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REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION OF CURRICULUM AND VOLUNTARY BIBLE STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

MISS ETHEL CUTLER,

*Secretary of Religious Work for Students of the National Board
of Young Women's Christian Association.*

In bringing for your consideration the report of the investigation of conditions of Bible study in some 207 typical colleges in this country, it is well to bear in mind that the immediate purpose of this study has been to secure as accurate and detailed information as possible regarding the work available for students of college rank. The ultimate purpose has been to determine a course of action based upon knowledge of the facts. The day has come when we can no longer content ourselves with sporadic effort in one or another college. As a group of educators and lay workers who believe that the study of the Bible and Religious Education holds rank equal at least to other courses included in a standardized academic curriculum, who believe that the Bible holds possibilities for character formation far and above any other collections of religious literature, we can no longer be content with individual effort.

Colleges have differed, and still differ, very widely in their judgment as to the value of Bible study as a factor in education. Others find no agreement as to the method of interpretation to be followed by the instructors. This is equally true, however, in other departments of education and does not, therefore, need to deter us.

The gulf between academic instruction and voluntary effort has been all too often unbridged and the student just emerging into religious self-consciousness finds his guide pulling in opposite directions and all too often he falls between Scylla and Charybdis, caught by the whirlpool with none to rescue him. But here also there is great hope.

The suggested program of academic and voluntary study already submitted and awaiting your approval and support offers a possible way out of the dilemma. It is all in tentative form at present, a theory that awaits the proof of its value in actual use.

When the representatives of the various commissions from the Biblical Instructors, Sunday School Council and North American Student Movement met in joint session in New York City to discuss the possibilities of a united movement for the advancement of Bible study through the colleges of the country, it became evident that any adequate effort would be possible only as we were familiar with actual conditions in the colleges and universities. A preliminary investigation of cur-

riculum Bible study had previously been conducted by the study of college catalogues, but it was the judgment of this commission that we must secure, if possible, more accurate and more detailed information, not only regarding the curriculum but also the voluntary Bible classes, the character of the work done, the number of faculty and students interested. At the request of Prof. C. F. Kent, the National Field and State Secretaries of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations were pressed into service and the data from which the statistical report is compiled are personally vouched for by one or another of the staff. In most instances it has been secured by personal visits of the secretaries who gathered the information from college professors, Sunday School Superintendents, Association Workers and others in authority.

The investigation covers 41 States from Maine to California and Minnesota to Mississippi. The questionnaires sent out included questions concerning the curriculum work offered in Bible and Religious Education, the faculty members, their equipment for work, the student enrollment, the voluntary Bible classes both in the Sunday School and those outside, most of the latter being under one of the Associations.

We have received and compiled statistics from 207 blanks. The statistical report is appended. Of the 207 colleges reported only 196 sent the actual enrollment of students of college grade, though almost without exception these same schools did give the enrollment in the various Bible courses. Except for this one glaring inaccuracy, the figures may be accepted as reasonably correct.

The classification of colleges is based on the preliminary report of the Bureau of Education at Washington, Class I being those colleges whose graduates can secure an A. M. as the result of one year's work; Class II, those colleges whose graduates must give somewhat more than one year of study to secure an A. M.

The foundation of the college was indicated on the blanks as desired by the college—the term "Private" meaning Christian colleges non-sectarian, the Denominational schools those under Church control.

It is certainly significant that of the 181 colleges offering Bible work of some sort scarcely a third have even one member of the faculty giving full time to the work. Of the 63 faculty members giving full time, most of them have had graduate work and hold one or more degrees B. D., Ph. D., S. T. D. Of the 261 giving part time, however, not more than 50% have had special preparation for Bible teaching and the general character of the courses offered is in many cases distinctly below par—sometimes evidently very unpopular—judging from the number electing, or quite as often one hour elective courses whose titles do not hold vast promise of academic values.

With a few notable exceptions, however, one may safely

say that those colleges which have at least one faculty member giving full time are the most fully organized and best equipped as far as Bible courses are concerned.

Lest you conclude from the figures before you that all first and second class colleges have good departments and only those below grade pull down the standard, may I add that of the 104 I and II Class colleges, 36 have faculty giving full time to the work, 53 faculty giving part time only, 89 of the 104 having any Biblical instruction—thus you can see that the data are typical as presented.

For the rest the figures speak for themselves—out of 92,051 students in these colleges, 16,076 are in curriculum Bible work, scarcely one-sixth and barely more than 3,400 out of the 92,051 are in other courses of religious education. Is it not a challenge to advance? The Sunday Schools at a conservative estimate enroll 13,560 students, the Christian Associations nearly 15,000—over 500 faculty led classes, 800 odd student leaders, 300 others. Do not these 25,000 students assure us of a real and vital interest in religion, but what of the 60,000 not in any form of Bible study?

STATISTICAL REPORT

ON COLLEGE BIBLE STUDY.

Colleges reported—	
Class I.....	97
Class II.....	70
Unclassified	268
Total.....	435
Foundation—	
State	25
Private	75
Denominational	89
Total.....	189
States	49
Colleges enrolling less than 200 students.....	82
Colleges enrolling more than 200 students.....	114
Total.....	196
College Students—	
Men	54,373
Women	33,588
Total.....	87,961

CURRICULUM BIBLE STUDY.

Colleges offering Biblical instruction.....	183
Academic Bible Department.....	122
Theological Department.....	18
Colleges having faculty members—	
Giving full time.....	52
Giving part time.....	141
Faculty members giving full time.....	63
Giving part time.....	261
Colleges offering required courses.....	112
Courses.....	277
Semesters.....	426
Hours.....	834
College students enrolled—	
Men.....	4,323
Women.....	5,702
Total.....	10,025
Colleges offering elective courses.....	125
Courses.....	405
Semesters.....	569
Hours.....	1,331
College students enrolled—	
Men.....	3,106
Women.....	2,867
Total.....	5,973

OTHER COURSES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

Colleges offering required courses.....	48
Courses.....	71
Semesters.....	83
Hours.....	210
College students enrolled—	
Men.....	654
Women.....	544
Total.....	1,198
Colleges offering elective courses.....	91
Courses.....	255
Semesters.....	261
Hours.....	796
College students enrolled—	
Men.....	1,257
Women.....	981
Total.....	2,238

VOLUNTARY BIBLE STUDY.

Bible Classes in Sunday Schools—	
Classes	580
Faculty leaders.....	301
Student leaders.....	154
Other leaders.....	164
College students enrolled—	
Men	7,132
Women	27,137
Total.....	34,269
Bible Classes outside Sunday Schools—	
Classes	1,070
Faculty leaders.....	266
Student leaders.....	688
Other leaders.....	136
College students enrolled—	
Men	7,711
Women	5,675
Total.....	13,386

A SUGGESTED CURRICULUM FOR VOLUNTARY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION GROUPS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES*

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In considering this suggested curriculum as the basis for the discussions of voluntary groups in colleges and universities, several facts need to be kept in mind.

1. The suggested curriculum is not the work of any one individual or group of individuals. The initiative has been taken in the consideration of this voluntary program by a committee of the Council of North American Student Movements (the Student Young Women's and Young Men's Christian Associations and the Student Volunteer Movement). The work on this commenced a year ago in a preliminary investigation, and the report in its present tentative form is the result

*Tentative Report of a Committee of the Council of North American Student Movements with the co-operation of various leaders acquainted with the student field.