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SOCIAL TRAINING OF LAY WORKERS.

A MEMORANDUM ON A CURSORY EXAMINATION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR LAY AND PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS WORKERS WITH RESPECT TO PREPARATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE.

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It is the purpose of this paper to gather up and present in intelligible form the results of an examination of the catalogues and other literature issued by schools in the United States which have for their object the training of religious workers, with a view to ascertaining to what extent these schools are offering training in social service. More than this, in the time at the writer's disposal, it has been impossible to do, but the matter appears to be of sufficient importance to warrant further effort along this line and a more thorough study of the situation.

Difficulty was encountered at the outset of the task in obtaining a complete list of such schools as it was desired to include in the study. Correspondence with some of the leading schools for lay and professional religious workers, with secretaries of denominational church boards and with other persons who, it was supposed, would be familiar with such schools, brought fragmentary lists, often inaccurate and sometimes misleading. In one instance the corresponding secretary of a Church Board of Education was ignorant of the existence of a school in a neighboring city which aimed to train workers for his own denomination. These facts are cited only to indicate the difficulties which were experienced in gathering the material for the study. Much time was lost in the mere compiling of a list and information continues to come in, too late to be of service, but calculated to make the writer painfully aware of the incompleteness of his information.

In the present study the announcements of forty-one institutions have been examined. Nine have been discarded as falling without the scope of our inquiry. The information here presented is based upon the printed statements of the remaining thirty-two institutions.

Geographically these schools are distributed as follows: New York 7, Illinois 5, Pennsylvania 4, Tennessee 4, Massachusetts 3, Ohio 2, and Connecticut, Maryland, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Minnesota one each.

In the case of some schools there is uncertainty as to their denominational connections. Few, if any, schools would restrict applicants for admission to members of their own denomination. The following grouping, however, is thought to be substantially correct: Congregational 4, Disciples 4, Baptist 3, Methodist Episcopal, North 2, South 2, Presbyterian and Reformed 2, Lutheran 2, Protestant Episcopal 1, undenominational 9, and the three remaining appear to be connected with the Holiness Movement.

Considering the institutions with respect to their age, we find that of the 25 schools for which the information is at hand, one was founded in the decade 1860-69, 9 between 1880-89, 6 between 1890-99, 7 between 1900-09, and 2 since 1910. Some of those which date back to the earlier period have been reorganized in later years.

Turning now to the question of the size of faculties and student bodies, it is difficult to give accurate facts in all cases. One institution is in process of organizing. Several make no statements on the points in question, and others report in their teaching staffs persons who give only occasional service as lecturers on special subjects. Much of the instruction in some schools appears to be voluntary and unpaid. Nearly all schools admit special students and in some cases these are not clearly differentiated. One institution might be classed as a theological seminary and two are correspondence schools. Another simply reports "over 600 students" enrolled in day and evening courses.

The figures presented, therefore, must be accepted with considerable allowance but indicate roughly the number of those engaged in the work of these schools as teachers and pupils. The total of professors, instructors and regular lecturers reported is 335. The total of students enrolled is 2,411 (8 schools not included). Thirteen of the 32 schools admit only women; three admit only men.

In the statements concerning the purpose of the institution there is naturally much variety. Seven schools state their aim to be to prepare specifically for social as well as religious

work and the large majority include some training in sociology. A few are obviously narrow and sectarian in purpose.

An examination of the courses of study offered reveals little upon which to venture an accurate judgment as to the character of the work. This is vouched for in a few cases by the standing of the instructors and the institutions. In all the schools much time is naturally devoted to the study of the Bible, to Old and New Testament History and the History of the Christian Church and to the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

One institution announces special lectures on "Bible Numerals," and "Dispensational Truth," and another declares "no fanaticism, higher criticism or false teaching done or tolerated." Our enquiry, however, concerns itself more especially with the character and scope of the instruction offered in sociology and social conditions. While it is impossible to form a judgment as to the value of the courses offered simply from examining the printed page, one cannot help deriving impressions which in some instances one feels must come fairly near the truth. It is interesting to note that about 80 per cent of the schools under consideration recognize in their curricula the need for some degree of social service training. Truly, as one announcement avers, "Social service is a phrase to conjure with." Only six offer nothing that can be classed, even with some latitude, as instruction in social service. One of the larger schools in point of enrollment and one which professes to train for social as well as religious work, appears to offer no instruction whatever in modern social problems and brings its students into contact with hospitals, jails and other institutions and agencies for the dependent, the defective and the delinquent only for the purpose of training in evangelistic work. Another institution whose students, perhaps fortunately few in number, do a large amount of relief work in connection with their field training, gives them no instruction, so far as appears from the catalogue, in modern methods of charity or in any branch of social service.

Judging from the announcements, there is wide variety in both the extent and the thoroughness of the social training offered by those schools which have incorporated it in their curricula. In a few instances "Household Economics" and "Home Nursing" are about the extent of the preparation offered for social service; and this, in the case of one school

(whose announcement in other respects makes an excellent impression) which explicitly declares that its training is intended to equip students for positions as superintendents in reformatory and charitable institutions.

In the case of eleven institutions, one a correspondence school, it seems reasonable to conclude that the social training is intelligently planned and competently conducted. More time is given to the work in some institutions than in others with the result of more varied content and greater thoroughness. In one city three schools representing different denominations have conducted a joint course planned by an experienced social worker, the lectures being given by specialists in their several fields. This co-operative scheme appears to work satisfactorily and might be imitated elsewhere to good advantage. In cities where there are schools of philanthropy and social service, schools for the training of church workers might take advantage of the opportunity offered for special instruction in social subjects. This is already done to some extent but does not appear to be a general custom.

It would be interesting to know how far the many schools throughout the country for the training of religious workers are in touch with each other and familiar with the various methods which are being brought to the test of experience. Our cursory examination of the literature of the schools which are included in this brief review would seem to point to the value of a thorough study of the situation. A more intimate acquaintance with the work of such schools would doubtless lead to a revision of some of the judgments which have been here tentatively expressed.

One cannot examine the purposes and statements of these training schools without being impressed with the importance of the work they are engaged in and without a growing conviction of their earnest efforts to meet a need that is evidently becoming more clearly defined. The large number of students enrolled in these institutions is impressive and the vital character of the work for which they are preparing demands that they should have the most thorough training possible.

The writer ventures to recommend that steps be taken at this meeting of the Religious Education Association to pursue the enquiry and provide for a comprehensive review of the questions which are involved in the situation, with a view to the submission of a report at the next annual meeting.

As one feature of such a report it would be of value to include a recommendation as to the content of a course of instruction in social subjects suitable for training schools for religious workers. It would perhaps be worth while to prepare an outline of a proposed course that could be given within the time that might properly be allotted to instruction for social service in schools which give a one year training, and a similar, but more comprehensive outline, for schools which devote more time to training. Such suggestions coming from a Committee of the Religious Education Association would command attentive consideration and would doubtless be welcomed by many institutions which are making honest efforts to offer sound and thorough training to those who seek preparation for religious work.