

definitely would happen, as this was the Word of God. The terms "forecast" and "foretelling" always contain an element of uncertainty, which is not the case with the prophet's message.

Each of the prophets was called directly by God to carry out his particular task. For this reason Moses is regarded as the first prophet of the Old Testament. How Moses received his calling and task is described in Exodus 3:1-22. Moses is referred to as a prophet in Deuteronomy 34:10.

Pupils should understand the designation "prophet" to mean that this figure from the Old Testament was a person called by God to make his message known.

## PROPHECY

The words spoken by the prophet are a prophecy, which need not necessarily contain a prediction. Briefly, the following are the characteristics of a prophecy.

- It is a call to people, "Thus says the LORD." These words of the Lord contain an announcement about offences and sin, with a call to conversion and repentance.
- A prophecy is always a verbal communication to the people, delivered by the prophet himself. Only later is it written down. For this reason a prophecy is mostly in the form of poetry, since it is easier to memorise and proclaim verbally in this form.
- A prophecy is concerned with the consequences of conversion or of the obduracy of the people after they had heard the words of prophecy. It was not a forecast or prediction, but something that will definitely take place. The prophecy is the Word of God which is an announcement of the action of the just God who does not leave sin unpunished, but shows mercy towards all who love Him.
- Prophecies can be divided into prophecies of salvation and prophecies of doom. The prophecy of Isaiah is an example of this.

Not only should pupils know the nature of the office of a prophet, but they should also know the nature of his proclamation.

## ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology is the teaching about the last days of the present dispensation on earth. God reveals Himself in the Bible through inspired individuals who recorded the history of revelation. Biblical eschatology refers to the destination

of the individual and the world in general. Eschatology is thus related to the way in which God has revealed Himself to man.

## REVELATION HISTORY

History set out in the Bible has a revelational character. This history was written with the sole object of making God's revelation known to mankind. For this reason the Bible presents only the historical details that have a bearing on revelation. Anyone who expects the Bible to be a historical account is disillusioned as early on as Genesis 1:1. This verse reads

"In the beginning ..."

These words give no indication of when this "beginning" was. There have been many vain attempts to determine the approximate date of this "beginning". The real meaning of the words "In the beginning ..." is that God created heaven and earth, and that He initiated it. Exactly when this happened is of minor importance.

## "CREATE" AND "MAKE" AS TERMS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

In everyday language "create" is used in the sense of bringing about something. Strictly speaking, this meaning attached to the word is erroneous. To "create" means to make something out of nothing. Only God can "create". In Hebrew there is a specific word, "bara", that can be translated as "create". It is only God who can "bara", who can "create". The Hebrew indicates clearly that man is unable to create.

Man makes something out of material that he takes from creation. Man makes a chair from wood or iron. The act of making is what man is pre-eminently capable of. It is essential when teaching Biblical Studies to take into consideration this fine distinction between "make" and "create" and convey it to pupils.

It should be noted, however, that Psalm 121 verse 2 reads:

"My help is from the LORD who *made* heaven and earth".

In Psalm 124:4 we read:

"Our help is in the Name of the LORD who *made* heaven and earth."

The question then is why these two Psalms refer to God's creative act as "made". Several learned arguments have been put forward for the use of the word "make" in these Psalms. An acceptable explanation is that the psalmist

accorded God human characteristics so that His creative act could be understood more easily. For this reason the poet writes that God "made" and not that He "created".

## ANTHROPOMORPHISM

To bring God in some way within the field of human understanding, Scripture accords God human features. The following serve to illustrate this:

- the hand of God
- the face of God
- the earth is the footstool of God on which His feet rest.

God is spirit. The above expressions serve to give people some idea of God.

A further example of an anthropomorphism can be found in Genesis 6:6, where it is written that "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." [which version of Bible used?] Taken literally, this means that God, who is perfect, admits that He has made a mistake. The Scripture writer uses the word "regret" to indicate how God censured the people's sinfulness at that stage.

## DOXOLOGY

A doxology is a paean or panegyric to God. The book of Psalms can be divided into five parts. The last verse of each part is a panegyric or doxology. Psalm 41:13 closes with a doxology:

"Praise the Lord, the God of Israel!  
Praise Him now and for ever!  
Amen. Amen."

Psalm 150, the last psalm in the book, is a doxology or panegyric in its entirety. The book of Psalms thus ends with a doxology.

## APOCALYPSE

Various parts of the Bible are characterised as apocalyptic. These parts are a literary type which can easily be confused with the prophetic parts. Both literary types contain an element of prophecy, but each in its own particular way. A brief discussion of the main characteristics of apocalyptic literature follows.

- The apocalyptic writer hears his message mostly while having a vision of an angel (for example the Revelation to John). The Apocalypse is thus

not as directly the Word of God as the prophecy uttered by the prophet. But this in no way diminishes the value of the apocalyptic pronouncement.

- Apocalyptic pronouncements give mainly an ominous version of the end of the world. They are thus concerned with eschatology.
- Apocalyptic pronouncements mostly appear in written form right from the start and are in the form of prose practically throughout. Because they are not transmitted verbally, they are far more complicated than prophecy.
- Symbols, numbers, imagery and mythological representations are used in an apocalypse, which make it difficult to interpret.

The best-known apocalyptic parts of the Bible are:

- parts of the book of Daniel: Daniel 7-12
- parts of the book of Isaiah: Isaiah 24-27
- parts of the book of Zechariah: Zechariah 9-14
- the whole of the book of Revelation (to John).

## GOSPEL

In Greek the word "gospel" means "good news". The word "gospel" as used in the Bible refers especially to the "good news" of Jesus Christ. In this sense it refers more specifically to the New Testament. But this does not discount the Old Testament, which signals the expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Very often in everyday language, when referring to the truth of something, people say "It's gospel". In this way "gospel" is linked to the truth, which in reality is not the precise meaning of the term. Biblical Studies pupils should not be allowed to associate this incorrect meaning with the word "gospel".

## REFERENCE TO THE DIFFERENT GOSPELS

The Gospels are commonly referred to as the Gospel of John or the Gospel of Luke. However, it is more correct to refer to the Gospel *according to* Matthew or the Gospel *according to* Mark. In each particular book the good news of Jesus Christ is being recounted by one of the writers. What we read in the Gospel is what happened *according to* the writer. It is the message of Jesus Christ that is being conveyed, not the message of the particular writer of that book.

## HOLY

"Holy" is a word that many pupils (most in fact) have problems with. The word "holy" originally meant to take something in everyday use and dedicate it to the service of God.

The Sabbath commandment, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day", then becomes "remember the Sabbath day that you set it aside for service to God". A definition of *holy* or *set aside* solves many problems when this term crops up. When there is said that ground is *hallowed*, it means that such ground is *set aside* for service to God.

## MESSIAH

"Messiah" is the Greek form of the Aramaic word meaning "anointed" or "the anointed [one]". The term refers to Christ the Anointed.

In Old Testament times people and objects were anointed to be consecrated, thus to be set aside for service to God. This is why priests and kings were anointed to consecrate them to God's service. Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit during His baptism. Christ is the perfect Anointed One and Messiah.

## CHRISTIAN AND CHRISTIANITY

Biblical Studies pupils and students are often confused about the use of the term "Christian" and also "Christianity" in respect of the Old Testament. Believers in the Old Testament are mistakenly and incorrectly referred to as Christians. There can be no talk of Christians in the Old Testament because at that time the coming of Christ was being awaited.

Pupils must realise that one can only talk about Christians and Christianity in the New Testament.

## "ENTSCHLIESSUNG", "UNLOCKING"

"Entschliessung", which could be literally translated as "unlocking", implies the dual teaching-learning situation in which the child is taught in the sense that his faculties and sensibilities become receptive to the realities around him. Through this receptiveness insight is gained, enabling him to assimilate knowledge.

In the teaching of Biblical Studies revelational-historical realities are disclosed to the pupil, that is revealed and clarified so that they are open and

accessible to the pupil's sensibilities and enquiry as part of becoming a responsible adult.

Where teaching and other similar terms are used, this explanation of "Entschliessung" (or "unlocking") should be borne in mind.

## SUMMARY

A brief explanation of the main terms in Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies was given. Concepts like "didactics", "subject didactics" and "method" are so comprehensive that there is considerable literature on them. The object here was only to present a basic understanding of them in so far as they apply to this work. The same applies to "Israel", "prophet", "Apocalypse" and others. Much more can be said about them than has been done here, and students who wish to gain more knowledge should do so through independent study.

## Section B

# Structure of Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies

*Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies comprises teaching principles, objectives, teaching and learning content, methods, media, and evaluation. In the discussion of a specific component it will be explained how each one fulfils its particular function in the structure of Subject Didactics of Biblical Studies.*

*First of all the teaching principles are discussed, as shown in the diagram on the next page. Every one of these principles contributes to the possible success of a lesson presentation in Biblical Studies. On the outer ring of this diagram on the top and at the bottom the traditional teaching principle is set out. This principle is explained in more detail in diagram 1.1.*

Teaching principles applied in Subject Didactics  
of Biblical Studies

