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EXTENSION COURSES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKERS*

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While extension, lecture and correspondence work is developing rapidly in the universities, little has been done as yet by denominational schools or any other in the development of such work in the religious phases of education. Two notable examples of such efforts are found in the University of Chicago and Hartford Theological Seminary. The former offers a large number of courses in Biblical material and four courses in advanced training for Sunday school teachers. It also offers four reading courses in a religious education series. Hartford offers one course each in Christian Doctrine and Church History, and two each in Psychology (viz., Genetic Psychology and the Psychology of Religion) and Pedagogy (viz., Elements of Religious Pedagogy and Stories and Story Telling in Moral and Religious Education). Some of the denominational Sunday school boards offer correspondence courses leading to the obtaining of certificates and diplomas, notably the Congregational and Methodist Episcopal. The Jews have a very good series in their Chautauqua Society.

In Des Moines, Iowa, Walter S. Athearn, Professor of Religious Education in Drake University, has organized an institute that meets weekly in a down-town hall throughout the college year. It enlists the Sunday school teachers and leaders from all churches. The evening, from 7:30 to 9:00 o'clock, is divided into two periods. In the first, lectures are delivered to the entire school by Professor Athearn and other experts. The school then divides into group classes, each group studying specific problems of the grade teacher. H. E. Tralle, Professor of Religious Pedagogy in Hardin College, Mexico, Mo., has organized a mid-week institute that enrolls from fifty to sixty. Study is made of general teaching principles and of specific teacher problems. He also conducts a correspondence course, using his own text—"Sunday School Experience"—and has about one hundred enrolled. He has held many institutes in local churches and communities. In Kansas City a training school has been organized on the Des Moines plan. A faculty of twenty-six members has been enlisted, and over two hundred

* From the valuable Report of the Commission of the Missouri College Conference on Religious Education.

students have been enrolled. A similar institute has been organized both in St. Louis and in Springfield, Mo., and indeed, institutes of a like nature are springing up throughout the country.

NEED OF SUCH WORK.

There is a large and promising field of effort in this line of endeavor. The most deplorable weakness in our magnificent Sunday school system is the inefficiency of its teachers as teachers. This weakness is so much talked to-day that the time is opportune to develop the means to help earnest teachers out of the difficulty.

DIFFICULTIES.

Denominational Sunday school associations have the most direct hold upon Sunday school teachers as a rule, but the lessons offered are liable to be overly simple and to tend toward the doctrinal and dogmatic rather than the science of teaching.

The international associations in the various states or the general association might do the work in an adequate manner if academic ideals could be upheld and efficient work be done.

The colleges could do the work with sufficient academic ideals, but are in danger of holding too strictly to the academic and thus fail to reach the decidedly unacademic mind of the teacher needing help.

Lecture extension offers a field for both stimulation of interest and the development of study, but meets the difficulty of expense in conducting courses of sufficient length to make for efficiency. Here, again, the interdenominational associations could best supply the need if their ideals could be made pedagogical rather than merely organizational and evangelistic.

The denominational consciousness does not always respond to interdenominational effort, and thus the best of methods in either lecture extension or correspondence would fail to reach many schools if offered by the interdenominational associations.

The ordinary teacher is not in the habit of study and really efficient courses tax him too heavily, unless he can be stimulated by the pastor or by a general movement such as the teacher training movement has been.

The most efficient method would be that of a series of local classes, if competent teachers could be found and the various schools persuaded to co-operate. But it is difficult to find efficient

teachers—even the average pastor not being trained in pedagogy. It is also almost impossible to obtain continuous interdenominational meetings unless there is a masterly leader. It would seem the place to begin is in the theological seminaries. They should require every student to be trained in all the arts of the teacher.

SUGGESTIONS AS TO METHOD.

The denominational college would seem to have the best opportunity to enlist teachers in study. It can co-ordinate with all other denominational Sunday school machinery and thus avail itself of the many-sided promotional activities of its denomination. It can assure efficiency in instruction, but must be careful not to be so academic as to fail to touch the consciousness of the average teacher. It has in its faculty men ready equipped for lecture extension work in Biblical study and in psychology and pedagogy.

Universities and normal colleges can offer extension courses on a par with their other extension work in both lecture and correspondence. They need only to bend their courses in psychology and pedagogy to the special needs of religious instruction.

The certificate or diploma could be granted by the International Association. The average teacher in the Sunday school cares little for the special recognition the college certificate accords, but his or her association in Sunday school conventions and various general meetings would give class to International Association recognition. Then the International Association's certificate or diploma would aid the tendency toward co-operative effort. If desirable, both the college giving the course and the International Association could grant recognition for work completed.

In the matter of lecture and conference extension work, it would seem more than probable that any college would profit by sending out leaders who could rally groups in churches and both give suggestions and inspire to better methods. The publicity and agency by-product of such effort would more than pay for the expenditure. Besides, there is no reason why a school of higher or expert learning should confine its efforts to those who come to it. There is every reason why it should extend its activities to at least the leaders in all lines of community effort and thus democratize its processes.

COURSES.

It may be profitably reiterated that the weakness of collegiate instruction, when offered to non-collegiate minds, is that it fails

to adapt itself to their comprehension, and so does not obtain students. Another danger is that the college mind will outline an overly comprehensive series of courses in order to meet the technical necessities of the scholarly mind rather than to conceive the task from the standpoint of the non-technical mind, and also that there will be such division and subdivision of themes that there is no appeal to the rather simple demands of the actual teacher who feels the need of help when before the class, and is not very much aware of the need of a comprehensive viewpoint of Biblical material, psychology and pedagogy. The average teacher feels the need of help for each Sunday's work, but does not conceive the task in the larger sense of scholarship. She wants something to help her comprehend the material of the lesson from Sunday to Sunday, to help her unfold it to the pupil's mind, and to give her teaching points. So long as we must depend upon the hit-and-miss voluntary teaching force this will doubtless be so. Thus it would seem the first step should be for the colleges to offer correspondence courses covering the actual lessons taught each year. These courses could cover each grade with material pedagogically devised to meet the teaching needs of that grade. They could cover Biblical material from the expository standpoint, psychological suggestions from the standpoint of the age of the pupils of that grade, and unfold pedagogical principles by the "case-method"—not at all the worst pedagogical method within itself. This type of instruction would meet the need of the average teacher and thus stand the better chance of obtaining enlistments for correspondence study. It would produce results immediately in the schools by giving an upward slant to the efficiency so much needed to make the Sunday school a school. It would stimulate some to take the more systematically devised and technical courses in all three of the lines of instruction needed. It would help to destroy the ordinary slavish dependence upon scrap-book teachers' helps, and put in its place some sense of preparation and sufficiency in the teacher.

The second course to be offered would be a general course, covering Biblical history, literature and ethics. This would give the average teacher a background of preparation in lesson material. The third course, perhaps even more needed by the average teacher, would be a course in pedagogy covering child psychology in the same material. Some such book as Weigle's "Pupil and Teacher" could be made the basis of this course. For the few who might be interested in larger fields of study, the American Institute of Sacred Literature, of Chicago, offers ample suggestion, and it might be best to refer all who desired such instruction to them.

SUMMARY.

1. That colleges establish extension lectureships, sending trained men, who can enter the consciousness of the average church, to hold short courses in methods, and conferences on general Sunday school work.

2. That correspondence courses be offered to the actual teacher before the class, using the lesson material in each grade as a basis for instruction, giving expository instruction on the lesson to be taught, and teaching child-psychology and pedagogy by the "case method."

3. That these courses be followed with two more systematically arranged courses, one on the Bible from the standpoint of history, literature and ethical teaching, the other on religious pedagogy, applying psychological principles to the material offered.

4. That the few who wish more special courses be referred to the American Institute of Sacred Literature, which offers more than two-score special correspondence courses, meeting every conceivable need.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

A Statistical Report of Activities in 1913

1. CONVENTIONS AND CONFERENCES

Annual Convention, Cleveland, Meetings 45, addresses . . .	144
Local Conferences	260
Addresses on Religious Education, over	1,000
Public Addresses by General Secretary	253
Mileage, General Secretary	49,350
Persons reached by Conferences, over	125,000

2. PUBLICATIONS

Total pages of new printed matter	1,030
Total pages of new printed matter circulated	5,289,000
Magazine, Religious Education, copies	24,000
Pamphlets and Circulars (14)	106,000
Earlier volumes sold	329
Total pieces	130,329