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The Religious Education Federation of New Haven Connecticut

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New Haven has been making an interesting experiment in the development of a more efficient Sunday school system under trained leadership and in interdenominational fellowship. The Religious Education Federation of New Haven was formed January 14, 1907, at a mass meeting called by the New Haven Federation of Churches as a result of suggestions made by Professor Charles F. Kent before the Pastors' Union in May, 1906. The purpose of the Federation is thus stated: "to stimulate a greater interest in Biblical knowledge on the part of all classes in the community and especially of the youth and to secure a greater efficiency among our churches in the work of religious education." A body of fifteen Directors, prominent clergymen and laymen of all denominations, including the Superintendent of Schools, was elected, and, after choosing their own officers, they appointed a Director to serve as Secretary and Supervisor of Training. The Federation has been extremely fortunate in its choice of Directors; and, although some churches of different denominations held aloof at first, nearly all are now in more or less active sympathy and co-operation with the movement. This last year has seen the amalgamation with the Federation of the Elementary Grades Union and the inception of plans for an affiliation of the Sunday school Superintendents' Union, the oldest Sunday school organization in the city, with the Federation. Both affiliated bodies preserve their own identity for special purposes and occasions; but, as subordinate to the general organization, they are less liable to duplicate and waste efforts, and each gains in strength and efficiency. The Federation is also affiliated, as a local Guild, with the Religious Education Association and with the State Sunday school Association, its Director being a member of the Executive Committee of the latter.

Perhaps the most novel feature is the employment of a Director. So far as known, this is the first attempt to secure a specially trained leader who shall give his main attention to the general Sunday school work of a city. The first Director, Rev. G. D. Castor, Ph. D. beside advising with the various Sunday schools as to plans, and arranging for public lectures by Presi-

dent Henry C. King and others, taught five Teachers' Meetings in different sections of the city, being assisted in two districts by students from the Divinity School. Three of the classes took up the Blakeslee Lessons and two the International. The average total attendance was 65. Mr. Castor brought to the work his valuable experience in secular education of the Academy type and a mind thoroughly trained in scholarly research by graduate work here and abroad. He also gathered together a library of the best Sunday-school literature for general use. After his call to the Professorship of New Testament Studies in Pacific Seminary his place was ably filled by Rev. C. E. Underwood who was able to give a larger amount of time to personal visitation of the Sunday schools and presentation of the work in the churches. The scheme of the Training Classes was changed from that of preparation for the next Sunday's lesson, except in one district where the best support had been given, to a series of 5 classes covering the same subject matter in various sections of the city and on different nights, and aiming rather at general preparation for Sunday-school teaching. Four were taught by the Director and one by a Divinity-school student. They took up an outline study of the Bible, a study of child-nature, teaching methods and Sunday-school organization, on the basis of Moninger, Gregory, Du Bois, and Haslett. The enrollment reached 117 from 25 schools. A series of illustrated lectures on Palestine by Professors Bacon and Kent and other lectures by Prof. St. John of Hartford and Secretary Cope of the Religious Education Association were also arranged. Next year, Rev. Harold Hunting, a graduate of Yale College and Divinity School, after pastoral experience, returns to New Haven to take the position of Director of the Federation.

The question naturally arises as to the financial support of an enterprise depending on such varied units, already bound up with their own special interests. This has been a difficult problem especially in the initiation of the movement before its real significance and importance was perceived by the majority of our church workers. The drain on the financial resources of the religiously interested part of the city this last year by the cost of the Chapman evangelistic campaign made the task doubly hard. Yet by the persistent efforts of those interested this stress has been weathered. Financial support is secured through three classes of members: (1) Supporting Members, who pay an annual fee of \$10. or more; (2) Contributing Members, who pay an annual fee of \$1 or more; and (3) Sustaining Members—churches, Sunday schools, or other organizations paying an annual fee of \$5 or more. All members of the Federation, and of any church, Sunday school, or other organization contributing to it are admitted without further payment to all classes, lectures, and other priv-

ileges which the Federation offers. The total contributions for the first year were about \$300, for the second, \$550. The larger portion of the salary of Mr. Castor was paid by one of the churches, which engaged him as Assistant pastor and allowed him to give much of his time to this work. He was also Instructor in the Biblical Department of the College. Even the sum for the second year was insufficient to secure the whole time of a capable man, and it had to be supplemented by opportunities for occasional preaching and the granting of time for graduate study. Next year the Federation hopes to pay a salary of \$500 or \$600 to the Director and raise more for occasional lectures than this year, in addition to providing for the expenses of the committees working on the new graded work.

This other feature of note in the brief history of the organization is a plan adopted at the June, 1908, meeting whereby the following courses are recommended to the various Sunday schools. Several schools have agreed to adopt one or more of them and to change their study year so that it will begin with the others in September. The courses suggested are not all ideal; but they represent the best available material for graded work for our own schools in the judgment of the committees appointed to investigate. These committees continue their work in the preparation and direction of these courses and of the departmental Teachers Meetings, which are to be substituted for the general meetings for all grades.

The suggested curriculum is as follows: Kindergarten department, a course of lessons to be worked out by the committee on the basis of Professor Pease's Outlines with Bible Stories substituted for some of the nature stories; Primary department, a course of Bible stories topically arranged according to Professor Pease's plan with mimeograph sheets prepared by the committee; Junior department, International Lessons with original graded supplemental work; Intermediate department, Gates' Life of Jesus with the following suggestions for following years and more advanced classes, in this order: Keedy, Old Testament Heroes; Keedy, Early Christian Heroes; Horton, Life Studies or Noble Lives and Deeds, or Gardner, History of the Church from St. Paul to Bishop Brooks, or N. Y. S. S., Commission course on the Teachings of Jesus; Senior department, Professor Kent's Historical Bible (published June 1908).

New Haven of course enjoys exceptional opportunities. It has at its disposal the trained talents of the Biblical teachers of the College and Divinity School. Of especial value in developing plans and leaders has been the Seminary on Methods and Principles of Religious Education conducted by Professor Kent and Mr. Clapp and including college and theological students, and city

pastors and deaconesses as well. Yet an adoption of this scheme would be very feasible for other cities also and some are contemplating such organization. A university town presents indeed some difficulties in the way of slowness of action which other cities would be spared.

The following is a general summary of the year's work, taken from the annual report of Professor Kent, now President of the Federation.

"During the past year the Federation has been confronted by unusual and unavoidable obstacles. Notwithstanding these it has accomplished certain definite results.

"1—By public addresses and conferences it has focussed public attention on the vital importance of religious education and the need of more efficient methods.

"2—Through public lectures on biblical and kindred subjects it has contributed to the practical equipment of the teaching force in our Sunday schools.

"3—By Teachers' Training Classes it has familiarized the hundred or more teachers who have attended with modern pedagogical methods and with the practical problems which every teacher must meet.

"4—And most important of all, it has brought together in close co-operation the experienced leaders engaged in religious educational work throughout the city."

Erastus Blakeslee

The Rev. Erastus Blakeslee, a Life Member of the Association, died July 12. As the founder of the Bible Study Publishing Company which issues the Blakeslee lessons, he has been helpful to a great degree in securing reforms in the study of the Bible. He was born in 1838. He edited nineteen series of lessons on all parts of the Bible, each series comprising all grades, from the Kindergarten to the Adult Class, making in all about 160 volumes of lessons. Their use has extended to the ends of the earth. They constitute a worthy work for any life.