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Herbert Wright Gates M. A. ^a

^a Religious Work Director , Central Department Y. M. C. A. , Chicago, 111.

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An Educational Policy for Religious Work in the Y. M. C. A.

HERBERT WRIGHT GATES, M. A.

Religious Work Director, Central Department Y. M. C. A., Chicago, Ill.

A. *The Purpose.*

The purpose of our religious work is two-fold:

1. To bring men into right relations with God, helping them to find in the teachings of Jesus the clearest revelation of God's purpose for man, and in Christian living the fullest expression of the divine life in man.

2. To bring each man, through fellowship, instruction and service, to the realization of his highest possibilities in spiritual experience and Christian usefulness.

B. *The Method.*

Our method is in keeping with the spirit of religious education. Religious Education differs from earlier forms of religious endeavor, not in its object, nor in the material, but chiefly in the point of view and method.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Character the Chief Aim.

Religious education, like all modern educational work, sets the highest value upon character. Just as the school has learned to place less emphasis upon mere recitation as compared with practical work; so religious education estimates the learning or reciting of creeds or professions of faith as of less value than Christian living.

2. The time element recognized.

Together with recognition of the importance of character comes that of the time element involved in any true character development. Suddenness and even definiteness of experience will have decreasing emphasis; consistency and growth will have far more. An immediate result of this viewpoint will be less attention to numbers in estimating results and more to the quality of the work actually done.

3. The Place of the Will.

Any attempt to reach character results brings one into contact with the will of the man. And when we understand the will we find that we are dealing with the whole man: his intellectual as well as his emotional faculties. Any evangelism which proceeds on this basis will not only endeavor to appeal in due proportion to both sides of the man's nature, but will avoid doing violence to either. Its appeal will not only be rational in its

presentation, but it will give time for reasonable consideration before insisting upon decision.

4. Consideration of Individual Personality.

Religious education, like any other kind of education, must take account of the personality of each individual: his temperament, habits of thought, mode of life, previous experience, innate capacities; and, having considered these things, it must govern its method accordingly.

5. Consideration of Class of Men to be Reached.

From this viewpoint, the policy of any institution must be shaped in view of the type of men who constitute its constituency. If they are men of little education, unaccustomed to thinking for themselves, or men who have forfeited through vicious habits the thoughtful self-control of their lives; then the method will be that of the rescue mission, and its appeal must be more largely to the emotions, and be more urgent for decisions made under the spur of the immediate feeling.

If, on the other hand, the majority of those to be reached are men of average intelligence, accustomed to thinking for themselves, still retaining a fair measure of self-respect and self-control, then the appeal must be more rational, decisions cannot be urged so immediately, and greater emphasis must be placed upon service rather than profession. But the decisions reached by this class of men, more gradually, and in the light of a full consideration both of the reasons for and the consequences of such action, are far more likely to issue in consistent and growing Christian experience.

C. *Features of Work.*

The features of our work may be grouped under the headings already suggested in the statement of purpose: Fellowship, Instruction, and Service, or Training.

1. Fellowship.

(a) In groups organized for service.

Yoke-fellows Club, Good Citizenship Club, etc.

(b) In individual service, assigned or undertaken upon personal initiative.

The important thing about this work is that the fellowship should be more or less continuous, not merely transient and temporary, and should persevere in each case until the end is achieved.

2. Instruction.

(a) In formally organized groups for more or less continued study: such as classes, clubs, round table conferences, etc.

First. Bible study, conducted in sympathy with the spirit

and aims of modern scholarship, and with acceptance of the reasonably assured results of historical Bible study.

Second. Study of the Principles of Christian Living: in such groups as those discussing "The Ethics of Everyday Living," "Ten Great Questions in Religion," etc.

Third. Study of Christian History, Past and Present, Missions, etc.

(b) Instruction of a more informal type, in the form of lectures and addresses, to groups gathered for the particular occasion and having no continuous enrolment.

This includes our general religious meetings.

(c) Instruction through literature.

First. The religious study library.

Second. The sale of religious literature.

The object of all instruction is to make such a presentation of the principles and workings of Christianity as to give to thoughtful men a reasonable ground for decision with reference to its claims.

3. Training.

Both Fellowship and Instruction must issue in Training in service if character results are to be reached.

The results to be looked for are:

(a) The strengthening and development of men already professing Christians.

(b) The bringing of men into a Christian life through enlistment in activities which they may later recognize to be Christian in their motive.

4. The Evangelistic Appeal.

The evangelistic appeal to men is a feature of all these different lines of work, and its form may be as varied as the work itself.

It will at times be made from the platform of a meeting, at times in the quiet of a personal conference, at times through the gradual influence of Association with a Christian personality, and the best results will be gained when the circumstances of each case are allowed to determine what form it shall take. But these points may be noted in general.

(a) The appeal for decision should come after reasonable presentation and consideration of the grounds upon which it is based.

(b) It will be most effective when backed by the personality of some individual with whom the man to be reached has become acquainted and in whom he has confidence.

(c) It should invariably be followed by continued fellowship and training in service.

Notes

Frank Knight Sanders, Ph. D., D. D., the first president of the R. E. A., has been elected President of Washburn College, Topeka, Kansas.

It is said that every member of the faculty of Yale Divinity School is a teacher in the Sunday school, and a similar statement has been made with reference to the teachers at Cobb Divinity School in connection with Bates College, Lewiston, Maine.

A largely attended meeting of the officers of the Department of Teacher Training was held at Union Theological Seminary on May 8th. Work was planned and topics selected for reports at the Chicago Convention.

The Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church publishes, for gratuitous distribution, a "Manual of Better Methods" in the Sunday school. The 200 pages of this booklet contain a large amount of really valuable suggestion on methods, including many papers by Sunday-school leaders. We would suggest that, when you write to the officers of the Sunday School Union for this Manual, you enclose at least ten cents for cost of mailing.

In the Public Library

Every public library in the country, as well as those in the universities and seminaries, ought to have a set of the volumes published by the Religious Education Association. These books, with their wealth of helpful, inspiring material, should be available to every parent, Sunday-school and public school teacher.

Just ask whether these books are in your library. If not, place a "request" for these titles: *The Improvement of Religious Education*, *The Bible in Practical Life*, *The Aims of Religious Education*, *The Materials of Religious Education*, *Religious Education and the Life of the Nation*.

Church Benevolences and the Religious Education Association

A few churches have come to recognize the importance of the work of the Religious Education Association and to see in it one of the far-reaching missionary agencies working for the redemption of the race and these churches are making regular annual contributions from their benevolent fund to the support of the Association. One of the latest to take this step is the First Baptist Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., of which the Rev. Alfred W. Wishart is the pastor.

Herein is a suggestion to many pastors who are members of this Association and who believe in its work.