

Institute of Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**ADULT LEARNING THEORIES
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
FOR SDA COLLEGE STUDENTS**

From Theory to Practice

By Henrik K. Jorgensen

Chaplain and Assistant Lecture
Department of Theological Studies
Newbold College
Bracknell, England

**332-98 Institute for Christian Teaching
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA**

Prepared for the
22nd International Faith and Learning Seminar
held at Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen
Austria - August 1998

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the andragogical learning theories of Malcolm Knowles, Carl Rogers and Peter Jarvis in the light of SDA educational philosophy as presented in the writings of Ellen G. White and some related implications of the Valuegenesis study. Finally we shall attempt to apply these theories to the teaching of general education religion courses for SDA college students.

These three above mentioned educational theorists all have a humanistic outlook. Malcolm Knowles is by many considered the father of adult learning theory (andragogy). His emphasis is on the concept of the learner and his or hers self-directedness. In this paper the extend to which the college student should be allowed to be self-directed in the area of Religious Education will be explored. Carl Rogers used his psychotherapist background to develop certain theories of education. He developed some very strong opinions about the role of the teacher and came to the conclusion that the most effective role is that of a facilitator. This paper will explore some of what Carl Rogers considered to be essential characteristics of an effective facilitator. Peter Jarvis' emphasis is on experience and reflection as learning. The question which will be asked is: what are implications for the teaching of Religious Education in post-compulsory education?

Andragogy: a definition

Knowles has been called the father of andragogy¹. Even though he did not invent the term he was responsible for the popular use of it. Knowles defined andragogy as: "the art and science of helping adults learn."² It provided a label for the growing body of knowledge and technology in regard to adult learning. Though Knowles in the beginning was of the opinion that andragogy and pedagogy were dichotomous, he later came to the conclusion that they were rather parallel. In other words andragogy is not the opposite to pedagogy but a different way of looking at education.

¹ Jarvis, 90

² Knowles, 6

THE THEORIES

KNOWLES:

Originally Knowles claimed that there were 4 main assumptions that differentiated andragogy from pedagogy. They were:

- **Concept of the learner -**

According to Knowles the adult learner is self-directing. His definition of an adult is "one who has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directing."³ He claimed that when people arrived at that point, they developed a deep need to be perceived by others, and treated by others, as capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Therefore when they were put into situations where they felt that others were imposing their wills on them without their participating in making decisions affecting them, they experienced a feeling, often subconsciously, of resentment and resistance.

One problem for the educator is that though adults may be totally self-directing in every other aspect of their lives, the minute they walk into a situation labelled "education" or "training," they revert back to their conditioning in school, assume a role of dependency, and demand to be taught. If education is for life and not just for a career, it is of utmost importance that transitions from being dependent learners to being self-directed learners are made. It seems vital that this transition must be made gradually through out the whole period of schooling . This means that when it comes to college it is absolutely vital that self-directed learning is introduced.

White says that "*the student must be drawn out to state the truth in his own language...*"⁴ The theologian Alan Jones is quoted by Scott Peck saying:

In many cases we have to rely on second-hand information in order to function. I accept the word of a physician, a scientist, a farmer, on trust. I do not like this. I have to because they possess vital knowledge of living of which I am ignorant. Second-hand information concerning the state of my kidneys, the effects of cholesterol, and the raising of chickens, I can live with. But when it comes to questions of meaning, purpose, and death, second-hand information will not do. I cannot survive on a second-hand faith in a second-hand God.⁵

³ Knowles, 9

⁴ Testimonies, VI,154 (emphasis mine)

⁵ A Road Less traveled

On this point White is very emphatic:

In matter of conscience the soul must be left untamed. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another or to prescribe his duty. God gives every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions.⁶

If indeed the aim of education is "to train youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts"⁷, it seems as if we are left with no choice. Students must not just be given the opportunity for independent thinking and learning, but be *actively encouraged* to do so. Especially when it comes to Religious Education at college level, students must be given the freedom and opportunity to ask questions and come to personal conclusions.

- **Role of the learner's experience -**

Knowles' model assumes that adults enter into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience than younger people. This means that for many kinds of learning, adults themselves are the richest resources. Knowles therefore suggests that a greater emphasis in adult education should be on such techniques as, group discussion, simulation exercises, laboratory experiences, field experiences, problem-solving projects, which make use of the experiences of the learners. He also recommends that because of the difference in experience of adults greater emphasis should be placed on individualised learning plans, such as learning contracts.⁸

However, experience can also be a hindrance to learning. Habits and preconceptions about reality, prejudices and defensiveness about their past can often be a hindrance to new learning. In such a situation the teacher's main task must be to help the student become more open-minded.

Though most SDA college students may not be considered fully mature the majority of them have about 15-20 years of experience in religious education at some level. The knowledge level may not be desirable, but it is still an invaluable resource we must recognise, tap into and make use of in the teaching of RE.

It is significant that the Valuegenesis data indicates that RE programmes do not seem to inspire most students. The authors state that:

⁶ The Great Controversy, 550

⁷ Education, 17

⁸ Knowles, 10

Many youth are not comfortable in our congregations and schools because they feel they are being told what to believe and how to behave and not encouraged to think for themselves.⁹

If students are always being told what to think or believe they will never have the chance of having their own experience validated and integrate their own beliefs into their lives. The significance about people's experience in any educational situation is that, if it is not used, ignored, not valued, it is not just the experience which is rejected, it is the person him/herself. The personal element is important in all subjects, but in none so more than in RE.

- **Readiness to learn -**

Knowles' andragogical model assumes that adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something in order to perform more effectively in some aspects of their lives. Any significant life-change triggers a readiness to learn.

The college years are often very comfortable and life can seem very simple. However for many they can also be very complicated. A career has to be chosen, fees for college have to be earned, this may be the first time away from home and the question of "who am I?" is asked seriously, this is also often the time when a life-partner is chosen and there is the whole issue of sexuality. If our RE programmes address some of these issues in the light of the Bible, students may be more ready to learn.

- **Orientation to learning -**

Because adults are motivated to learn after they experience a need in their life situation, they enter an educational situation with a life-centred, task-centred or problem-centred orientation to learning. Most often they do not learn for the sake of learning; they learn in order to perform a task, solve a problem, or live in a more satisfying way.

The chief implication of this assumption is the importance of organising learning experiences around life situations rather than according to subject matter units. In a RE course Bible teachings must be related to life situations. Doctrines must be related to reality. Propositional truth must be related to personal truth. This must be done not just through impersonal lecturing. But students should be given opportunities to perform tasks and solve problems related to the subject and to their personal life.

⁹ Faith in the balance, 283

In its evaluation of the RE programmes the Valuegenesis study calls for "...the development of service opportunities, and occasions to understand the giving and receiving of love in theological terms."¹⁰

Knowles revised his assumptions about adult education on several occasions which indicates that they are open to discussion. However, they are important and need to be considered carefully by all educators. As one critic wrote: "It is a human theory of learning...not a theory of ...adult learning."¹¹ Knowles himself had to admit that "some pedagogical assumptions are realistic for adults in some situations and some andragogical assumptions are realistic for children in some situations."¹²

ROGERS:

Rogers' main emphasis is on the self-actualisation of the learner and argues that the aim of education is the development of a fully functioning person¹³. His basic assumption is that: "teaching... is a vastly over-rated function"¹⁴. In a fast changing environment, as we have in most places of the world today, he sees more value in the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning than an instructor of irrelevant fast-changing facts. He claims that:

The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realised that no knowledge is secure. Changingness, a reliance on *process* rather than upon static *knowledge*, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world.¹⁵

Rogers sees "the facilitation of learning as the function that may hold constructive, tentative, changing *process* answers to some of the deepest perplexities that beset humankind today"¹⁶

The Christian educator would probably disagree with Rogers, as s/he would most likely be of the opinion that there is some important static knowledge. Creation, the nature of man, the incarnation would just be some areas where there might be contention. However, as it has been

¹⁰ Faith in the Balance, 291

¹¹ Knudson, 261

¹² Quoted in Jarvis, 91

¹³ Rogers, 283

¹⁴ Rogers, 119

¹⁵ Rogers, 120

¹⁶ Rogers, 121

said earlier, most students have been taught about this at some level since childhood. What can be learned from Rogers, is how to apply this knowledge in a changing world. This is where his emphasis on process is important. The world is not static, it changes all the time and does so at a faster and faster rate. The world today's students are growing up in is vastly different from the world their teachers grew up in. The process by which they apply their knowledge, religious or otherwise, will therefore be different. As an RE teacher it is important to be available to help facilitate that process.

According to Rogers the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal *relationship* between the facilitator and the learner. Generally speaking it is the ability to enter into a relationship of two equal parties. The teacher should not be a superior being trying to feed knowledge into the student, treating him/her as an object.¹⁷ It was through his study of therapy that he found these qualities were essential and later discovered that these were also valuable in the teacher/student relationship.

According to Rogers these qualities are:

- **Realness or genuineness.**

By realness he means that the teacher enters into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a facade. It means that the teacher comes into a direct personal encounter with the learner.

It has been argued that it is important for students to be allowed to challenge, question etc. in order to properly internalise knowledge. In this process of questioning and challenging it is important that the teacher does not become defensive and put up a front when questions are asked to which s/he does not have a ready answer. The teacher must be willing to be open and vulnerable in order not to close avenues down and leave them unexplored. A question is better left unanswered with the possibility of further exploration, rather than given a "made up" answer, or closed with a statement like "you should really not be asking questions like that." An educator must remember that it is not ignorance which is a stumbling block in learning, but rather fear of the unknown outcome. In this process, Rogers request for realness and genuineness is of utmost importance. The teacher must be willing to enter an open relationship with the students.

¹⁷ This what Buber would call a *I-Thou* rather than an *I-it* relationship

White said it in these words: "He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted."¹⁸

For the RE teacher to feel comfortable with questions and challenges posed by the student, it is important that s/he has internalised the values s/he is trying to transmit. S/he must be comfortable with the unanswered questions s/he has and feel comfortable with the uncertainties they will bring. If the teacher cannot do this, s/he will not be able to be real and genuine with the students. The relationship will be kept behind a front and the personal encounter with the student will never appear.

- **Prizing the learner**

What Rogers is describing by this term is valuing and respecting the learner as an imperfect human being, with many feelings, many potentialities. It is an expression of the teachers essential confidence and trust in the learner. It is an acceptance of the learner as a separate individual, having worth in his/her own right.

An educator with this kind of attitude can accept the fear and hesitation of the learner as s/he approaches a new problem. Feelings which disturb the learning can be accepted as part of life or the learning process. An educator with this attitude, Rogers describes as an individual who accepts the learner for who s/he is.

In the Valuegenesis study of teachers and school climate in SDA schools, one of the greatest concerns expressed by the authors was that nearly 40% of the students felt "put down by their teachers"¹⁹. For seventh and eighth graders the figure was 42% which compares with 22% in a national study of public school students in eighth grade in the USA. One of the recommendations which the study suggested on this point was that: "New approaches call for the purposeful creation of caring environments..." and further

Many of our directions for the future revolve around the building of personal relationships for, as we have seen, such relationships play a vital role in the development of faith, values and commitment...We need to bend all our efforts toward establishing and maintaining a warm and accepting climate in each of our schools.²⁰

¹⁸ Education, 78.

¹⁹ Faith in the balance, 227

²⁰ Faith in the balance, 291,292

It should of course be noted that the Valuegenesis study was done of students in compulsory education. However, students will carry their attitudes towards teachers with them into further and higher education.

In further and higher education the issue of teacher/student relationship is made even more complicated by the fact that class sizes generally are greater in the number of students. This makes it more difficult to establish a personal and trusting relationship with the individual student. A greater effort must therefore be made by the educators at this level. It is a matter of realising that: "In all true teaching the personal element is essential. Christ in His teaching dealt with men individually."²¹ Alternative teaching methods in which the teacher has easier access to the individual student must be considered. These could include, individual tutorial, seminars and small group projects. This is not always easily done, but attempts must be made, if true "prizing" of the learner is to be made.

- **Empathic listening**

When the teacher has the ability to understand the student's reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems *to the student*, then Rogers claims, the likelihood of significant learning is increased. Empathy is the attitude of standing in the other's shoes, of viewing the world through the student's eyes.

Empathy goes further than "realness" and "prizing". It is the ability of making the learner feel heard and understood - not evaluated, not judges, but simply understood from their own point of view, not the teacher's. However, in order to be truly empathic, the teacher has to be real and prizing. It is more than saying: "I know what you feel like because I have been there too." In order to be truly empathic the teacher has to be confident (or real) enough to step out of his own shoes and into those of the students. The teacher also has to value and recognise the unique feelings of the student. It is not his own feelings in a similar situation the teacher is recognising, but it is the students feelings he is trying to understand.

Though Rogers comes from a humanistic, psycho-therapeutic background, his contribution to education is considerable and valuable. His understanding of the qualities of the teacher is important and must be considered by the teachers of RE if their teaching is to make a difference to the students.

²¹ Education, 231

JARVIS:

Peter Jarvis defines learning as "the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, feelings etc."²² It is the experience which is central to his learning model. In his opinion any situation can be turned into the a learning experience, it all depends on what is done with the situation. New learning takes place when people have to stop and think. Previous learning can no longer cope with the present situation, people are consciously aware that they do not know how to act. They will have to think, to plan or to learn something new. Learning then, according to Jarvis, always begins with experience. "There can be no learning that does not begin with experience although the level of consciousness of the learner play a significant part on both the experience and the ensuing learning."²³

By studying about 200 adult learners over a fifteen month period Jarvis came to the conclusion that there are nine types of response to an experience which can be classified into three fundamentally different categories: non-learning, non-reflective learning and reflective learning.

- **Non-learning**

According to Jarvis people do not always learn from their experiences, so the first group of responses in his learning theory is non-learning. Now Jarvis would agree that it is still debatable whether there actually is such a thing as non-learning. Can a person enter a learning situation a remain totally unaffected by it? He suggests that there are at least three responses which produce non-learning.

Presumption

Presumption is a typical response to a familiar situation. It has been described in this way: As long as the structure of the world can be taken as constant; so long as my previous experience is valid, my ability to operate in the world in this and that manner remains in principle preserved. It has been suggested that this is the basis of all social living because it indicates that they are in harmony with their environment. It would be quite intolerable for people to have to

²² Jarvis, 59

²³ Jarvis, 66

consider every word and every act in every social situation before they understood it. Therefore, a great deal of life is lived on the basis of previous experience.

This response is given by a lot of college students who are taking general education bible courses. They have been through the Bible stories for an x amount of years, think that they know it all and that the teacher cannot teach any more which is of relevance to them. It must therefore be the task of the teacher to create an environment where this “taken for granted-ness” can no-longer be assumed.

Non-consideration

There can be a number reasons why people do not respond to a learning situation: the realisation that one simply does not have the ability or desire to take everything on board. This could be the reaction to a topic which is too theoretical and not related to life.

Rejection

This is typical of the closed minded person who is not going to have his/her changed by any means. One can think of the student who is only taking the course in order to be affirmed in the beliefs s/he already has. Any new ideas or ways of considering are totally rejected. Students who come into class with preconceived ideas and are only there to have them reaffirmed. Anything new they hear or read is rejected.

- **Non-reflective learning**

Non-reflective learning are forms of learning which are most often socially defined as learning. The factor which puts them in the same category is that they do not involve reflection.

Pre-conscious learning

This has also been called incidental learning. This is the type of learning which occurs in the course of everyday life. Experiences which happen to and at some level impact us but about which we do not really think or are particularly conscious about.

Skills learning

This type of skills learning has to be limited to the learning of simple, short procedures that somebody at an assembly line might be taught. This is usually done through modelling or imitation.

Memorisation

This is the most commonly known form of learning. Children learn their mathematical tables, their language vocabulary etc. College students often feel that this is the type

of learning which is expected of them, so they try to memorise what the teacher has said, in order to reproduce it in an examination. However, especially for our college students it is important to get them beyond this, as White points out that:

The education that consists in training of the memory, tending to discourage independent thought, has a moral bearing which is too little appreciated. As the student sacrifices the power to reason and judge for himself, he becomes incapable of discriminating between truth and error, and falls an easy prey to deception. He is easily led to follow tradition and custom.²⁴

- **Reflective learning**

Non-reflective learning can not do other than reproduce the social structures of society. Though reflective learning may not always be innovative, it does have the potential of being revolutionary. Jarvis suggests that there are three types of reflective learning.

Contemplation

This is the process of thinking about an experience and reaching a conclusion about it without reference to the wider society. This is the pure thought process of the philosopher or the pure mathematician.

Reflective skills learning

This is the process that often produce new skills as they respond to the uniqueness of the situation. This is not only learning a skill but learning about the knowledge undergirding the practice and, therefore, why the skill should be performed in a specific manner.

Experimental learning

This is the form of learning in which theory is tried out in practice and the end-product of the experimentation is a form of knowledge that relates fully to the social reality.

Jarvis' main contribution to the theory of adult education is to incorporate valid elements from most of the theorists and combine them into the one comprehensive theory. His emphasis on experience and reflection is important and needs to be taken into consideration of how it can be incorporated into a subject like RE.

²⁴ Education, 230

AN APPLICATION

THE CONTEXT:

Having now looked at the theories we shall now consider how they can be applied to the teaching of religious education courses at college level. However before we do that we must look at the context in which they will be applied.

The course which this paper is related to is called Christian Beliefs. That is a college level general education religion course taken mainly by American transit students, business degree students and advanced language students. The class consists of approximately 30 and is mainly made up of students coming from a SDA background. Over the past three years maybe a handful of non-SDA students have taken the course. However, the large majority of students are Americans who have been taught through the SDA system. This means they have already had 12+ years of Bible classes 2-3 times per week, apart from religious education in Sabbath School, pathfinders, worships etc. So in the majority this is a group who at some level knows the facts and is rather apathetic when it comes to religious theory. In their attitude they are saying: "we have had enough of this, tell us something new." However, there is not much "new" to be told. In spite of that maybe there is something in the way it is taught and in the attitude of the teacher, which can be learned from these humanistic theorists, the educational philosophy of E. G. White and the recommendations from the Valuegenesis study we have reviewed. How can these implications be applied? We shall consider applications to the learner and the teacher and the assignments given.

THE LEARNER:

Knowles' emphasis is on self-directedness and autonomy of the learner. White claimed that the aim of education should be to develop independent thinkers and help students to responsibility for their own convictions. With this in mind students in Christian Beliefs are given the opportunity to help set the agenda of the course. In the course objectives which has been developed it states that this is "a student driven course which concentrates on a broad study of the main teachings of the Christian faith as presented in the Bible." This means that when it comes to the section of the course outline titled "Areas to be covered in Christian Beliefs I" it states

“Details to be decided.”²⁵ The first assignment students are given is to bring to class five topics, which fit within the course objectives, they would want covered in the class discussion. When the students come to the following class period they are asked to get into groups of four or five, share their suggestions and through discussion come up with five topics the group would consider important to be covered in the class discussions. In this way the agenda for the course is set. The students are an integral part of the process and the topics covered in the course is their choice and thus should be what is important to them.

Furthermore, when it comes to the assignments and criteria for assessment the students also have influence in that area. The facilitator sets three course assignments none of which are very specific. In the first term there is a group project in which they are asked to develop a set of beliefs which by the group is considered essential for a church to hold to in today’s world.²⁶ The objective of this assignment is to get the student think about and discuss the relevance of what they have found to be important in the Bible. In the second term the students are asked to rebuild a church right from the ground. They are to develop a mission statement, objectives and an action plan. A set of criteria for the acceptance of new members must be developed. The only guidelines for the development of this church is that whatever they decide it has to be based on the Bible. The students have the ownership and the onus for their learning is on them, rather than on the facilitator. Another assignment is a reflective diary which we shall discuss below. The third assignment is an individual learning contract worth 50% of the grade. With the learning contract the students are given the opportunity to show the course facilitator, what area they want to study in depth, how it is going to be studied, what kind of support is needed, how they want to be assessed and when the assignment should be due. On the basis of a discussion of those questions in a personal tutorial session, a contract is drawn up between the student and the course facilitator.

Learning contracts are very time consuming to set up. In classes with large numbers of students it may not be possible at all, unless the teacher has additional help. However, if the class is of a reasonable size (aprox.25-30) it can be done and is worth the time. It gives the

²⁵²⁵In order to make a distinction in emphasis on first and second term of the course the course outline does state: “REL205 concentrates on a basic understanding of the message of the Bible, whereas REL206 concentrates on the mission of the Church.”

facilitator an opportunity to spend time the student on an individual basis, talk over issues which are important to him/her, hear what they want to get out of the course and discuss how they are going to ensure their aims are fulfilled.

In the process of developing into self-directed learners the students are given responsibility for their own learning. In this way the learner is given the opportunity to study what is important to him/her and encouraged to make a practical application of into his or her life.²⁷

THE TEACHER:

The teacher's role in a course taught according to this model becomes what Rogers called a facilitator of learning. The teacher is there to draw out the truth out of the learner and help them express it in their own language as White noted.

As much class time is spent in student lead discussions, one may be of the impression that this becomes an easy option for the teacher. Some would even suggest that it is a cop-out as it leaves so much to the student. The fear which traditional teachers may have is the lack of control they have over the learning outcomes. It is indeed a model of teaching which easily can be abused by teacher and student. Especially, if it is seen as an easy way out for the teacher there are several pit-falls which needs to be noted.

Facilitating a course, rather than teaching a course in the traditional sense of teaching, requires a different kind of preparation. The facilitator will not necessarily spend as much time preparing and presenting lectures. However the level of required knowledge is the same as a traditional lecture style teacher but it will be used in a different way. The emphasis will be on guidance and the process of learning rather than on the content of learning. This means that in Christian Beliefs more time is spent in guiding and stimulating the individual students or groups to think about the logic and the implications of what they read, they think, say, write or for that matter practice. The content (Christian doctrines) become tools for understanding and reading the message of the Bible in an intelligent and personal way (the process).

The facilitator must keep a close personal contact with the individual students through tutorials (formal or informal), small seminar groups and sit in on the work which is going

²⁶ The guidelines for the group project are that each doctrine must: 1) be shown to be valid in the light of the Bible, 2) be shown to be valid in the light of the world as it is at the end of the 20th cent, and 3) be expressed in a language which can be understood by "the man on the street."

on in the groups projects. As most students are not used to this kind of learning they need a lot of encouragement and support to keep up the process of learning as they tend to fall into the trap of relying on the teacher for their learning.

In discussions open-ended questions become an important part in the learning process. These are questions which encourage the students to keep exploring issues and leaves the answers with the students. However, the facilitator will need to develop good group and discussion leader skills. The danger is that the stronger students will tend to dominate the class and the shy will not express themselves and the facilitator need to be aware of this and be able to lead the discussion it does not become one-sided.

In the end it is the job of the facilitator to create an environment in which the student feels safe and valued.

REFLECTION IN LEARNING:

The concept of reflection is very important in the learning model of Jarvis. The idea is that significant change does not take place until reflection has happened. Memorisation and other forms of non-reflective learning will just reproduce existing concepts, thinking or behaviour. It is not until reflection has taken place that new concepts, thinking or behaviour will take place. It is only through reflection the student can integrate what s/he has learnt into his/her life. That is why among the assignments in Christian Beliefs is a reflective diary. This is a chance for the students to put on paper their “undigested” thoughts about the issues discussed in class, discussions from other classes or reading they may have done which is related to the subject matter. This allows the students to “dialogue” with themselves and gives the facilitator a chance to see what kind of thinking is really going on. At times towards the end of a class period time is set aside for the students to write down their immediate thoughts and reactions to the topic which had been discussed. These notes will then become part of their reflective diary. In this way the more shy students or students who, for some other reason, do not feel comfortable speaking up in class are given a chance to express their thoughts about what went on in the class.

In the other written assignments the important element which we are looking for is what the student is thinking about the issues they are writing about. Research has to be done in

²⁷ Various assignments have been taken on by students from very academic papers, class presentation, worship talks, to very practical items like helping elderly people in the community.

order for the student to be aware of what the issues are, however in the end it is what the student's opinions are which is important. It is the student's reactions, thoughts and feelings about the message of the Bible and its message the teacher must be looking for.

CONCLUSION

Students need to learn to become involved in the challenges the Bible and Christianity presents them with. Too often students are taught in a monologue style and left passive to accept what is presented to them. It becomes head-knowledge which does not become integrated in to the life of the student. At every level, but especially when it comes to college level general education Bible classes it is important students are encouraged and given the freedom to make personal applications of the issues they study.

Though the model presented above is not perfect, it has been found to be a workable alternative. The freedom the students have been given to study areas which are of concern to them and the freedom they have had to express their thoughts and feelings has been appreciated by the students. The issue of how much freedom to give to the students is of concern to some teachers. Some do not feel comfortable with giving too much freedom to the students and are of the opinion that there is a set curriculum which has to be covered. How can that be covered if it is left to the students? The balance between freedom and control therefore has to be evaluated by each facilitator. However, in my experience with teaching according to this model, most students (there are always exceptions), though they find it strange in the beginning, in the end appreciate the freedom given and deal with it in a responsible and mature manner.

The freedom given, though, is not only an issue for the facilitator, it also can be for the student. Some students feel more comfortable being told what to believe and are shaken when they are not given a straight answer to their questions. The facilitators foremost task must be to help and support the students in the process of finding their own answers. As one student expressed it: "I feel I do not have as strong a faith as when I began the course. But I know realise that that was a borrowed faith, my parents faith. The faith I have now may not feel as strong, but I know is *my own* and therefore it will be strong." That must be the ultimate goal for every teacher of religious education, to help the students through the process of making faith their own. If we

are to take the results of the Valuegenesis study seriously, and I believe we should, the way religious education is taught at every level needs to be given further study.

