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Training Teachers of Religion

Following the presentation of the papers printed below, a resolution originating in the Department of Teacher-Training and framed by the Council of Religious Education was adopted in the general convention of the Religious Education Association at Washington, D. C., February 13, 1908. This resolution is as follows:

"In view of the pressing need of leaders who can properly instruct Sunday-school teachers and others in the principles and methods of religious education, we urge the universities to provide in their departments of education for specific training with reference to such leadership."

The State University and Teachers of Religion

DANIEL B. PURINTON, Ph. D., LL. D.
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The relation of the state university to all matters of religion is a delicate and difficult one. It involves questions of church and state and manifold other considerations upon which good men do greatly differ. This difference arises, I take it, from various and somewhat divergent views of the nature of religion itself. Now religion is not a superstition, an inheritance or a creed. It is a life. As such, it has three chief elements, the intellectual, the ethical, the emotional. It includes a perception, an obligation, an attitude. In the Christian religion at least, all these elements are essential. Each is primal, none is negligible. There is a proper sense in which instruction may be given in all these aspects of the Faith. But religious instruction is peculiarly important and fruitful on its intellectual and ethical sides. Teachers of religion must be both mentally informed and morally sound. All experience proves that there is no ethical strength or certitude without the superior sanctions of religion. And the importance of the intellectual element is seen in the history of all religions whatsoever. Every faith that has shaped the history and destiny of men has been largely intellectual. Mr. Lecky has justly remarked that every conquering religion has addressed the heart. With equal justness we may add that it has addressed the head as well. The religion of Plato and Aristotle was of this character. The dominant faiths of the Orient today are eminently intellectual. Indeed there is vastly more of philosophy in them than of religion. In every age the Christian religion has involved the active use of the human intellect. In

our own age Christian intelligence is specially needful for preserving the foundations of the Faith, for propagating the principles of the Faith, and for carrying forward the constructive activities of the Faith. Perhaps never before was this intellectual need of religion quite so imperative as now. Doubt and criticism are everywhere current in religious circles. The one cannot be met by ignorance, nor the other by a sneer. Men will no longer believe either as their fathers did, or *because* their fathers did. Neither will they accept religious faith as a synonym for mental inertness or inanity. We must address their intelligence and give them a reason for the hope that is within us. And this can readily be done. The exercise of faith is not at all unreasonable. On the contrary, it is the necessary foundation of all reasoning, whether mathematical, historical, philosophical or religious. And certainly it is more reasonable to accept than to reject the divine, historic Christ. But this acceptance becomes more and more a matter of intelligence and conviction.

And herein the function of the state university in religious matters at once emerges. While such an institution must be strictly non-partisan in politics and non-sectarian in religion, nevertheless it is manifestly proper that any university should offer exact and sympathetic instruction as to the great facts and principles of the Christian Faith, which is easily the most stupendous phenomenon in all human history, and at the same time the basis of all civilization and ethical law in our own country. For this reason among others it is both the right and the duty of the state university to recognize teachers of religion and to provide for their proper instruction. The University of West Virginia has recognized this right and this duty and has already made some provision accordingly. Since the movement which led to this recognition is altogether unique in the history of state universities, it is perhaps worth while to devote time to a description and explanation of the movement itself.

Early in the spring of 1904, there came into the mind and heart of the General Secretary of the State Sunday School Association of West Virginia an earnest desire to furnish special instruction for teachers and other Sunday school workers in the state who might wish it. Other state Sunday school associations were organizing summer schools for this purpose, but in West Virginia no such provision was made and no possibility of it was in sight. This became a matter of grief and great anxiety to the secretary. About the same time it occurred to the president of the state university that something ought to be done by that institution for the Sunday school teachers of West Virginia. Already the university was providing special instruction in its summer school for the secular teachers of the commonwealth,

and it did not seem right that the hundreds of Sunday school teachers throughout the state should be left out of such provision. For were they not teachers as well as the others? And were they not teaching virtue and civic righteousness? And as such instructors were they not even more useful to the state than other teachers? And if so was not their exclusion from the university summer school an unjust and unrighteous discrimination against them? About the time that these troublesome questions were running through the presidential head, a county Sunday school convention was held at Morgantown, the seat of the state university. This convention brought together the president of the university and the secretary of the state Sunday school association. Whereupon each discovered what had been in the mind of the other concerning this important matter. This discovery led to the organization during the following summer of a School of Methods for Sunday School Workers in connection with the University Summer School. In this university movement the state Sunday school association co-operated at once and heartily. At the next meeting of the regents of the university the action of the president in organizing the school of methods was unanimously approved and authority was given for its continuance. Four sessions of the school have already been held and the fifth is being arranged for next summer to begin June twenty-ninth. Instruction is given by members of the university faculty, by officers of the state Sunday school association, and by Sunday school specialists brought from other states of the Union.

Among the specialists hitherto engaged for such service are the following: Marion Lawrence, General Secretary International Sunday School Association, Toledo, Ohio; W. C. Pearce, Teacher Training Secretary, International Sunday School Association, Chicago; Dr. R. G. Moulton, University of Chicago; Dr. H. M. Hamill, Superintendent Teacher Training Work, Methodist Episcopal Church South, Nashville, Tennessee; Dr. Richard S. Holmes, Editor the Westminster, Philadelphia; Dr. Charles Roads, General Field Worker, Methodist Episcopal Church, New York; Sarah E. Griswold, Chicago Normal School; Nannie Lee Frayser, Primary Superintendent for the State of Kentucky, Louisville; Rev. E. M. Fergusson, Trenton, New Jersey; Dr. J. T. McFarland, Sunday School Secretary Methodist Episcopal Church, New York; Dr. H. T. Musselman, Superintendent Teacher Training American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia; Dr. E. S. Lewis, Vice President International Sunday School Association, Columbus, Ohio; Dr. F. J. McConnell, Brooklyn, New York; Dr. Joseph Clarke, General Secretary Ohio Sunday School Association, Columbus; Charles G. Trumbull, Editor Sunday School Times, Philadelphia.

These representatives of the leading Sunday school workers in America have brought to the school of methods, each his own peculiar and appropriate contribution toward the accomplishment of its great purpose. This purpose is to give pastors and Sunday school superintendents and teachers the best available instruction and the highest genuine inspiration in the modern methods and principles of Sunday school work. To this end the widest possible range of topics has been selected for discussion.

As illustrative of this range of topics I may venture to quote at random from one of the schedules of study—that of 1906. Here are some of the subjects taken up at that session: The Higher Values, The Teacher's Preparation, Observation Classes, Bible Study, The Spiritual Side of the Teacher's Work, The Big Boy and How to Deal with Him, The Teacher Teaching, The Art of Illustration, Sunday School Music, the Old Book and the New Man, Sunday School Officers and Their Duties, Teacher and Pupil, Theory and Conditions, Child Study, The Law of the Teacher, The Preservation vs. the Rescue of the Child, The Law of Child Growth, The Best Method for Local Teacher Training, The Law of the Superintendent, Ethical and Civic Significance of Sunday School Work, Stereopticon Lecture on Palestine, Psychological Basis of Grading a School, Graded Supplemental Work, The Home Department, The Child, The World-Wide Sunday School Movement, Sunday School Organization, Departmental Work in Sections, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior, Superintendents, School Officers and Pastors. For the next session we expect in addition to such topics as these just named to emphasize the department of teacher training. Experts will give special instruction therein and at the close of the school international diplomas will be awarded.

Attendance upon the school of methods has been fairly good—indeed, quite good under existing circumstances. We enroll about a hundred students each summer and the number promises to be larger hereafter. These students are from all parts of West Virginia and from some other states. They include pastors, Sunday school officers, superintendents and teachers of all grades. And a more earnest intelligent, conscientious and appreciative company of students it would be hard to find anywhere. The work when compared with that of older summer schools conducted by Sunday school associations of other states, is very gratifying indeed. And we are hoping to make it still broader and better in the future.

I have said that this movement is unique and exceptional among state universities—and so it is. Since its inception a number of presidents of such universities have made inquiries concerning the work with an evident view of introducing something of

the kind into their own institutions. Last summer the University of Georgia, as I am informed, conducted a work of this character in connection with its summer school. No other state institution in America, so far as I know, has in any direct and open fashion attempted to provide for the distinctive needs of teachers of religion. It is quite possible that in some of the states any such attempt might be met with a degree of hostility or at least of criticism. In West Virginia, it is gratifying to know, that as yet not even the slightest evidence of such criticism has appeared. On the contrary words of hearty approval and commendation have been received from all quarters, especially from pastors and Sunday school officers have come numerous unsolicited statements of the gratifying improvements in their work which have resulted from the presence of some of the workers at a single session of the school of methods.

As it seems to me, no citizen of any state has the slightest ground for just complaint in case the state university should offer instruction to teachers of religion in that state. And this opinion has not been reached without due deliberation. The true relation of the state to education, when carefully considered, not only justifies this conviction, but actually necessitates it.

Notice for a moment the fundamental principles that relate to the educational functions of the state:

1. Ethical education is necessary to good citizenship. The higher the type of society becomes, the greater will be the need of such education, which, in its best form, is impossible when divorced from the superior sanctions of religion.

2. The state and the state alone has both the right and the duty to prepare the citizen for good citizenship. And this must be done, by force if need be.

3. The state need not actually educate all its citizens. If parents, public minded citizens, corporations, guilds or religious bodies are disposed to engage in this work, they may rightly do so and thus relieve the state from the responsibility of furnishing instruction.

4. But no one can ever relieve the state from the obligation to oversee the work of education by whomsoever carried on within its borders, and to secure to all its citizens at least so much instruction as may be needful for good citizenship.

5. All education must be carried on in the name of the state. Even the denominational university must hold its property, carry forward its work and confer its scholastic honors in the name and by the authority of the state. Any teaching of doctrines immoral, treasonable or otherwise harmful to the state must be promptly suppressed by law.

6. In case any genuine educational need for good citizenship is not supplied by other agencies, it must be met by the state itself. The proper instruction of teachers of religion, at least in the ethical aspects of their work, would seem to be such a need.

7. Therefore the state should furnish such instruction, in case it is not otherwise available.

If these principles are at all correct, it is distinctly worth while for all the states of the Union to take into serious and sympathetic consideration the claims of that great and goodly company of Sunday school teachers—more than fifteen hundred thousand in number—who are doing more than all other teachers combined to elevate the type of life and improve the character of citizenship in the American Republic. The topic assigned for this discussion would seem to intimate that there is a real relation between the state university and teachers of religion. And the writer of this paper most heartily believes that this intimation is absolutely correct. Surely state universities have some responsibility in this great and essential matter of religio-ethical education. One of them has recognized its obligation and is honestly trying to meet it. It is earnestly to be hoped that other state institutions may “go and do likewise.”

Conference in Kansas City

A conference for eastern Kansas and western Missouri was held on Monday and Tuesday, March 9 and 10, in the Grand Ave. Methodist Church, Kansas City, under the auspices of the Ministers' Alliance, of that city, co-operating with the Religious Education Association. The following papers were presented:

Action Aggressive and Intelligent, Hon. Henry M. Beardsley.
Education and the Life of the Nation, Henry F. Cope.

The Pulpit in Relation to Biblical Theology, Prof. W. M. Patton.

The Pulpit in Relation to Social Science, Rev. Paul H. Linn.

The Pulpit in Relation to Spiritual Dynamics, Rev. Burris A. Jenkins.

The Present Condition of Sunday School Work in Kansas City, Rev. Albert Bushnell.

The Importance of Teacher Training, Rev. J. H. Hardin.

The Religious preparation of the Parents through the Home Department, Mrs. Charlotte F. Wilder.

A Rational Evangelism, Rev. Geo. H. Combs.

The Seat of Authority in Evangelical Religion, Rev. T. E. Chandler.