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THE CONTENT OF AN IDEAL CURRICULUM OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN COLLEGES

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Our ideal is limited by the fact that the curriculum contemplated is to be but a part of the regular college course leading to the A.B. degree. The courses that go into that curriculum must commend themselves as possessing general educational and culture values as distinguished from mere professional values. Full training for most competent leadership in religious work must be sought in the graduate school of religion, the theological seminary, or the religious training school. It is from these institutions that we shall expect to come the fully trained ministers, directors of religious education, missionaries, or Christian Association secretaries.

But the college curriculum may be so adjusted as to furnish a correlated group of courses which in their combined form would constitute a curriculum of religious education in the broader sense. It should be comprehensive enough to prepare for efficient service that large class of men and women who give their services voluntarily in religious work, and be the basis for advanced studies for those who seek more professional training.

The content of an ideal curriculum as thus contemplated may be grouped as follows:

Group I. RELIGION.		
1. Psychology	3	hours
2. Ethics	3	"
3. The History of Religion.....	3	"
4. The Philosophy of Religion.....	3	"
Group II. BIBLICAL RELIGION.		
1. Biblical History	3	"
2. Biblical Literature	3	"
3. Biblical Religion	3	"
4. Biblical Languages	6	"
Group III. CHRISTIAN RELIGION.		
1. History of Christianity.....	3	"
2. The Social Problems of Christianity.....	3	"
3. The Propagation of Christianity.....	3	"
Group IV. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.		
1. History of Education.....	3	"
2. Methods and Practice Work.....	3	"
Total	42	hours

Group I has for its subject the nature of Religion. The course in psychology will acquaint the student with those fundamental

and general processes, laws, and conditions of the mental life of which the religious element forms a part. The course in ethics will give him the means by which to evaluate which religion has the most moral values. The History of Religion will bring him face to face with the varied manifestations of the religious spirit in the world and lead him to determine their comparative merits. The study of the Philosophy of Religion will furnish him with the grounds of belief in God and the moral order in the universe. From the pursuit of these studies the student should carry the intelligent conviction that Religion is a normal and essential element in human life and that to be engaged in its dissemination is to contribute to the highest welfare of the human race.

Group II has for its subject the Bible and the origin and growth of the Hebrew religion culminating in the Christian religion. The course in Biblical History should furnish a comprehensive survey of the outstanding events, personalities, and institutions of Biblical times, with special reference to their permanent value to civilization. The course in Biblical Literature should not only deal with each part as a unit, with view to its historical origin, literary character, and religious and moral teachings, but also from the point of view of its place in the chronological order to which it belongs. The origin of the Bible as a whole or a collection and as an English version should also receive due attention. The greatest importance should be attached to a course in the teachings of the Bible. This course should trace the essential religious, ethical, and social ideas of the Bible through their various stages of growth to their culmination in New Testament teachings.

There is still a failure fully to appreciate the strictly practical value of critical and historical Bible study, even among its friends. In religious leadership the Bible will ever have to be the great textbook. In view of the great variety of religious and ethical ideals that the Bible contains, a critical knowledge of its content is absolutely essential to its proper use for religious education. Biblical criticism, not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of giving access to the right material for clear-cut religious and ethical ideas, should not be lightly treated.

The study of the original Biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, are now quite commonly regarded as practically useless. But there is an aspect of the question that may well be considered. The college curriculum demands a certain amount of language study, ancient or modern languages, or both. I have known a number of instances where college students have elected a course in Spanish,

for instance, for which they admittedly had no particular use, except to fulfill the requirements of the college curriculum. We have made it a rule that in the case of a student preparing for religious work the substitution of Hebrew is permissible to cover the language requirement. A course of Hebrew will give the student the pedagogical values of a language study and also open up his closer approach to the main source of information in his career. If I could reach the preparatory schools, I should suggest to those students who are looking toward religious work as their profession that, if they are bound to choose but one ancient language, it be Greek instead of Latin, for it would give them all the pedagogic values of the study of an ancient language and at the same time open up to them a deeper interest in the New Testament. But as long as the study of languages is an educational requirement, so long may the original languages of the Bible lay claim to attention of those to whom the Bible will be the main textbook in their work.

Group III has for its subject the propagation of the Christian religion and its influence upon the civilization of the present time. The course in the History of Christianity should acquaint the student with the various forms Christianity has assumed from its rise to the present time. But its main purpose should be to bring him into sympathetic touch with the religious forces of to-day, rather than to enlighten him on the dogmatic differences. His course in sociology should make him see how to apply the principles of Christianity to the economic and sociological problems of modern life and the part that the various institutions and organizations for social betterment should take in the task. A course in the principles and history of home and foreign mission work should be made to possess strictly educational and cultural values in broadening the student's horizon and in making him realize the forces at work in modern times tending to world-wide civilization.

Group IV has for its subject the principles of education in their application to Religious Education. As the teacher of religion has to perform exactly the same functions in his sphere that other teachers do, he needs to know the principles of education, which a general course in the History of Education will give him. A laboratory course in method and practice work is the best practical accompaniment to a course in theory, and is as important in the preparation for efficiency in the church school as in any other.

The total time required for these courses is forty-two year hours out of sixty, in other words, about two thirds of the college

course, leaving one third for other studies. This distribution compares favorably with the specialization contemplated in colleges where the major and minor system is in vogue. These studies would balance a student's college course as well as the elective courses of those who are preparing themselves for teaching other branches.

But while this curriculum is designed for the undergraduate college course, it might easily yield itself to expansion into a graduate course.

THE FARGO COLLEGE PLAN FOR A DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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For one of two reasons the American college until recent years avoided the issue of Religious Education: (1) the desire to imitate and so line up with the universities; (2) the fear of being classed with the theological seminaries. Pressed by other demands, college presidents assumed that the problem was being cared for elsewhere. College professors looked upon the entire matter as out of the range of the busy scientific man. When courses in English Bible were introduced the gap was regarded as filled. All talk of the application of pedagogy to religious education and the organization of forces for systematic moral and religious training, was cavalierly passed over to some recondite corner of the university or divinity school, there, quite likely, to be suitably shelved. Once upon a time, before education became a livable pursuit, the entire matter was passed over to the clergy, who, it was argued, had vowed themselves to poverty and sacrifice. From that error we are slowly emerging. Similarly religious education was laid on the shoulders of the clergy, who, often with more zeal than skill, accepted the responsibility. The advent of the layman was hailed with as much surprise as was Saul among the Prophets. To-day the layman acknowledges his responsibility and his need for special training.

This much gained, further procrastination was excused on the ground of scarcity of funds and more pressing needs. In the beginning, then, demands must be reduced to a minimum. Now peda-