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TEACHER TRAINING IN THE  
GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCHES

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AN EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by

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To My First Teacher

- MY FATHER -

Who Challenged Me to be  
a Good Teacher

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## INTRODUCTION

TEACHER TRAINING IN THE  
GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCHES

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AN EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Significance of the Subject

Much has been written in recent years on leadership education in the program of the Christian churches. It is a challenging study. One of the major areas within this field is that of the teacher who stands before his class from Sunday to Sunday. What are the cardinal qualifications which he must display in order to be a competent teacher? In what way can he best be trained for his task as a Sunday School teacher? Why is it necessary that he be trained for his task?

It is this challenge of teacher preparation for the Sunday School endeavor that is the basis for this study. The Sunday School is one of the primary avenues of Christian education within the Mennonite churches of the General Conference. There is a great need for concerted and wise effort among the leaders of the General Conference Mennonite churches to develop a unified and more adequate program of teacher training.

In the first place, the teacher who stands before his class is concerned with the most precious part of life - the soul of a child or young person. Every teacher who, as he stands before his group,

realizes the influence that his life and teaching will have upon those whom he teaches must feel the need for training and thorough preparation so as to be able to fulfill the obligation which he has. The training of a teacher must provide him with an awareness of his task in all its vital relationships and with adequate means by which this task can be accomplished.

In the second place, there is a great need for an aggressive and unified program of teacher training within the Sunday Schools of the General Conference because of the fact that to a large degree the training of teachers is completely overlooked. In his latest report on Sunday Schools and teacher training, the Reverend Erland Waltner makes this statement:

"Only thirty-six per cent of our schools have teachers' meetings of any kind. Only eight per cent have a teacher training course of their own. Thirteen per cent cooperate in community teacher training projects . . . This appears to be the weakest point in our Sunday School set-up."<sup>1</sup>

This lack of a training program is due to various reasons which will be considered within the study.

#### B. Purpose of the Study

The need for teacher training is present. Various courses by which this need may be met are also available. This study purposes to bring about an awareness of the need within the individual Sunday Schools as well as in the Conference as a whole, and to motivate a desire to do something constructive about it.

. . . . .

1. Erland Waltner, "Sunday School Work," The Mennonite, August 22, 1944, p. 2.

To help the leaders of the Sunday Schools in their choice of a training course is the second purpose of this study. A standard will be set up by which various courses may be judged. This study will attempt to point out the strong and weak factors in the four teacher training courses that are recognized by the Board of Education of the General Conference, as well as of two other courses that are popularly used in various sections of the Conference.

A third intent of this study is to recommend practical ways in which the program of teacher training can be improved and strengthened so that the needs of the Sunday School teachers can be supplied in the different localities and sections of the Conference.

Finally, this study will attempt to bring about greater unity among the Sunday Schools in dealing with this particular problem, and thus to support and strengthen the efforts of the General Conference Board of Education. This unity is greatly needed to provide correlation and efficiency. Furthermore, it supports the growing trend toward centralization which is becoming evident in other areas of activity in the Conference.

### C. Method of Procedure

In the investigation and consideration of pertinent facts regarding this problem, the first approach will be historical. A study will be made of the various attempts to deal with the issue in the past. This approach will take into account the characteristics of the Mennonite principles of faith and their relation to and influence upon the problem.

The next step will be a survey of the principles upon which a teacher training course must be based. These principles will involve the qualifications which every teacher must possess. They have been suggested in various ways by leaders in the field of religious education. They are to be applied in setting up a standard to be used in evaluating the courses of study under consideration, and to suggest practical ways by which the most suitable courses can be used.

After the standard for evaluation has been established, the teacher training courses dealt with in this study will be reviewed. The four courses officially recognized by the Board of Education are: Oliver's Preparation for Teaching, The Evangelical Teacher Training Course, The Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education, and the Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools for Church Workers. The two other courses used in the Conference are: The Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association, and Christian Leadership in the Church prepared by the Middle District Conference of the Mennonite Church. These six courses will be studied and evaluated in order to determine their adequacy to meet the needs of the Sunday School teachers of the General Conference.

In the fourth chapter an attempt will be made to propose practical ways in which the courses found to be most useful can be applied in the Sunday Schools of the local, district, or Conference organizations. Thus, the study is to provide a stimulus for greater consecration and more thorough preparation by the teachers and will

suggest a unified standard for those who serve in the Sunday Schools of the Conference.

#### D. Sources of Data

The primary sources for this study will consist of copies of the six training courses dealt with in the thesis. Official records of the General Conference sessions, pamphlets and books on the educational activities of the Mennonite Church, general textbooks on religious education, and The Mennonite will provide secondary sources. Denominational literature will also be studied for its contributions to this subject.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF TEACHER TRAINING  
IN THE  
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MENNONITES OF NORTH AMERICA

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL SURVEY OF TEACHER TRAINING IN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MENNONITES OF NORTH AMERICA

#### A. Introduction

In order to understand and appreciate the present conditions within the General Conference which reveal a definite need for the development of a unified standard and course of action in regard to teacher training, it is necessary to consider the historical background of this branch of the Mennonite Church. The principles of doctrine upon which the Church has been founded, the cultural emphases of its members, and the organization and polity which govern its congregations are all important factors which must be taken into consideration when viewing this problem. This study of the historical development will aid in revealing the causes for the problem as well as in offering possible solutions.

#### B. General Survey of the Mennonite Church

##### 1. Its Size

The Mennonites in America as a denomination are a relatively small group. Within the denomination there are various branches, each with its own peculiar emphases of doctrine.<sup>1</sup> The largest branch is the Mennonite Church, distinguished from the others by the more commonly

.....

1. Cf. C. Henry Smith: Mennonites in America, p. 73. 1942 figures reveal a total of 169,830 Mennonites in the United States and Canada, and this total is divided into nineteen branches.



used title, Old Mennonite.<sup>1</sup> The next group in size is the General Conference, the one under consideration in this study.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Its Principles of Doctrine

The principles of doctrine upon which the Mennonite Church is founded are of significance in relation to the apparent need for a standardized program of teacher training within the General Conference. It is necessary, therefore, to understand these principles and to note their influence upon the development of this more pedagogical phase of the program of the Church. Many of the basic points of faith are in accord with those of the larger Protestant bodies. Others are peculiar to the group; it is these which have played an influential part in the emphases which have developed, as well as the areas which have been left undeveloped.

At the points of departure from the commonly accepted interpretation of Christianity the Mennonite Church becomes unique in some ways and offers contributions which are not so generally accepted among other Protestant groups. One Mennonite historian has stated it this way: "The early Anabaptists aimed at nothing less than the restoration of apostolic Christianity. They went directly to the New Testament for their pattern of what a Christian church should be."<sup>3</sup> The New Testament became the rule of every Christian's faith and living. In his discussion on the principles of doctrine of the Mennonite Church, Edward Yoder lists

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1. Cf. Ibid., 1942 figures list it at 58,500.

2. Cf. Ibid., 1942 figures list it at 40,500.

3. Edward Yoder: Our Mennonite Heritage, p. 8.

the cardinal points of difference from Protestantism which have, in many cases, become the basic foundation for Mennonitism:<sup>1</sup>

1. Baptism of a believer upon confession of faith and repentance.
2. Church membership limited to those who voluntarily accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, thus forming a disciplined and close-knit fellowship of believers.
3. Freedom of conscience in matters of conflict between religious and civil authorities.
4. Separation of church and state.
5. Nonresistance in the spirit of Christ as over against military and police forces.
6. Non-swearing of oaths.
7. The Bible as the inspired Word of God with the New Testament as the authority for a Christian's faith and practice.

### 3. Its Cultural Character

There are certain cultural characteristics within the Mennonite Church which have been influential in causing greater seclusion of the group from the stream of Protestantism. It is interesting to note the lists of names on the record books of the Church to find that certain family names are there in great numbers. This indicates that the members have a common cultural background and certain loyalties which bind them together. To illustrate, the Swiss Mennonites settled in certain sections of this country and maintained their own established ways of living; those with a Prussian background did likewise, as did the Russian Mennonites. This has led to a conservatism toward any im-pregnations from without, as well as to isolation of one group from the other, and thus has resulted in a lack of unity and strength. In many localities there is a tendency to emphasize the "simple life" - simplicity of dress, of economy, and of religious practices and form of

. . . . .

1. Cf. Yoder: op. cit., pp. 8-12.

worship. John E. Hartzler lists the following characteristics of the Mennonite people: the simple life, industriousness, rural folk, unprogressiveness, and a tendency toward intolerance.<sup>1</sup>

### C. General Survey of the General Conference

#### 1. Its Beginnings

Originally the General Conference was not a separate branch of the Mennonite Church. Rather, it was the result of a unification movement in America. This trend toward greater unity among the congregations where voluntary church membership and freedom of conscience are of paramount importance is a noteworthy fact. Two early leaders who planted the seed for this unification movement were John H. Oberholtzer and Daniel Krehbiel. At West Point, Iowa, in 1860 a meeting was held to present resolutions for the formation of such a conference. By the next year this seed had taken root, and when a meeting was called for May of that year at Wadsworth, Ohio, eight congregations responded. This Ohio meeting in 1861 can be designated as the formal beginning of the General Conference of Mennonites of North America.

#### 2. Its Aims

The primary aim of the General Conference was to offer a strong working organization through which the common church interests could be promoted. It was not to become another group of independent congregations jealous for its own interpretation of the Christian faith.

. . . . .

1. Cf. John E. Hartzler: Education Among the Mennonites of America, pp. 34-36.

To fulfill this purpose minor individual differences had to be minimized and only the major fundamentals were stressed. Notable among these common interests were the following: mission endeavors, education within the Church, and publications. In pursuing these interests the General Conference has become one of the largest and most prominent Mennonite groups.

### 3. Its Polity

Though the purpose for the organization of the General Conference was to provide greater efficiency and strength in dealing with matters of common interest, each congregation still retained her individuality and independence. Thus, the powers of the Conference were solely advisory, and each congregation was still responsible for the discipline of its members.<sup>1</sup> Standing boards, with representatives from each of the six districts comprising the Conference, were set up.<sup>2</sup> It is these boards that have carried on the work of the Conference. Though their powers have been primarily advisory, they have gained recognition and support from the majority of their constituents. The establishment of central headquarters for the mission boards is an encouraging sign to those who desire a greater degree of unification and efficiency.

#### D. The Development of the Sunday School in the General Conference

It will be necessary to consider the development of the Sunday School within the churches which comprise the General Conference

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1. Cf. Smith, op. cit., quoting H. P. Krehbiel, pp. 690-691.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 693.

in order to understand and evaluate the problem of teacher training. The way in which the Sunday School has developed reveals the peculiar attitudes of the members of the Conference toward education.

### 1. Causes for Opposition

The early Mennonite leaders were well educated, but after a few generations education became a very minor emphasis among the pious folk of the Church. The reason for this opposition to education is understood when one remembers that institutions of learning were under state or ecclesiastical control. Higher education became synonymous with worldliness, pride, and boasting.<sup>1</sup> This led to an inefficient leadership opposed to education for many years. However, there was a sincerity in their opposition which must be recognized; as Hartzler says, "They considered <sup>that</sup> 'human learning' did not qualify for the ministry, and they did not allow their children to go to the university, lest they should be injured in their spiritual life."<sup>2</sup> Education of the children was always maintained with a special emphasis upon Bible knowledge, indigenous cultural interests, and character training. In many of the schools for the children the Bible was the principal textbook; as some-one has said, "It was their only guide in life."<sup>3</sup>

### 2. The Growth of the Sunday School

For many years, therefore, the home and the parochial school were the institutions which cared for the educational needs of the children. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that

. . . . .

1. Cf. Hartzler, op. cit., p. 41.

2. Ibid.,

3. Louis L. Miller: Religious Education in Mennonite Preparatory Schools and Colleges, p. 6.

Sunday Schools were established. John H. Oberholtzer, one of the most progressive leaders of the Mennonite Church, introduced a children's class which might be considered a forerunner of the Sunday School. It was called "Kinderlehre Meetings." These meetings began in 1847 and were held in the Swamp churches near Quakertown, Pennsylvania. Imparting Bible knowledge which would lead to church membership was the objective of these meetings. They were conducted on alternate Sundays and consisted of prayers, hymn-singing, and the recitation and exposition of the catechism.<sup>1</sup>

It was this same man with a vision, Oberholtzer, who organized the first actual Sunday School within the Mennonite Church. In 1857, this Sunday School was started at West Swamp, Pennsylvania, with A. B. Shelly as superintendent. The 1941 triennial report states that this Sunday School now has a membership of three hundred and one with a staff of twenty-four teachers.<sup>2</sup> The impetus of this small West Swamp group brought many of the other churches to the realization of the values of such an organization, and they soon followed suit.

In the Mennonite communities of the Middle West the Sunday School developed more slowly. This was due, in part, to the fact that the latter half of the nineteenth century was a period during which many of these people immigrated to America, especially the Russian Mennonites. Where it was established it was not considered to be a part of the church at first. In fact, many Sunday Schools existed side by side with the church, yet independent of its recognition or support.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Hartzler, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

2. Cf. Official Minutes of 1941, p. 185.

In some instances the church leaders were fearful of this innovation, and those who supported it were forced to meet in nearby schoolhouses or in the homes of various members. Some of the early Sunday Schools met every week, others met once in two weeks, and still others were active only during the summer months.<sup>1</sup>

The Mennonite, official weekly publication of the General Conference, first appeared in October, 1885. At that time it was a monthly journal published by a committee of ministers. The first issue offered an article on the Sabbath School, in which the following statement was found: "The Sabbath School is a part of the congregation and should never be considered as a separate institution."<sup>2</sup> In the second issue the Sunday School Teacher's Ten Commandments were listed, as follows:

- "(1) Pray continually to God for understanding, advice and patience.
- (2) Hold fast to thy convictions, and continue therein in faith.
- (3) Love and respect thy scholars. (4) Consider well thy plans.
- (5) Win the attention and love of the scholars. (6) Strive to express thy thoughts and convictions distinctly. (7) Teach the whole plan of salvation. (8) Never forget that a tree is known by its fruits. (9) Frequently prove whether thy teaching benefits thy scholars. (10) Hope continually for fruit of thy labors."<sup>3</sup>

Through the efforts of thoughtful and visionary leaders and the support of The Mennonite the work of the Sunday School grew and developed.

#### E. The Development of Teacher Training in the General Conference

The above Ten Commandments for a Sunday School teacher are among the first indications of an awareness of the need for preparation

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1. Cf. Hartzler, op. cit., pp. 74-79, 92-93.
2. Ibid., p. 92.
3. Ibid.

as a teacher. It is interesting to note the inclusiveness of this list and to observe its relation to present standards. However, there is no record of its effectiveness among the teachers of that day. The nature of the polity of the General Conference did not present an opportunity to establish an arbitrary standard which all cooperating Sunday Schools would be expected to follow. The training of the teachers within the Sunday School was still within the jurisdiction of each independent congregation.

#### 1. Early Records

There are scattered records of various attempts to develop teacher training programs within the congregations of the General Conference. In a letter to the editor of Das Christliche Volksblatt in 1857, E. Hunsberger writes: "The chief purpose of this Bible class is to prepare men and women teachers for teaching the Word of God in Sunday School; and to instruct the Christian better."<sup>1</sup> In 1876 the first Sunday School Convention was held in the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was called by a group of laymen and ministers. After this, the convention became quite common among the churches of the Eastern District, and the discussion, in most cases, dealt with materials, methods of teaching, and the qualifications for teachers.<sup>2</sup>

In Kansas, a Teachers' Society was formed in 1885 which met twice a year to discuss educational problems of interest to teachers.

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1. Hartzler, op. cit., p. 93.
2. Cf. Ibid., pl 102.



Valuable contributions resulted: uniform school books were adopted, a song book was published, and a German Teachers' Institute was organized. This Institute met for two weeks during the month of August and considered materials as well as methods of teaching. Hartzler describes it thus:

"Instruction was given in Religion, German, Pedagogy, Mathematics, Geography, and Vocal Music, all in the German language. Under Religion came Introduction to Old and New Testament, Bible History and Church History. Under German were Grammar and Syntax. Under Pedagogy, were offered Psychology, School Economy, Methods, and History of Pedagogy. Instruction was given through text books and lectures . . .

"A unique and interesting feature of the work was the 'model' recitation, one or two of which were given each day. One of the students was appointed to teach a certain branch as he would teach it in an ordinary school. His pupils were chosen from among the students. After the recitation his work was severely criticized by the others, both merits and demerits being pointed out."<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that these early Institutes used methods of teacher training which are today considered essential and quite modern. Emphasis upon adequate Bible knowledge, as well as a mastery of methods and psychology, are considered imperative today. The opportunity for application in a practice session anticipated the modern college training schools.

In the Middle District most of the Sunday Schools attempted to set up training for their teachers, but their success was only temporary. The same had been experienced by different congregations in other districts.

A few Sunday Schools have been successful in establishing teacher training classes which have remained a regular part of their

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1. Hartzler, op. cit., p. 126.

program. At Berne, Indiana, a teacher training class has been effective for about fifty years.<sup>1</sup> At Summerfield, Illinois, classes have been organized at intervals for the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> Many other similar incidents could be referred to throughout other sections of the General Conference. The realization of a need for teacher training and the desire to fulfill this need have been apparent, but the power to establish such a program has been lacking. In 1920 John F. Moyer made a survey of the religious education program of the Mennonite churches of the Middle District. Since this district is representative of the situation in the whole Conference, it is well to consider his reaction to the conditions which he discovered. He says:

"The most essential single factor in a successful Sunday school is a good teacher. A good teacher is usually a trained teacher . . . Many Sunday schools feel it is a part of their work to train their own teachers. More than half of the schools studied in this survey have at some time or other attempted teacher-training. Some attempts have been successful only temporarily or occasionally. In a medium-sized Sunday school it may be expecting too much to attempt a teacher training class as a regular feature, though such a class may be very successful at intervals of several years."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Organization and Purpose of the Board of Education

A study of the official records of the Board of Education of the General Conference from the time of its inauguration reveals that the duties of this agency have been largely those of gathering statistics and making suggestions. Until recently it has been practically impossible for this Board to exert much influence due to its lack of power. The 1923 report presents the initial organization and the under-

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1. Cf. Hartzler, op. cit., p. 94.

2. Cf. Ibid.

3. John F. Moyer: Religious Education in the Mennonite Churches, p. 21.

lying purposes for the formation of the Board. It states that the General Conference meeting of 1908 passed a resolution appointing a committee of five members to deal with the problems of education and to be ready to offer recommendations at the next meeting, which was to be held in 1911.<sup>1</sup> It was at the 1911 session of the Conference that the hardworking committee presented a set of recommendations based upon the results of a questionnaire which had been sent to the leaders of various congregations within the Conference. In part the recommendations stated:

"In order to develop this important branch of our conference activities effectively, this Committee recommends that the Conference create a Board of Schools and Education. This Board is to consist of six members and to be elected by the Conference the same as other Boards."<sup>2</sup>

Four duties were listed for this original Board, the last one being:

"To make preparation for the most efficient training of our prospective workers in church and on the mission fields."<sup>3</sup> It was at the next Conference meeting in 1914 that the Board was officially established, amendment to the constitution having been made for this purpose.<sup>4</sup>

The report of the Board of Education at the following triennial session, 1926, reveals a number of encouraging developments in the field of teacher training. A Sunday School standard was adopted and referred to the executive committee for final ratification. Within this standard ten out of a total of one hundred points were designated

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1. Cf. Official Minutes of 1923, pp. 277-283.
2. Official Minutes of 1923, p. 281.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. Ibid.

for a teacher training class. A regular Workers' Conference and a meeting for teachers and officers to deal with current problems were also advocated. In addition this report reveals the fact that one member of the Board was requested to supervise the Teacher Training Department. Some of the interesting facts which this report reveals are: forty-three elementary certificates and fourteen standard diplomas were issued, Oliver's Text examinations were given, and the recommendation was made to use Oliver's Preparation for Teaching as a guide for an elementary text in teacher training. It was also recommended that a committee of three be appointed to select textbook materials for a two or three year course to meet the needs of future leaders in the Sunday School.<sup>1</sup>

The next available report is that of 1933, which lists credits offered to various numbers of persons who completed the training course requirements. In this report the director urged "the use and approval of such teacher training materials that is generally accepted as being true to the Scriptures, especially in view of the fact that such material is available."<sup>2</sup> Although no official recognition is made of it, there is mention made in this report of the Evangelical Training Courses, another course of study now accredited by the Board of Education.

It was the report of 1935 that listed the four teacher training courses which are now recognized by the Board of Education.

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1. Cf. Official Minutes of 1926, pp. 173-176.
2. Official Minutes of 1933, p. 114.

To quote from the Minutes:

"The Board discussed rather thoroughly the program of Teacher Training within the churches of the Conference. This was followed by the adoption of a motion that the Board recommends the 'Western District Conference Plan for the Training of Church Workers' as our General Conference plan of Teacher Training. The Board also decided to give credit for the Teacher Training course of the International Council of Religious Education, and the Evangelical Training Course. The Board encouraged the Chairman of the Sunday School and Teacher Training Department with the help of two other members of the Committee to effect an integrated program for the General Conference relative to the work of this Department."<sup>1</sup>

This report also revealed that fourteen schools had teacher training with a total enrollment of two hundred, and that sixteen schools participated in community teacher training efforts. But, contrary to the encouraging statement quoted above, the director of the department called attention to the decline in the number of credits and certificates issued. In an attempt to explain this, he recognizes that various organizations offering training courses grant their own certificates, and thus no request is made to the Conference for recognition.<sup>2</sup>

Very little mention is made of the work of teacher training in the next triennial report. Most of its attention is directed toward the interest and support of church schools and colleges with a special emphasis upon the need for a seminary to train Mennonite leaders. The only direct reference to teacher training is the statement that within the three years forty-nine certificates were issued and more such classes are being encouraged.<sup>3</sup>

The report of 1941 is more comprehensive than any of the others in certain respects. Ten major objectives for the Board of

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1. Official Minutes of 1935, p. 117.
2. Cf. Official Minutes of 1935, p. 118.
3. Cf. Official Minutes of 1938, pp. 129-130.

Education are listed, and the sixth objective is:

"To help in training a consecrated volunteer leadership within the church . . . . The organization of training classes for the leadership has been encouraged and certificates issued to such as completed the courses. In many churches there has been a decided decline in the work of leadership training. But in spite of this there is still need for such work, and the Board encourages the ministers and Sunday School officers to continue it wherever possible."<sup>1</sup>

The most recent report was published in the weekly publication, The Mennonite, at the close of the triennium, ending June, 1944. Due to transportation conditions relative to the war it was impossible for the Conference to meet for its regular session until the following year. For that reason the reports were published. Highlights in this report include:

"Only thirty-six per cent of our schools have teachers' meetings of any kind. Only eight per cent have a teacher training course of their own. Thirteen per cent cooperate in community teacher training projects . . . . Only two churches requested (teacher training diplomas). This appears to be the weakest point in our Sunday School set-up."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Present Status

It is significant that the writer of the above article considers the teacher training field to be the weakest link in the program of the Sunday School. Thirty years or more of activity on the part of the Board of Education have not brought about the development of a strong and active program of teacher training, though it has been a matter of concern to some degree during the entire time. The interest has been present, but not the power to deal adequately with the problem.

It is evident at the present time that there is a definite consciousness of the need for a unified and aggressive program in

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1. Official Minutes, 1941, pp. 141-142.
2. Erland Waltner, "Sunday School Work," The Mennonite, Aug. 22, 1944, p. 1.

teacher training. Although there are still many local congregations which make no effort along this line because of other major interests, others are recognizing the great need and are attempting to deal with it. The Middle District has developed a course which, although not as yet recognized by the Board of Education, will also be considered in this study. H. E. Nunemaker, one of the leaders in the Middle District, submitted a report on the survey made in this district. Among other things he said:

"In some schools the securing of consecrated and prepared teachers is a problem and in most schools the training of the teachers is most difficult because of conflicting duties. The need for training was recognized in all our meetings but the difficulty seemed to be two-fold; (1) getting the teacher and prospective teachers to see the need for it to the extent that they will be willing to set aside the necessary time and effort, (2) finding a time in which the group can meet . . . . The annual reports just received indicate that less than one-half of our schools had access to a training class last year."<sup>1</sup>

Within recent months a number of articles have been published in The Mennonite which reveal a growing interest and concern for this particular phase of the program of Christian education.

It is well to recognize this awakened interest and to utilize it for good; to offer a unified course of action which the various churches will find satisfactory and stimulating, and thus to provide the best possible preparation for the teachers in the Sunday Schools. The children and young people of the General Conference deserve and need good teachers if they are to gain the fullest experience of Christ in their lives. Neither the best of curriculum materials, modern equipment and facilities, nor efficient organization deserve primary

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1. H. E. Nunemaker, "A Visit to the Middle District Conference Churches," The Mennonite, October 10, 1944, p. 6.

consideration in the Sunday School program of Christian education; it is the teacher who supersedes them all.

#### 4. Teacher Training Courses

In this brief sketch of the development of the teacher training program within the General Conference mention has been made of four courses of study that have received official recognition from the Board of Education. These are: Oliver's Preparation for Teaching, The Evangelical Teacher Training Course, The Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education, and the Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools for Church Workers. Two other courses are receiving popular recognition in certain communities and churches of the Conference. They are: Christian Leadership in the Church prepared by the Education Committee of the Middle District Conference, and the eight units of the Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association. In order to make this study as complete as possible, it is planned that all six of these courses of study will be evaluated according to the standard set up in the next chapter.

#### F. Summary

In this chapter certain elements of the history and development of the Mennonite Church were studied in order to present a background which would offer a basis for a fair evaluation of the teacher training program in the denomination. The relative size of the Church, as well as its principles of doctrine and cultural characteristics, are factors which were considered in this approach.



The purpose for which the General Conference was organized and the manner in which it was achieved were the next consideration because these facts throw light upon a correct interpretation of the development of the teacher training program within the Conference. Further, a survey of the practices of government polity were taken into account as they aid in understanding the characteristic lack of unity within the Conference, and consequently affect the degree of efficiency revealed in any undertaking by its leaders.

Since this study deals with the training of teachers in the Sunday School, its development in the General Conference churches was next considered. There was a marked degree of opposition to the rise of this movement when it was first introduced. It was necessary to make note of this opposition in order to recognize its relation to the attitude which prevailed toward teacher training for quite some time.

In dealing with the actual development of the teacher training program the study was largely dependent upon the records of the Board of Education, for it was through this official body that the work was carried on. These records were studied for any clues toward a growing interest in the training of teachers. Finally, articles printed in the recent issues of the General Conference church paper, The Mennonite, were read and considered for the purpose of noting indications of the attitude and interest prevalent at this time. In this way an attempt was made to recognize the present status of teacher training within the Conference by noting its relationship in historical development to those activities of the Sunday School and Conference organization to which it is most closely related.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR EVALUATING TEACHER TRAINING COURSES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR EVALUATING TEACHER TRAINING COURSES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

#### A. Introduction

"The object of teacher training is not to study the next Sunday's lesson, though a portion of the time may be devoted to this, but to study the work of teaching itself."<sup>1</sup> Far too often the exposition of Scripture is the primary emphasis of the teacher's preparation. The teacher who realizes the greatness of his task will put forth every effort to do his best and to improve his work so as to fulfill his obligations to his pupils and to his Lord. However, too many of those in positions of responsibility in the Sunday School are unaware of the vital necessity for sound and adequate training for their teachers and prospective teachers.

Any standard which attempts to evaluate the courses for teacher training must recognize the primary fact that the training of teachers is, and must always be, an essential part of the program of the Sunday School. Furthermore, such a course must be organized and adapted to fit the needs of the teachers who are taking it, and must provide an opportunity for a learning teacher to develop and strengthen those cardinal qualifications which will make him a good teacher.

Since there is no official standard set up by which the

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1. James Henry Snowden: Outfitting the Teacher of Religion, p. 251.

training courses listed in the previous chapter can be evaluated, the purpose of this chapter is to formulate the elements by which such a course can be judged. These elements will be based upon the qualifications which every teacher must meet in order to be a good teacher, as well as upon the criteria by which a course can be judged. In the main the former will deal more specifically with content and the latter with form.

## B. The Importance of Teacher Training in the Sunday School

### 1. To the Teacher

Why is the training of teachers so important in the whole Sunday School program? The answer is quite simple. It is because the task of a teacher is so vital. A Sunday School teacher deals with the most precious thing in the world - the soul of a child or young person. The public school teacher is given the responsibility of imparting the secular knowledge which will make for a full, complete life, but the Christian teacher within the Sunday School has the responsibility of bringing the soul of the child in his class into relationship with the supreme and ultimate Reality of life - God as revealed in His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; When a teacher realizes the challenge that comes with such a task, he cannot but agree with the words of Mould when he says: "It is an almost frightening responsibility thus to teach - to be the living link between Christ and a fellow soul."<sup>1</sup> Such a teacher will not be satisfied with anything less than

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1. Ralph Norman Mould: Guiding Boys and Girls to Christ, p. 23.

the best preparation for his task.

In many of our Sunday Schools the program of training is completely ignored or given secondary consideration because of ignorance on the part of officers and leaders. They consider it expedient at times to put such a program aside for the sake of some more flourishing enterprise. They may consider it unnecessary for the time being, or may feel that the lack of proper time or leadership for such an endeavor does not warrant its initiation. Then there are those who expect good teaching from anyone who is a sincere, consecrated Christian. In his discussion on some of the problems of the rural church, McLaughlin faces this particular matter when he says:

"The teachers are without special training or guidance - a good heart and good intentions are considered adequate qualifications for teaching the spiritual principles necessary to the abundant life."<sup>1</sup>

No one would dispute the fact that every Sunday School teacher must, first of all, be a true Christian if he is to lead others to Christ. In fact, this is and must always be the first requisite for teaching in the Sunday School. "A genuine, sane experience with God in Christ is the most vital point in our leadership,"<sup>2</sup> so states Louis J. Sherrill. However, he continues, this experience can never take the place of sound training or provide those qualifications which every teacher must have. Nor will a poor teacher realize the need for improvement in class spirit or individual growth unless he is aided in recognizing this need. Passive waiting for better conditions will never bring it about.<sup>3</sup> Vital Christian living is of prime importance, but, to use the

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1. Henry W. McLaughlin: Religious Education in the Rural Church, p. 74.
2. Louis J. Sherrill: Religious Education in the Small Church, p. 57.
3. Cf. Ibid.

words of Sherrill: "The development of spiritual experience is no substitute for training."<sup>1</sup>

The old adage, "Experience is the best teacher," is one which some individuals and groups are prone to follow. It is true that much can best be learned by experience, but it is a slow and painful process - painful both to the teacher and his pupils. Others will assert that it is the accumulation of knowledge which offers the best preparation for teaching, but knowledge alone is never enough. Both knowledge and experience have their place in the program of training; it is the wise application of each that will make the program useful and worthwhile. Harner has expressed this well when he said: "A person grows in good workmanship by closely interwoven experience and knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. To the Cause of the Sunday School

The cause which the Sunday School represents is far too great to allow for anything less than the best to be used in its fulfillment. Secular education recognizes the fact that children cannot, and will not, learn well unless the teacher's preparation is sound and adequate. Effective teaching is definitely dependent upon such preparation. The children and youth of today have a right to gain their Bible knowledge through teaching as efficient as that which deals with their world history, geography, or mathematics. Not only does the lack of this in the Sunday School hinder the child from receiving all that is his due, but it casts a reflection upon the institution which such teaching represents. This reflection is noted by the pupils in the school as well

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1. Sherrill, op. cit., p. 57.

2. Nevin C. Harner: The Educational Work of the Church, p. 192.

as by the public in general. Eavey points this up by saying:

"The Christian teacher of today unprepared for his specific work is at a tremendous disadvantage, and his being at a disadvantage reflects discredit not only upon him but upon the cause for which he stands."<sup>1</sup>

Outstanding leaders in the field of Christian education recognize the place of importance which teacher training holds in the program of the church. In his discussion on the need for a better trained and certified teaching staff, Snowden laments the common practice of calling on young, inexperienced people or drafting older ones to fill teaching positions when neither group is prepared. He asserts that "probably the weakest link in the chain of the Sunday School has been and is the untrained teacher."<sup>2</sup> DeBlois goes so far as to say that "the wise and invigorating leadership of the teachers has more value than any other single factor in determining the success of a school."<sup>3</sup> Eavey agrees with DeBlois in pointing out that the teacher is the most important factor in the whole school; that excellent equipment, a fine building, the best of curriculum materials and expert administration are of little value when the teacher does not know how to teach.<sup>4</sup> He elaborates upon it by quoting Walter Scott Athearn:

"Society protects its land from the ravishes of unskilled tenants; it insists that justice be not thwarted by untrained jurists; it guards the bodies of its citizenship from the untrained 'quack'; . . . but the souls of children have been left unprotected from malpractice at the hands of well-meaning, but untrained workers in the field of religious education."<sup>5</sup>

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1. C. B. Eavey: Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers, p. 99.
2. Snowden, op. cit., p. 248.
3. Austen K. DeBlois and Donald R. Gorham: Christian Religious Education, p. 368.
4. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., p. 97.
5. Ibid., quoting Walter Scott Athearn, p. 100.

Finally, Eavey presents a ringing challenge to every sincere Christian teacher - a challenge which calls him to feel the obligation for thorough preparation. First of all, there is the obligation to God who commands us: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."<sup>1</sup> Then, there is the obligation to his students. Every teacher must be aware of this when he recognizes the great responsibility which is his - that responsibility of caring for the spiritual needs of those entrusted to him. Finally, he feels an obligation to himself. His preparation will determine the degree of joy and satisfaction for service rendered which he will gain. The greatest satisfaction comes to those who have made the most thorough preparation. Then, only, can a teacher claim with Paul to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."<sup>2</sup>

#### C. The Basic Qualification of a Sunday School Teacher

As stated above, the emphasis upon personal relationship to God in Christ is the first requisite for a Christian teacher. This must ever be kept in the foreground by officers and leaders within the Sunday School. Mould, in his challenging booklet, Guiding Boys and Girls to Christ, states it this way:

"Whoever would guide children in a Sunday School must be not merely someone who has 'heard about' the way to Christ, but a person who has footed the trail, and - above all - has stood and stands at the summit in his or her own Christian experience. Such a teacher does not merely tell others which way to go, but reflects the attitude: 'Look, here is the way; let us travel it together, for I have been over this ground; and, knowing where it leads, I covet for you the thrill of this journey!'"<sup>3</sup>

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1. II Timothy 2:15.
2. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., pp. 100-101.
3. Mould, op. cit., p. 28.



How many teachers today stand before their classes unprepared for teaching because they have not reached this "summit" in their own experience? Is it any wonder that so much of the effort expended in the Sunday School program yields no worthwhile results? Sherrill has caught the significance of this when he says: "No valley of dry bones is drier than the teaching of religion when that religion does not live in the teacher."<sup>1</sup> There may be knowledge about God and a sincere desire to transmit this knowledge to the pupils, but the vital spark of fellowship with God is missing. Christianity remains formal and cold, and consequently, does not have the power to transform the lives of those to whom it is taught.

When, in His great commission, Christ said: "Go . . . . teach . . . ."<sup>2</sup> He intimately associated with this command the thought that His presence would be the source of strength and power to those who accepted its challenge. To be a Sunday School teacher means to accept this challenge, to become a witness for Christ and to carry on the work He has begun.<sup>3</sup> To be a true witness requires close association with and personal knowledge of the one to be represented. Richardson elucidates this profound thought by phrasing the words of Paul in Philip-  
pians in this way: "For me, to teach is Christ."<sup>4</sup> Thus, only a person who has genuinely found his life made complete in Christ dare accept the challenge of serving Him as a witness in the Sunday School classroom. To use the words of Eavey: "The teacher worthy of the name

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1. Sherrill, op. cit., p. 56.

2. Matthew 28:19-20.

3. Norman E. Richardson: The Christ of the Class Room, pp. 265-266.

4. Ibid., pp. 266-267.

Christian will be in vital touch with His Lord and earnest in his effort to lead others into fellowship with Him."<sup>1</sup>

D. The Essential Elements of the Curriculum  
of a Teacher Training Course

Much has been written and spoken on the subject of the essential qualities of a Christian teacher. It is a vital issue, and one which merits much thought. In order to set up a standard by which to evaluate the teacher training courses under consideration, it is necessary to recognize those qualities of training and character which make for a successful teacher.

In the introduction to his book, The Christ of the Class Room, Norman E. Richardson makes an assertion which is echoed by many other leaders in the field of Christian education. He says, in part:

" . . . the teachers and directors of religious education who intend to do their work in Christian churches, should make a devout and thoroughgoing study of Jesus Christ, the teacher, and make this study a central, primary, and indispensable part of their training. There has been a relatively excessive emphasis upon process, technique, practice, objective standards, and too little upon spiritual content and personal devotion and consecration to the Saviour and Teacher of mankind and to his unfinished task."<sup>2</sup>

1. To Provide a Mastery of the Bible

a. A Thorough Knowledge of Bible Content

The Bible is the basic content of the curriculum for the Sunday School. Snowden calls it the supreme textbook because it

" . . . stands central and radiates its light over the whole subject

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1. Eavey, op. cit., p. 335.

2. Norman E. Richardson: The Christ of the Class Room, Introduction, p. x.

and gives the origin and development and is the standard of our Christian faith."<sup>1</sup> Eavey offers the following reason for making the Bible the basic subject matter for every Christian teacher:

"The Bible is the revealed Word of God given to man that he may know whence he comes and whither he goes, that he may be perfected for the eternal destiny which a loving God intended for him, and that he may be completely furnished for living the life which God wishes him to live."<sup>2</sup>

Vieth gives place to the Bible in the curriculum of Christian education, since, as he says,

" . . . it is not irreverent to say that we use the Bible so largely in religious education, not just because it is the Bible, but because it possesses such unique qualities for stimulus and guidance to the religious life."<sup>3</sup>

"If one is to be a teacher of the Bible, he must first be a student of the Bible."<sup>4</sup> This statement from Barclay's introductory paragraph on the teacher's study of the Bible is indicative of the paramount importance of this phase of a teacher's preparation. What one does not know he cannot teach. Every Sunday School teacher must, therefore, be thoroughly acquainted with the basic content of his curriculum. This implies that the teacher training course must offer adequate and thorough study in the Bible, in order that the teacher understand it, appropriate its truths, and have the ability to pass its great lessons on to his pupils.<sup>5</sup> Most educators and leaders in the field agree upon this point, although it is interesting to note that

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1. Snowden, op. cit., p. 107.

2. Eavey, op. cit., p. 105.

3. Paul H. Vieth: Teaching for Christian Living, p. 136.

4. Barclay, W. C.: First Standard Manual of Teacher Training, p. 1.

5. Cf. Ibid.

Knapp recognizes another side to the issue.<sup>1</sup> Whether the teacher gains his knowledge within the classroom as a student or whether he makes a special study of the Bible in preparation for teaching, in either case it is absolutely necessary that he know his material.

It must be recognized that one's philosophy will determine the place and use of the Bible in the whole field of Christian education.<sup>2</sup> The two extreme positions are represented by the supporters of the "experience-centered" curriculum and those of the "material-centered" curriculum. In any case, Bible teaching must become a means to an end,

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1. Cf. Forrest L. Knapp: Leadership Education in the Church, pp. 106-107. Knapp notes the criticism that has been made of leadership curricula which has not offered enough Bible emphasis. He goes on to say that "the church's program for children, young people, and adults, should provide most of the knowledge of the Bible, without depending upon the specific leadership training curriculum."
2. The extremist position of the exponents of experience-centered teaching is reflected by Robert S. Smith, New Trails for the Christian Teacher, (p. 150) when he asks: "Shall we use the Bible in Christian teaching?" Religious educators who support the emphasis upon the experience of the child are prone to discard everything that they deem unnecessary or irrelevant to such experience. If the material in the Bible is adaptable to a particular problem, they will use it; if, however, they find other materials more appealing, they unhesitatingly ignore the Bible and use what they consider more closely related. To illustrate, Smith suggests that there is little in the Bible that is suitable to the comprehension of the beginners and primaries, and therefore, the children should not be forced to accept it. This extreme position is a definite reaction to the stereotyped and formal transmission of Bible facts for the sake of the facts themselves. Every teacher who presents the Bible to his class must do so with a purpose above and beyond that of mere transmission. There must be application of these facts to life situations, if it is to become alive and meaningful to the pupils. To use the words of Paul H. Vieth, Teaching for Christian Living, (p. 136) "To teach the Bible as a printed record without assuring its entering vitally into experience is no more likely to succeed than to teach rules of courtesy from a book without relating them to the situations in the group which call for courteous conduct."

not an end in itself. Bower points up the criticism which the "experience-centered" leaders offer by saying that "the fundamental weakness of the use of the Bible under the older transmissive and authoritative Christian education was that it taught the Bible as the end product of past religious experience."<sup>1</sup>

b. An Ability to Teach the Bible Creatively

Whether it be for the purpose of transmitting Biblical knowledge or applying the living truths of the Scriptures to present-day situations, all teaching must be creative.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, it must effect a change within the lives of those who are taught. The child must ever be the primary consideration of all activity and effort in the Sunday School; therefore, whatever approach is made to the Bible must be in the light of the needs of the child. The great truths of the Bible are so applicable to the life situations of any child or young person that they offer excellent opportunity for such creative teaching.

How, then, can a teacher gain Bible knowledge so as to make it creative within the lives of his pupils? First of all, it must be alive to him. He must know it as God's Revelation of Himself to man. It must be "not merely a record, or a series of documents, or a depository of truth, nor a treasure house of fine arts and good morals, but God's powerful living Word, which enters the soul, to bring it to

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1. William C. Bower: Christ and Christian Education, p. 78.
2. In the light of the fact that some liberal Christian educators have attempted to make "creative" become synonymous with "experience-centered," let it be understood that that is not the concept of the word "creative" in this discussion.

repentance and faith, to transform it and build it into Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Barclay asserts that "there is no royal road to the mastery of the Bible. Here, as in any other field of learning, application and effort are necessary."<sup>2</sup> Reading through the Bible in a cursory manner will not yield fruitful results. Neither will "proof-text" searching of Scripture offer that which the teacher needs. Diligent, thorough study of the books of the Bible with a primary emphasis upon the messages which the books reveal will provide the teacher with living truths in such a way that they can be creatively applied in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> Eavey has suggested a number of forms of Bible study which may be found to be very fruitful. To list them:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) The synthetic method.
- (2) The study of the Bible by individual books.
- (3) The study of the Bible by topics.
- (4) Biographical study.
- (5) The study of the Bible by types.
- (6) The study of the Bible for practical usefulness.
- (7) Studying in terms of pupil needs.

The spirit with which a teacher approaches his Bible study will determine, to a large degree, the fruitfulness of the study. It must be done in a spirit of reverence and with a sincere desire to

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1. Eavey, op. cit., p. 106.
2. Barclay, op. cit., p. 1.
3. The teacher who desires this needs to bring to the Bible a critical yet unbiased attitude, but should guard against bringing to the study negative premises or criticisms. He should study it for what it has to offer in itself; a direct, thorough, and independent study will result in a mastery of facts and a comprehension of the messages of the various books. There must also be a willingness to enter imaginatively into the experiences recorded in it so as to appropriate the truths of God's Revelation in his own personal experience.
4. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., pp. 109-114.

learn. A prayerful attitude must be present. Barclay points out that the quest of an earnest teacher involves the most important issues known to man, and that a frivolous spirit will be incapable of attaining to a comprehension of the supreme truths within this Book. He says:

"The Spirit shows his mind to those who are spiritual. The study is for the purpose of apprehending a revelation; the student must have an inquiring mind and heart. . . . The Bible unfolds its message to the tireless searcher for truth."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. To Provide an Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

To know and understand his pupils - this is the second requirement of a good teacher. This demands more time and interest in each member of the class than the hour provided on Sunday morning can supply. What does it mean to know one's pupils? Surely it is not sufficient to know their names, addresses, names of the parents, and other such statistics. Each pupil must be seen as a personality with individual potentialities and needs. How else can the teacher translate the message of the lesson into the life of each pupil?

### a. Through Formal, Psychological Study

The recent emphasis upon the study of psychology has contributed much to the field of child-study. Every Sunday School teacher must be aware of the basic characteristics in the spiritual growth and development of a child or an adolescent. Mould recognizes and emphasizes the importance of these character traits by enumerating the chief traits of every age group and suggesting "spot guidance" for the teacher's use.<sup>2</sup> Henry F. Cope emphasizes the laws of child life in

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1. Barclay, op. cit., p. 2.

2. Cf. Mould, op. cit., pp. 10-22.

his discussion of the curriculum for teacher training. He states:

"There is a whole world of power waiting the teacher and officer of the school who will take the pains to enter into it. The failure, or breakdown, of the school, wherever it occurs, is not due to the depravity of the pupil, nor to the inadequacy of the equipment; it is due to the fact that we are blindly blundering around among the delicate souls of children; we are with the fingers of a blacksmith touching the most delicate mechanism in nature, and creating discord and even warfare where harmony and efficiency were meant to be. The powers of nature, the forces of the child life are not opposed to religion; if we but sit down patiently to learn the laws of these lives, we will find that the great powers within them are with us and not against us; we have but to obey them in order to use them. We must learn the laws of the child life."<sup>1</sup>

b. Through Informal Friendship

In his Letters to a Church School Teacher, John W. Suter emphasizes the fact that the pupils must be known by their teachers as friends. He asserts that it is necessary to know all about them because "as their teacher of religion it is your business to set at work influences that will change their lives for the better, give them the power of God, and make Christ live in them."<sup>2</sup> One hour on a Sunday morning does not provide sufficient time for a teacher to become well-acquainted with his pupils. In fact, many a pupil will not express himself naturally during the Sunday School session. It is necessary to provide natural situations through which the teacher may observe his pupils and thus learn how best to guide and help them. These situations may be in the home, on the playground, at a social gathering, or during some work experience. This demands continuous interest on the part of the teacher toward his pupils. More than that,

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1. Henry F. Cope: The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice, pp. 178-179.
2. John W. Suter: Creative Teaching, p. 24.



this interest must be genuine and heartfelt. Mould has said: "Teaching is not a matter of conveying information for an hour a week, but of loving and influencing lives seven days a week."<sup>1</sup>

"Loving . . . lives seven days a week!" Might it not be that this is the crux of the whole problem for a teacher who sincerely desires to know his pupils as they should be known? Such love denotes more than mere casual acquaintanceship; it is more than interest for the sake of the lesson to be taught; it infers a deep and genuine affection toward each of the pupils and for their own sake. Barclay goes so far as to suggest that this love imperative will bring success to an untrained teacher where a well-trained teacher may fail for the lack of such love.<sup>2</sup> To quote him:

"It must be said that where some teacher-training graduates fail other untrained teachers succeed because they have a love for children, a feeling of human sympathy and comradeship with them which gives them an instinctive understanding of their nature and needs. Love imparts insight to knowledge in a truly wonderful way. No amount of cold, unsympathetic study of scientific facts about child nature will prepare a man or woman to nurture the spiritual life of boys and girls. Learning without love is preparation for failure."<sup>3</sup>

This element of informal, personal friendship with the pupils is difficult to incorporate into a teacher's preparation because of its intangible nature. It is as hard to stimulate as to evaluate. However, a teacher who has a genuine Christian love for his pupils will use whatever avenues avail themselves, and will do all that is possible to bring about this friendly, informal relationship between himself and his pupils.

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1. Mould, op. cit., p. 23.
2. Barclay, op. cit., p. xii.
3. Ibid.

### 3. To provide a Mastery of Principles and Techniques

#### a. The Underlying Principles

Another qualification which the Sunday School teacher must meet is the mastery of teaching principles and techniques. Every teacher must possess the instruments whereby he can best achieve the aims of the program set up before him. There are many ways to teach; that is, methods vary and must be chosen in accord with the immediate purpose and situation. However, certain basic principles must become well-known and understood and must be at the constant disposal of the teacher for quick reference at all times. In the preface of his book on the principles of teaching, Eavey suggests that

" . . . while method is important, principles are far more so because understanding and knowledge are always essential to intelligent action. No method is good except as it is used in accordance with principles that are fundamental to teaching and learning."<sup>1</sup>

He gives a summary of basic principles which every teacher ought to know in order to be a good teacher. Briefly they are:<sup>2</sup>

- a. There is no teaching without learning.
- b. The pupil does the learning.
- c. The motivation of the pupil determines what he will learn.
- d. The mental set of a learner at a particular moment is most potent in determining the nature of the learning response.
- e. Various ways of learning make variety in teaching necessary.
- f. The teacher needs to plan most carefully and thoroughly for the teaching of each separate lesson.
- g. Every teacher should be improving his method constantly.

#### b. The Formulation of Aims

Aimless teaching is useless teaching. It is not always easy

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1. Eavey, op. cit., preface.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

for a teacher to determine the purpose of a particular lesson as well as to establish a prospective goal for a series. However, it is very necessary that the teacher develop the ability to evaluate his efforts and activities in the light of his objectives. The objectives indicate the direction in which to proceed, as well as guarding against moving into undesirable directions.<sup>1</sup>

Every teacher must know how to set up aims and must realize their value to his teaching. It is necessary that he recognize both general and specific aims, and their relation to each other. Specific aims are in danger of becoming lost in details when not closely related to the general objectives, while general aims may become abstract and impractical if not closely allied with each specific goal in mind.<sup>2</sup> In their function aims are of value to the teacher because they (1) give direction, (2) make an orderly continuity, (3) offer a basis for selecting materials and activities, (4) present a basis for measurement, (5) encourage right aims in the pupils, and (6) keep the teacher courageous and energetic.<sup>3</sup>

#### c. The Mastery of Techniques

Even with a thorough knowledge of underlying principles and a mastery of setting up aims for teaching, the teacher is not prepared to effect any changes in the lives of his pupils unless he knows how to apply the right method for each teaching situation. Just what is meant by method? DeBlois defines it as "a planned and systemized manner of thinking or acting."<sup>4</sup> Vieth speaks of it as "using some material

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1. Cf. Paul H. Vieth: Teaching for Christian Living, p. 24.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
3. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., pp. 47-51.
4. DeBlois, op. cit., p. 196.

in an orderly and effective way to produce a desired end."<sup>1</sup> No matter which definition one may prefer, method implies an objective plan whereby a particular aim is achieved.

It requires more than a few weeks or months of preparation to gain familiarity and skill in the use of correct methods for various teaching situations. Constant and alert interest and application are necessary. A teacher may be a fine Christian, he may know his pupils and his Bible, and he may be aware of the teaching principles which best apply to particular situations, but without adequate understanding and use of correct method his teaching may be very ineffective.<sup>2</sup>

There are many methods which have proved their worth in the Sunday School program. Some of the more common ones, such as storytelling, discussion, memorization, and the lecture, are in danger of being overworked. It is so easy to master a particular method and then to use it with total disregard to the possibilities of other methods. A good teacher must have a range of techniques available and ready for wise use.

The more recent trend toward creative teaching by means of methods which utilize life situations and practical experiences of the child has come about because there were those who feared that spiritual content would suffer through stress on form.<sup>3</sup> Betts speaks of it as "teaching that kills."<sup>4</sup> He asserts that "the best and highest religious truth can have its effect lost upon the learner by unskillful

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1. Paul H. Vieth: Teaching for Christian Living, p. 95.
2. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., p. 115.
3. Cf. George H. Betts: Teaching Religion Today, p. 94.
4. Ibid., p. 95.

presentation."<sup>1</sup> It is true that where method becomes the end in itself instead of the means to an end, it does lose its vitality. It must be recognized that a child or young person learns much through everyday activities; therefore, these common experiences should be used to the best advantage.<sup>2</sup>

However, as Vieth suggests, "as in many values of life, in this new emphasis in education there is danger of going to extremes."<sup>3</sup> Surely, there is no place for methods to be discarded in the program of Christian education. Every teacher must become cognizant of the value of a particular method to the purpose of the moment, and must learn to choose the one which can be used most effectively. There are a number of factors to consider in making such a choice. Some of them are: (1) the age of the pupils, (2) the nature of the problem, (3) the nature of the material, (4) the nature of the aim, and (5) the teacher's skill in the method.<sup>4</sup>

#### d. Opportunity for Observation and Practice

The accumulation of theories and facts is not of much value unless there is the ability to apply them in action. This is as true in the field of teacher training as in any other field. Therefore, if at all possible, it is well to provide for observation and practice by the student teacher so that he can test and evaluate the factual knowledge which he has gained.

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1. Betts, op. cit., p. 94.

2. Cf. Paul H. Vieth: Teaching for Christian Living, p. 117.

3. Ibid., p. 91.

4. Cf. Robert S. Smith: New Trails for the Christian Teacher, pp. 166-168.

The value of observation lies in the fact that through it the student teacher can be guided in his own application by a pattern or model. To see good teaching being carried on is often the best way by which certain principles or methods can be crystallized. This observation may be accomplished by visiting public school teachers who are known to do good work, by observing a fellow Sunday School teacher who excels in some phase of teaching activity, or by offering a demonstration. Vieth makes this comment in regard to an observation which points up a particular issue: "Such specific reference to aspects of the teaching process will make the observation more effective and will make it easier to find good models."<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that practice makes perfect. The fallacy of this statement is that such "perfection" may be the very opposite of what is really desired. Practice establishes a habit, but it must be guided and watched so that the end result will be in accord with the original objective. Eavey has said: "Unless it is practice of the right procedure, practice will be clumsy, wasteful, and imperfect."<sup>2</sup> This demands a supervised practice which allows for constructive criticism and practical suggestions. Such supervision requires a well-qualified and trained individual.<sup>3</sup> Needless to say, such practice can

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1. Paul H. Vieth: Improving Your Sunday School, p. 52.
2. Eavey, op. cit., p. 121.
3. The place of the supervisor does not actually belong in this study of teacher training; however, his responsibilities relate themselves closely to the never-ending process of improvement. Ideally, there is a definite place for a supervisor who counsels, encourages, and maintains the standards set up by the training program. Practically, however, it is not likely that such supervision will be practiced within the Sunday Schools of the General Conference for some time. A specialized instructor supervising the program of a number of localities or a district may be accepted in the future.

best be carried on outside the Sunday School classroom. It requires wise guidance and tactful encouragement on the part of the supervisor.

Observation and practice are valuable if they offer practical help. To illustrate, they may be used to clarify an underlying principle or to allow for testing a newly-acquired method. If this is not the case or if the situation must be forced to allow for such activity, then it is best to discard them. The instructor of the teacher training class will be wise if he understands his particular situation and acts accordingly in his use of these mediums.

#### 4. To Provide an Understanding of the Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

There is another factor with which every teacher must become familiar if he is to do his best work in the classroom. This is the element of how the Sunday School is organized and administered. In order to have a unity of purpose, the superintendent and his teachers need to recognize each other's responsibilities and must, consequently, effect a working cooperation. Such cooperation cannot be achieved unless every officer and teacher is aware of his own position in the light of the whole.

To bring about an understanding of Sunday School organization and its administration, the teacher training course will provide the opportunity to gain familiarity with the following phases of this area: the historical development of the Sunday School in relation to its present functions and purpose, departmentalization and grading, the curriculum, building and equipment, finances, records and reports. When a teacher comprehends the necessity and value of these related interests, he will be better prepared to work with them so as to make the Sunday School what it ought to be.

5. To Provide for the Development of Christian Personality

a. Qualities of Character

"Though the teacher speak with the tongues of educators and evangelist, and have not \_\_\_\_\_, the teacher becomes as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though the teacher have the gift of child psychology, and understand all mysteries of learning laws, and all knowledge of the Scriptures, and have good intentions to move up the mountains, and have not \_\_\_\_\_, the teacher gets nowhere."<sup>1</sup>

What is it that Mould is trying to say? What is that supreme quality without which no teacher can hope to achieve his fondest desire? It is Christian character, or Christian personality.

Much has been written on this subject. It is not the purpose here to present another standard by which the qualities of character can be judged. However, in order to have a standard by which to deal with the teacher training courses under consideration, it is best that there be a clarification of the elements that make for Christian personality.

For the sake of brevity the six-fold character traits which Eavey suggests will be considered since they appear to include the essentials. They are:

- a. Physical - good health, fine posture, an attractive appearance, vitality and energy, a pleasing voice.
- b. Mental - a genuine interest coupled with a scholarly approach, sound judgment and constructive imagination, the ability to concentrate and evaluate, foresightedness.
- c. Emotional- a bouyant cheerful outlook, sympathy, sensitivity, patience and self-control, a sense of humor, poise, courtesy, and reverence.

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1. Mould, op. cit., p. 23.



- d. Social - qualities of leadership, punctuality, resourcefulness, reliability, honesty, and tolerance.
- e. Moral - high moral standards, dignity, fairness and loyalty, earnestness.
- f. Spiritual- a personal relationship with God in Christ and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, interest in the salvation of others, humility, intelligent and genuine convictions, eagerness to serve, a consistent and earnest prayer life, and a devotion to God and to others.<sup>1</sup>

Richardson reveals that great students of Christian education place primary emphasis upon the importance of personality traits as these listed here, for they condition the effectiveness of the teaching process.<sup>2</sup> "We teach most by 'contagion' of personality. To live ourselves 'according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' is the best preparation and the best method of teaching."<sup>3</sup> There is not much danger of over-emphasizing this qualification, for it is a basic truth that living is far more powerful than speaking. The life of the Sunday School teacher - seven days a week - supports and strengthens or weakens and refutes that which he teaches on a Sunday morning.

#### b. Motivation to Growth

How can such a Christian personality be developed and achieved? It is impossible to do it alone, of one's own power. However, the devotional life of the teacher will influence this development. "The object of a teacher's highest devotion gives direction and terminus to his personality development."<sup>4</sup> Daily periods for prayer and private

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- 1. Cf. Eavey, op. cit., pp. 82-92.
- 2. Cf. Norman E. Richardson: The Christ of the Class Room, p. 269.
- 3. William W. Meyer: "For Teachers," The International Journal of Religious Education, December, 1942, p. 17.
- 4. Norman E. Richardson: The Christ of the Class Room, p. 277.

study of God's Word must be a habitual part of a teacher's life. True humility must be there. In his article on the predominant characteristics of a teacher's life, Meyer says: "The best teachers are those who feel most humble. Unless we are teachable we cannot teach others."<sup>1</sup>

Then, too, there must be a constant desire to grow and improve in his manner of teaching. A good teacher will never be satisfied with the plans and preparations of last year. Nor will he lose sight of the need for pertinent applications of the lesson to contemporary situations and problems. This requires continual and persistent study of the latest developments. Preston states it thus:

"A leader should keep on the alert, keep abreast of the times, and keep up with the newest thought in his own line of endeavor by studying the specialized books dealing with that work. He should continually broaden his general education, studying general literature and the Bible."<sup>2</sup>

Mould suggests that the following books be included in every teacher's personal religious library: a teacher's Bible, several translations of the New Testament; a Bible commentary, preferably a one-volume edition; a concordance; some standard life of Christ and of Paul; volumes on Bible characters and heroes of the Church; a book on teaching your particular age group; a current religious education magazine; general religious books by which to keep informed on the best thought in the life of the Church; and devotional books.<sup>3</sup>

However, though mention has been made of a few of the steps by which a teacher may apply himself to growth of his own personality,

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 17.

2. Mary Frances Johnson Preston: Christian Leadership, p. 42.

3. Cf. Mould, op. cit., p. 25.

no such personality can be achieved by self-effort or self-discipline. Only through complete and utter consecration to Christ as Lord and allowing Him to mould the life according to His holy plan and purpose can this be done. To use the words of DeBlois: "Above all else let us recognize fully and realize vividly the supremely important truth that effective leadership depends upon the leadership and overlordship of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

#### E. Special Areas of Interest in a Teacher Training Curriculum

No two teacher training courses are alike. Certain essential features are common to all, but specialization is dependent upon the author's interests. These special areas are of value in that they offer greater appreciation and enrichment to the resources of the teacher. There may be such who are likely to ignore or underestimate the pertinency of such studies, especially those who are determined to "teach the Bible" for its content's sake. Knapp makes this assertion in dealing with the curriculum of a leadership training course:

"Other bodies of knowledge, such as knowledge of the world in which we live, a sound understanding of historical Christian doctrines, knowledge of the development of the church, knowledge of the experience of great Christian leaders, and knowledge of <sup>2</sup> other religions, should be provided by the general curriculum."

##### 1. A History of the Christian Church

In order for a Sunday School teacher to recognize the place of the Sunday School within the program of the contemporary Church, it is necessary for him to be acquainted with the historical development

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1. DeBlois, op. cit., p. 378.

2. Knapp, op. cit., p. 108.

of the Church. It is quite likely that many teachers have never had the opportunity to make a study of this. Offering such a course as an enrichment study in a training program can become of great value. With this information, a teacher is better equipped to interpret and apply the lesson truths.

## 2. The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

It is apparent that the teacher who desires to serve his Church to the best of his ability must be well-informed as to its doctrine and historical development. Therefore, the Sunday School teachers within the Mennonite churches of the General Conference need to understand and appreciate these facts if they want to be sure that their lesson interpretations will be in accord with the teachings of the Church. It is quite apparent that this emphasis has been sadly neglected in the past; and this neglect may, in part, be responsible for the inconsistency and disunity noticable throughout the Church. Ideally, this material might be presented as a part of the curriculum content of the Sunday School program; however, since that has not been practiced in the past, it is necessary to supply this to the teachers in the course of their preparation.

## 3. Educational Evangelism

Recently much has been said and written about the need for a re-awakening to the place of evangelism in the educational program of the Church. In the light of the discussion within this chapter on the primary purpose of every Sunday School teacher - namely, to lead boys and girls to Christ<sup>1</sup> - this is a pertinent consideration. Richardson

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1. Cf. ante, p. 27.

points up the issue in his new series, The Teaching Evangelist, when he says: "The time has come when the church needs to be challenged with a bold and accurate statement regarding the interdependence of evangelism and education."<sup>1</sup>

Sunday School teachers need to understand and appreciate this contemporary philosophy which they encounter in books, magazines, and curriculum materials which they use. They need to be ready and able to apply their own teaching in the light of the true relationship between education and evangelism. To quote Richardson again: "The church school of the future is the one whose teachers understand what education has to offer to evangelism and how evangelism can become the heart and center of religious education."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is well to include a unit of study on educational evangelism in the teacher training course.

#### 4. Missions

Too often missions is thought of only in terms of the endeavors which are expended in foreign lands. The attempts to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the hearts and lives of those in the homeland must be included in this conception. Every effort to spread the work of God's Kingdom is a part of the mission endeavor. A Sunday School teacher is not able to do his best in the classroom unless he has a degree of comprehension of this great work. He needs to be able to relate his own interests and activities to this larger

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1. Norman E. Richardson: The Teaching Evangelist, Study Unit No. I, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 15.

task; he must be able to interpret missionary enterprises to the members of his class.

It is especially valuable for the Sunday School teacher to be familiar with the fields of work and the personalities of his own denominational missions. For the teachers of the General Conference this implies an opportunity to learn more about the mission fields and their workers in the Mennonite missions at home and abroad. The teacher training course provides an excellent opportunity for such study.

#### 5. Others

It is likely that other special interests will present themselves to those who organize or develop a teacher training course. Among these may be the study of Biblical geography, an introduction to and evaluation of visual aids, or the element of worship within the Sunday School. It must be recognized that although these fields of special interest have their place, they cannot equal in importance the essential elements of a training course as presented earlier in this chapter. A wise instructor will know when to interject a special study in order to meet a particular need.

### F. The Essential Factors of a Teacher Training Course

#### 1. The Curriculum Content

The amount of space allotted to the discussion of the essential content material for a teacher training course in this chapter indicates the primacy of this consideration. It has been presented in various arrangements. Barclay lists five factors which, he says,

every course must include; they are: the pupil, the institution, the teacher, the lesson, and principles and methods.<sup>1</sup> Schauffler suggests four essential divisions: (1) Bible material basic to all Sunday School teaching, (2) a study of the workings of the mind at different age levels and under differing conditions, (3) teaching principles and their application, and (4) the place where the instruction is held - the school.<sup>2</sup>

It is to be noted that although the elements listed above are divided differently, they nevertheless include the same materials. The discussion on curriculum content within this chapter has been divided into six major divisions and these will be the basis for an evaluation of the content of the six courses under consideration. To summarize them briefly:

a. A Mastery of the Bible

In order to provide a Sunday School teacher with adequate preparation for his task, the teacher training course must present a thorough study of the Bible, both as to its factual content and the approach to Bible study which will result in creative teaching within the classroom.

b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

Although it is to be recognized that a formal, psychological study of the individual is not enough and that informal relationships with him in home and on the playground are necessary, nevertheless it is quite impossible to incorporate the latter element into a teacher

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1. Cf. Barclay, op. cit., p. ix.

2. Cf. A. F. Schauffler and others: Training the Teacher, p. 5.

training course. Therefore, the standard for evaluating the courses must be judged primarily upon its thoroughness of psychological study.

c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

An adequate understanding of underlying principles of teaching and an opportunity for developing objectives and various pedagogical methods must be provided within the training course. The opportunity for observation and practice is closely related to the elements of principles or methods, and may, therefore, be included in either of these elements.

d. An Understanding of the Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

In order to insure close cooperation and harmony within the various departments and among the various officers of the Sunday School, it is well for the teachers to be aware of the basic considerations and problems of the Sunday School organization and administration.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

Recognizing the basic qualification of every teacher, a vital relationship with God in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that the teacher training course provide for an opportunity to grow in his Christian life and character.

f. Special Areas of Interest

Teacher training courses vary as to the type of enrichment material which they offer, but it is quite likely that every course will suggest some special areas of interest. The value of these will depend in a large measure upon the needs of any particular situation.



## 2. The Organization of Materials

### a. Form of Presentation

Two principal types of teacher training courses are obtainable. The one organizes its content by supplying its own textbook and depending solely or almost solely upon this. The other suggests various bibliographical resources and allows for a wider representation of materials. In addition, some courses provide a summary outline of the complete course, while others each unit of study independent of the others. Whether the textbook or bibliography type of course is to be used will depend upon the instructor and the amount of other materials available. It is easy to see that a bibliography course will require a more extensive library than the textbook course. A skillful instructor can take the bibliography course and through wise choice of books offer a fine, comprehensive course to his student teachers. Then, too, he may use the textbook course and make it worthwhile by supplementing its material with additional sources which will open wider vistas to the members of the class.

### b. Guidance for the Instructor

No two teacher training courses are alike. One outstanding feature of their difference is the degree of assistance that is provided for the instructor. Some courses offer specific steps in the development of individual lessons as well as an over-all outline for the unit. At times there are good questions and topics for discussion. Some courses provide pictures, maps, and other similar helps to make the lesson more graphic and pertinent. Furthermore, the amount of assistance that is offered in regard to the number and

types of resources that are suggested is an important factor to consider in the choice of a training course.

c. Provision for Progress

A teacher training course must provide for progress on the part of the student teacher taking the course. This progress may be determined by the age or experience level of the teacher, or it may be indicated by the number of units that have been mastered previously. In this respect, again, courses do not agree. There are those who offer one comprehensive unit of study, while others provide a series of units which build into a complete whole. Certain courses of study offer a number of general units with specialized units of study to follow.

d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

Contrary to the opinion of some Christian education leaders, the teacher training course needs to prepare its teachers to deal with all age groups, from the nursery child to the adult and the old person. This is necessarily true within the General Conference, because the Sunday Schools of this denomination include every member of the family. This requires that the training course to be chosen present a scholarly and up-to-date unit of study on the psychological development of an individual for every age group.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

To offer a teacher training course simply because neighboring Sunday Schools are doing it deserves no commendation. There must be a conscious desire for such training on the part of the student teachers because they feel the need for it. Furthermore, the

means that are used to make a particular course available need to be well-suited to the situation. Some of the ways that are open to use are a permanent class during the Sunday School hour, a series during a Workers' Conference, an Institute for Teachers, a summer camp program, and others. The choice of training course to be used will depend upon its adaptability to the particular situation for which it is needed. The organization of the content, the number of units within a course, and the availability of suggested source materials will aid in the choice of course to be used.

### 3. The Provision for Certification

Every Sunday School teacher has a right to receive recognition for the time and effort he spends in preparation for teaching. In most cases this recognition is given through credits or certificates by denominational boards or committees. Certain standards of certification have been set up by these bodies, and each course requires the satisfactory fulfillment of these standards before recognition is given. The number of class hours and hours of preparation, and the length of the units determine the qualifications. Although the field of Christian education lags far behind secular education in this respect, concerted effort in this field by Christian leaders reveals a growing awareness of this need.

In order that certification be authoritative there needs to be a uniformity of checking the student teacher's work. In most cases this takes the form of an examination or the fulfillment of a specified number of projects. The form which such measurement takes is not as important as the fact that there be uniformity and an arbitrary standard

which merits full-fledged recognition. The higher the standard, the more likely it will be that the measurement will be thorough and scholarly.

G. The Standard of Evaluation for a Teacher Training Course

1. An Explanation of the Standard

The following chart lists the various elements which are to be considered in the evaluating of the teacher training courses. The curriculum content is listed first since it is the primary factor in a successful course. The manner in which the material is organized and the provision that is made for certification follow in order. The suggested degrees of evaluation: no material, poor, fair, and adequate, must be recognized as being relative. It is to be recognized that no course can be found adequate in all elements and even the term, adequate, does not imply excellent. This manner of evaluation is to be a guide in determining the strong and weak points in each of the courses under consideration.

## 2. The Chart

NAME:

AUTHOR:

PUBLISHER:

DATE:

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .				
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .				
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .				
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .				
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School				
The Development of Christian Personality . . .				
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .				
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch				
Educational Evangelism . . . . .				
Missions . . . . .				
Others . . . . .				
THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .				
Form of Presentation . . . . .				
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .				
The Development of Progression . . . . .				
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.				
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .				
THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION . . . . .				

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate

#### H. Summary

The discussion in this chapter has dealt with the factors to be considered in setting up a standard by which to judge the six teacher training courses named in the previous chapter. This standard will be used in the next chapter as the basis for the evaluation of these courses.

The importance of the teacher training program in the Sunday School was considered in the light of its relation to the teachers and prospective teachers, as well as to the cause for which the Sunday School stands.

This was followed with a consideration of the basic qualification which every teacher must possess; namely, a vital personal relationship to God in Christ.

The larger share of the discussion within the chapter dealt with the essential elements of the curriculum of a training course. These elements were chosen and developed on the basis of their relation to the qualifications which every Christian teacher needs to display if he is to fulfill his obligation to his pupils. Closely related to this was the next consideration, which dealt with special areas of interest that are found in the curriculum of these courses.

The essential factors that need to be considered in evaluating a teacher training course were next discussed. These were divided into three main sections: the curriculum content, the organization of materials, and the provision for certification.

Finally, a standard of evaluation was made, based upon these findings. For the sake of clarity this standard was developed in the form of a chart.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE EVALUATION OF TEACHER TRAINING COURSES USED WITHIN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

### CHAPTER III

#### THE EVALUATION OF TEACHER TRAINING COURSES USED WITHIN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

##### A. Introduction

In the preceding chapter a standard has been set up which is to be used as a basis for evaluating the teacher training courses used within the General Conference. This standard has been developed according to the findings which reveal the major elements necessary in a good training course. It is the purpose of this chapter to carry out this evaluation in such a way that the strong as well as the weak points of each course will be determined.

The courses under consideration fall into two types: the textbook type which presents its own material for instruction, and the bibliography type which suggests book lists from which to choose textbooks for a course.

The order in which the courses will be evaluated is the order in which they received recognition within the Conference. The last two courses in the study have as yet not received official recognition from the Board of Education of the General Conference, but are included in the study because of their wide acceptance in certain areas of the Conference.

Each course will be evaluated by first presenting a chart with its degrees of evaluation. This will be followed by a summary discussion on each point within the course for the purpose of clarifying the factors which determined the evaluation.



B. Preparation for Teaching by Charles A. Oliver

1. The Chart

NAME: Preparation for Teaching

AUTHOR: Charles A. Oliver

PUBLISHER: The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: 1922

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .		✓		
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .		✓		
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .			✓	
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .		✓		
An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School			✓	
The Development of Christian Personality . . .		✓		
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .	✓			
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch	✓			
Educational Evangelism . . . . .	✓			
Missions . . . . .		✓		
Others . . . . .		✓		
THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .			✓	
Form of Presentation . . . . .		✓		
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .			✓	
The Development of Progression . . . . .		✓		
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.			✓	
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .			✓	
THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .		✓		

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate

## 2. General Impressions of the Course

Preparation for Teaching is of the textbook type of course. It is a small volume of one hundred fifty-eight pages. The material in it is written to be complete in itself, and no recognition is given to other sources except for a short bibliography at the end of the book. Consequently, the evaluation of the course is based upon the assumption that it demands no outside information. The fact that it was written more than twenty years ago means that in certain areas it has been outmoded by the progress within the field of religious education.

## 3. The Curriculum Content

### a. A Mastery of the Bible

Although one-half of the volume deals with the Bible, it is inadequate in its presentation of this Bible material. Except for isolated cases where direct reference is made to the Bible, most of the content is factual information about the Bible presented in a very summary fashion. This factual material deals with historical and organizational matters. Each lesson suggests a list of test questions and a blackboard outline of the major facts to be learned.

No plan for personal Bible study is provided; since the emphasis is upon a summary of Bible facts, there is little opportunity or incentive for creative study. Hence, the teacher is not prepared to make the Bible live and apply to the lives of his pupils.

### b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

There is a unit of ten lessons on the pupil; and, although this material is presented in a summary fashion, it does provide the

teacher with a fair understanding of the nature and characteristics of children, adolescents, and adults. Seven lessons deal with the physical, mental, moral, social, and spiritual development of an individual, from the beginner to the adult. Each lesson offers hints to the teacher which apply the psychological findings to his teaching situations. Test questions point up the main facts, and the blackboard outline suggests a clear-cut organization for each age level.

Although it is difficult to present the best ways for informal personal relationships between teacher and pupils, this textbook presents one lesson on Knowing the Pupil by his Play. (pp. 107-109.)

#### c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

Since this course purports to present a complete and comprehensive presentation within itself, it fails in the area of teaching principles and techniques. Four lessons in the unit on the teacher deal with this area; at that, they are presented in the same cursory fashion as all the other units.

One short lesson deals with principles of teaching. These are not elaborated upon, nor are they complete and clear in their presentation. The test questions at the end of the lesson drill on the material within the short lesson and do not call for a wider study of this problem.

One lesson deals with preparing the lesson. The fifth point in the order of preparation suggests that a single truth be selected and that the lesson be planned and adapted in its relation to the pupils' conditions and needs. This is the extent of aid given in the formulation of aims.

Two lessons suggest a summary of methods in Sunday School teaching. The first presents four methods which are primarily of the transmissive type. The second lesson deals with story-telling.

d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration in the Sunday School

Within the unit on the Sunday School there are six lessons on its organization and administration. As usual, the material is presented in a summary manner with test questions which drill upon lesson facts. The following factors are given consideration: the development of the Sunday School and of uniform and graded lesson series, the relation of the home to the Sunday School, the purpose of the Sunday School, its organization and equipment, and its grading and departmentalization.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

The course fails in the area of a teacher's preparation by giving so little attention to this important phase. There is a short discussion of his spiritual preparation (p. 144) which emphasizes his dependence upon prayer and the study of God's Word. In the preceding lesson four qualities of character are summarily discussed. However, this is too brief and unchallenging.

No definite motivation to growth is offered. A short discussion on the teacher's responsibility might challenge him to better work and constant improvement. A short bibliography is suggested on the last page of the course, but no reference is made to it throughout the pages of the course.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

No provision is made for this field of study in the course.

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

Since the course is not denominational in character, it is not expected that a unit be offered on this subject. However, recognition for the inclusion of such a unit might well be made and provided for. No such recognition is found in the course.

(3) Educational Evangelism

No provision is made for a study of this element in a teacher's preparation.

(4) Missions

The final lesson in the unit on the Sunday School deals with its relation to the work of missions. Various activities within the Sunday School by which missionary endeavor may be spread are listed in the lesson.

(5) Others

The third unit on Bible Institutions and the Sunday School provides three lessons with factual information on places of worship, sacred services, and the sacred year. A few lessons provide maps to aid in interpreting the Old and New Testaments.

4. The Organization of Materials

a. Form of Presentation

As stated above, this course presents its own factual material for a teacher training program. It is presented in a very summary fashion with little room for evaluation of different views or consider-

ations. Many elements are merely named or listed with a sentence or two of elaboration. Information on the Jewish institutions and on the church year are presented in the unit on the Sunday School; matters related to pedagogy are discussed in the unit on the child. On the whole, much improvement could be made in the organization of the content.

b. Guidance for the Instructor

The instructor is provided with test questions and a black-board outline for each lesson. The unit on the pupil also offers a list of helpful hints based upon each particular age group. The maps provided are helpful in presenting the factual material about the Bible. However, there is little help for the instructor who desires to make his training course creative and vital. The preface suggests a list of simple teaching hints, but no provision is made for their execution.

c. Provision for Progress

It appears that practically no consideration is given to the need for progression in training. The first two units deal with Bible facts, which, in many cases, is the one phase a teacher has partially mastered before he begins to teach. The history and organization of the Sunday School is dealt with before the study of the pupil is considered. The personality and preparation of the teacher is the last unit in the course. Being preliminary in nature, this course must be followed with more specialized units of study.

d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

The unit on the pupil comprises all age groups from the beginner to the adult.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

The adaptability of this course to various teacher training situations is fair. It is possible to use one unit without reference to the others; each unit is made up of ten lessons, which makes it possible to use it for a short term course.

5. The Provision for Certification

At the time of its last printing, (1921) the course was approved by the Committee on Education of the International Sunday School Association, one of the two bodies which later became the International Council of Religious Education. Because of this recognition the course is certified, although its content has become outmoded in many ways. There is no examination suggested for the end of a unit or for the course as a whole. The preface of the book suggests that the class take the official examinations of the denomination or of the state Sunday School association.

C. The Evangelical Teacher Training Course  
by Luther A. Weigle and others

1. The Chart

NAME: The Evangelical Teacher Training Course

AUTHOR: Luther A. Weigle and others

PUBLISHER: Eden Publishing House, Chicago, Illinois.

DATE: 1917, 1918, 1919.

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .			✓	
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .				✓
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .				✓
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School			✓	
The Development of Christian Personality . . .		✓		
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .			✓	
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch.	✓			
Educational Evangelism. . . . .		✓		
Missions . . . . .		✓		
Others . . . . .			✓	

THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .			✓	
Form of Presentation . . . . .			✓	
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .			✓	
The Development of Progression . . . . .				✓
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.				✓
An Adaptability to Individual Needs . . . . .			✓	

THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

\* No Material

\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair

\*\*\*\* Adequate



## 2. General Impressions of the Course

The Evangelical Teacher Training Course presents its own material in the textbook style. The course includes two volumes with 338 and 352 pages, respectively. The material in each unit is quite detailed, and furthermore, almost every lesson suggests a related bibliography. The units of the course have been written by various leaders in the field of religious education, including such men as Luther A. Weigle, Frank K. Sanders, and Walter S. Athearn. Its copyright dates of 1918 and 1925 reveal that recent findings in the field of Christian education are absent in this course. However, the basic principles of teaching are there, and the Biblical material can quite easily be adjusted to present-day situations and needs.

## 3. The Curriculum Content

### a. A Mastery of the Bible

The course includes the whole Bible. The First Year course offers a study of the life of Christ based upon a harmony of the Gospels. The form and content of Jesus' teaching as well as His personality are studied from the teacher's standpoint. Within each lesson there are direct references to the Bible, and suggestions for further Bible study are listed at the end of every lesson. The Second Year course offers two units on the Bible; the first on the teaching values of the Old Testament offers a detailed account of the geographical and historical facts regarding each book. The approach to the teaching values of the New Testament, the second unit, is by using Paul's journeys as related in the Acts as a basis for the study of the epistles and other New Testament books, excluding the Gospels.

Various Scripture passages are suggested as they fit into the development of Paul's ministry, and these books are not studied as units in themselves.

Since there is no provision made for a direct approach to various books of the Bible which would result in an independent and creative study, this need is not adequately met in this course. However, both the First and Second Year courses do present application of the Bible to the particular needs of the various age groups. In the First Year course there is a series of lessons on the life of Christ as it might be taught to each of the following groups: little children, juniors, intermediates, young people, and adults. A similar approach is made in the Second Year course to the study of the Old Testament.

b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

The first unit of the First Year Course deals with the pupil. This fact may be an indication of the primary place given to this element in a teacher's preparation. As has been noted above, the Bible units offer definite application to the various age groups within the Sunday School departments, signifying the differences in needs. The physical activity of an individual, instinct and habit, the will, and the development of morality and religion are all factors which are considered in the study of the person. Suggested points for observation, a bibliography, and topics for investigation are also provided at the end of each lesson.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

1. Although the course is rated adequate in this unit, it does not imply that it is considered to be complete or excellent. If used to its full possibilities, this unit can provide a teacher with an adequate mastery of the psychological phase of his preparation.

c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

The second unit of the First Year course deals with a study of pedagogical principles and methods of teaching. One lesson presents the general principles upon which all teaching is based; in addition, these principles are incorporated into the various lessons dealing with the teacher's use of pupil interest, activity, and application.

The first lesson on the teacher's personal preparation suggests a very practical way in which to formulate one's aims for teaching. It is presented by the use of Biblical material, and offers a definite and constructive way in which to develop the best possible aim for a particular age group and lesson subject.

All ten lessons within the unit on the teacher's preparation in some way incorporate the mastery of techniques. However, lesson two suggests and discusses five of the most common methods; lesson four deals with a variety of activities for different age groups; lessons six through nine deal with story-telling, illustrations, questioning, review, and examination. The unit on worship in the Second Year course also offers an opportunity for mastering techniques in that it deals with various methods by which memory work, hymns, and prayers may be used.

d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

Ten lessons in the First Year course are on the organization and administration of the Sunday School. Each lesson deals with some phase of the program and suggests thought questions and problems at the end for further study.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

This is one area in the course that is relatively weak. At various points in the lessons references are made to the personality of the teacher; to illustrate, in the discussion on getting and holding attention this statement is made: "The teacher's own personality may be a distraction." (First Year, p. 120.) It is an element which appears to be taken for granted as a necessary part of the teacher's equipment. However, considering the length of the course and the special topics which are developed within the Second Year units, there might well be a recognition of this very necessary qualification.

The fact that this course is divided into a two-year study is in itself a motivation to further development on the part of the teacher. In many cases the questions and problems at the end of a lesson or of a series of lessons challenge the teachers. Another factor within this course that may well become a motivation to growth is the list of references for collateral reading found at the end of almost every lesson. However, practically nothing is provided for spiritual growth by the teacher, except what may be implied in the unit on worship in the Second Year course.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

Included in the unit on The Program of Christianity for the second year is a brief but fairly complete outline of the history of the Christian Church. Collateral reading is referred to at the end of the lessons on this historical survey. Although not a thorough study, this survey does provide the teacher with an appreciation of the major

factors in the development of the Church through the centuries.

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

Not being denominational in character, this course does not offer a study of the major emphases of the Mennonite faith and church history.

(3) Educational Evangelism

One lesson in the unit on The Program of Christianity, an historical study, deals with evangelization within the Church.

(4) Missions

Closely allied with the program of evangelism is the work of missions, as seen in the unit on The Program of Christianity. Three lessons deal with mission endeavors, presenting them as a part of the evangelical as well as educational tasks of the Church.

(5) Others

Whereas the First Year Course deals primarily with the basic needs of a Sunday School teacher, the Second Year course provides a number of enrichment units. Among these are a study of the place of worship in the Sunday School and Church, the Christian in the world today, and Christianity's program of education and social reconstruction.

4. The Organization of Materials

a. Form of Presentation

The content of the two year course is well organized by offering four units each year with ten lessons in each unit. Furthermore, the material within the First Year course is basic preparation which every teacher must have in order to be a good teacher. It is assumed that the teacher has some knowledge of his subject matter, for his

first two units deal with the psychological development of his pupils and his personal preparation. After this the life of Christ is presented with close reference to the Bible. The last unit of the first year provides the teacher with an understanding of the program of the Sunday School.

The Second Year course offers enrichment units. A further study of the Old and New Testaments give a greater insight and appreciation of the values for present-day living as found in these books of the Bible.

b. Guidance for the Instructor

The first lesson of the first unit presents a good discussion on the way in which each lesson is to be worked out. It suggests ways in which the bibliography, topics for discussion and problems may be handled by the instructor. Each lesson thereafter ends with a list of reference books, and offers one or more of these helpful activities: topics for investigation, thought questions and problems, written reports and discussion. One major factor which hinders the full value of the course is its copyright date which infers that recent books are not included in the bibliographies.

c. Provision for Progress

The fact that the First Year course deals with basic needs of a teacher and the Second Year course presents units for enrichment reveals a good sense of progression.

d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

Both in content matter and in the psychological approach there is an adequate inclusion of all Sunday School age groups. Recog-

dition is given to the Cradle Roll and on up to the adult who is a member of the Sunday School.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

Since each unit is made up of ten lessons and there are four units in one year's course, the course is well adapted to a variety of situations. Then, too, the fact that the first units deal with basic studies while those of the Second Year provide enrichment materials suggests easy adaptation to particular needs. However, in certain ways the units may be found to be too long to be useful for short term courses.

5. The Provision for Certification

The course is approved by the International Sunday School Association, an organization which later merged with the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations to form the International Council of Religious Education.

No provision is made for examinations or credit cards which might provide a scholarly basis for the proper completion and recognition of the course's work.

D. The Standard Leadership Curriculum

1. The Chart

NAME: The Standard Leadership Curriculum

AUTHOR: Educational Bulletins 501 and 502.

PUBLISHER: issued by The International Council of Religious  
Education

DATE: 1943, 1944.

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .			✓	
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .				✓
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .				✓
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School			✓	
The Development of Christian Personality . . .				✓
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .		✓		
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch		✓		
Educational Evangelism . . . . .		✓		
Missions . . . . .				✓
Others . . . . .				✓
THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .				✓
Form of Presentation . . . . .				✓
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .				✓
The Development of Progression . . . . .				✓
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.				✓
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .				✓
THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .			✓	

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate



## 2. General Impressions of the Course

The First and Second Series courses of the Standard Leadership Curriculum issued by the International Council of Religious Education presents an altogether different approach to teacher training than the two courses considered so far. In the first place, this course is not limited to the Sunday School teacher, and that which is applicable for the teacher must be chosen from the larger content. Furthermore, instead of presenting a textbook of material this series suggests a bibliography of content for a training course. There are general courses for background material, and specialized courses to fit particular situations.

The First Series are presented in a bulletin of twenty-four pages, edited in 1944. The Second Series were edited in 1943 and are offered in a bulletin of forty-six pages.

The fact that these courses do not present the factual information which the instructor can give to his training class, but demand choices of textbooks from which the material is chosen, implies that the instructor of such a course must be an expert in his field. It requires fine discretion and wise guidance for an instructor to lead a teacher training group to fruitful study when the field is left open to their choice.

## 3. The Curriculum Content

### a. A Mastery of the Bible

These series offer a wide range of Bible material. The First Series courses are primarily introductory and factual, providing a background of Biblical knowledge to the teacher. The Second Series

courses deal more specifically with interpretation of Scripture.

Although the Second Series courses on the Bible suggest a more direct approach to the Scriptures than the First Series, there is, nevertheless, no provision made for a creative study of the Bible itself. The textbooks suggested either present a critical approach or attempt to interpret the Bible in the light of contemporary needs and conditions. It would be the instructor's responsibility to lead his student teachers to a direct and creative study of the Bible with the suggested texts as guides for the study.

b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

Both the First and Second Series courses offer a number of general as well as specific courses on the psychological approach to child study. It can be seen that a great emphasis is placed upon the need for understanding the individual with whom one deals in a classroom. The way in which the courses are organized and the textbooks which are recommended demand a wise choice on the part of the instructor so that the needs of his group will be met.

c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

As in the psychological approach, here again both general and specific courses are offered to provide the necessary material, depending upon the situation. The specific courses deal largely with principles for teaching various age groups.

The Series offers no indications that recognition has been given to the development of aims and objectives. There is a possibility of including this study in the course on Ways of Teaching (p. 24) of the Second Series.

Great emphasis is placed upon the mastery of techniques in teaching. Both general and specific courses are provided. The specialized courses are offered for every age group from the nursery child to an adult.

d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

As stated above, the courses of the Series present a broader scope of material than that needed for the Sunday School teacher. Courses on the Vacation Bible School and Weekday Religious Education are also included within its curriculum. However, both Series offer a group of administrative courses in which specific studies can be made of the Sunday School.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

This Series does give ample recognition to the necessity of developing a strong Christian personality on the part of the teacher. Both the general and specific courses deal with this factor. The basic general course in the First Series is listed as Religion in Personal and Social Life, (p. 6). In the Second Series a comparable course is listed as Personal Religious Living (p. 20). Other general courses suggest the need for a positive Christian character in the life of every Sunday School teacher.

Both Series list courses which challenge the teacher to growth and greater fruitfulness, both in his own life and in his Sunday School work. The group of courses dealing with leadership development provide this challenge; the very fact that an ever-growing bibliography is kept before those in places of responsibility aids

this challenge; and the policy of constant revising and editing to provide the latest material supports this purpose.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

Nothing is provided in the First Series courses on the subject of church history. However, in the Second Series there is a course on The Church Through the Centuries, (p. 23).

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

Although no recognition is given to any particular denomination in the courses because of the interdenominational character of the Series, a course in the First Series suggests the possibility of including a unit on Mennonite history. It is the course entitled The Program of My Church (p. 8).

(3) Educational Evangelism

Relatively little is offered in educational evangelism, although it is one of the more recent trends. The Second Series suggests one course, entitled Christian Evangelism, (p. 24).

(4) Missions

One missions course is provided in the First Series, while many courses are included in the Second Series. General courses are offered as well as specialized ones for various age groups.

(5) Others

The nature of the Standard Leadership Curriculum is such that there are possibilities for any number and variety of courses which may be offered. The bulletin of the First Series states:

"There may be other questions or topics which you might wish to study. If this is the case, and if there is someone in your church, or in a neighboring church, who can plan for the discussion of such

a topic, it will be fine to have your own church or a group of neighboring churches start right in on it. Follow the usual procedure for courses for which there is no leader's guide." (p. 18)

Since this is the policy of the organization, there is a wide variety of special courses listed in the bulletins. Those which might be of special value to the Sunday School teacher deal with such subjects as: the function of the Sunday School within the community, worship, education regarding the alcohol problem, workers' conferences, visual aids, music and dramatics in Christian education, and others.

#### 4. The Organization of Materials

##### a. Form of Presentation

In both the First and Second Series courses the content is well organized under similar headings and with parallel numberings. This aids the student teacher to check his own progress and to follow through a particular interest of his own. Since this course does not present factual content, but rather furnishes bibliographical suggestions for the development of a course, no two applications of the course will be identical. General courses are listed first, followed by courses for the three major age groups and on leadership, administration, and field work. The bulletins are so prepared that the organization can be clearly understood and followed.

##### b. Guidance for the Instructor

As stated above, an instructor who uses this Series must be an expert because of the wide range of materials available and the need for making individual choices. The actual content which an instructor will present to his teacher training class will be determined by him. However, much guidance is offered to the instructor in the organization

of his class and for its execution by supplying "Leader's Guides" for most of the courses.

c. Provision for Progress

The First Series courses are basic, the Second Series courses provide a more extensive study of the same interests, and a Third Series has been developed for those who are advanced in their preparation but desire still further study. The particular course which a student teacher or a group of teachers will take will depend upon their own status and previous progress. It is possible to begin with a Second Series or even a Third Series course, if proof can be given that the basic material has been mastered. This system provides for excellent progress, both from one level of understanding to another and from one interest to another.

d. Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

An adequate inclusion of age groups is given. Psychology, methodology, and organization receive the greatest emphasis in this respect.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

By its very nature this course is almost unexcelled in the matter of adaptability. It recognizes the greater majority of problems, needs, and interests, and it allows for special courses to be developed if so desired. The fact that it is a bibliographical type of course allows for a variety of textbooks, which makes it usable by both small and large libraries.

f. Provision for Certification

The courses of the Standard Leadership Curriculum are made

by the cooperative action of the Protestant Evangelical Forces through the International Council of Religious Education. Since this Council holds a place of recognition within the religious education field, its standards and qualifications demand attention and acceptance by the various cooperating denominational boards. The requirements for certification are clearly defined and well organized. Course cards are provided for each student, and these cards signify credit for work completed. However, no standard tests or examinations are provided, and it is the responsibility of the instructor or the denominational board to provide such a standard.

E. Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools  
for Church Workers

1. The Chart

NAME: Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools for  
Church Workers

AUTHOR: Rev. J. J. Voth, chairman, and others

PUBLISHER: issued by the Western District Conference Education  
Committee

DATE: 1936

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .		✓		
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .		✓		
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School		✓		
The Development of Christian Personality . . .	✓			
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .	✓			
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch		✓		
Educational Evangelism . . . . .	✓			
Missions . . . . .		✓		
Others . . . . .		✓		
THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .		✓		
Form of Presentation . . . . .		✓		
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .		✓		
The Development of Progression . . . . .			✓	
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.	✓			
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .			✓	
THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .			✓	

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate



## 2. General Impressions of the Course

The Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools for Church Workers has been developed for the purpose which the title implies. It is a course developed by the leaders of one of the General Conference districts with the desire to provide a practical plan for their group. The fact that this course was devised after the Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education was found unsatisfactory may account to a degree for the similarity between the courses.

The course is presented in a small pamphlet of eight pages. As referred to above, it is of the bibliography type with short lists of approved books to be used as texts or for outside reference. This signifies the need for expert instruction, and it requires an extensive library. The course was published in 1936 denoting the absence of the more recent publications in this field.

Certain elements in the course give indication that the preparation for its use was sketchy and superficial, in part. To illustrate, the statement of purpose appears too general and ambiguous; it is stated thus:

"The purpose of these schools shall be to aid Sunday school and church workers in the acquisition of the element of Christian religious education. The plan herewith set forth aims to point the way rather than to dictate." (p. 1)

However, this course is the first attempt on the part of a group within the General Conference to set up its own training standard. This is a forward step and denotes a recognition of the need for teacher training.

### 3. The Curriculum Content

#### a. A Mastery of the Bible

Of the total of six courses developed within the course, two deal with Bible content; one deals with the Old Testament and the other with the New Testament. The text and reference books recommended suggest both a factual emphasis and guidance to Bible study. Since all of them are general in character, the degree of mastery will depend in a large measure upon the way the material will be taught by the instructor.

No indication is given to the need for individual, personal Bible study in order to provide for a creative approach to the Bible. The bibliography suggests books about the Bible, but very little that might lead to an independent and creative study.

#### b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

The first unit in the course deals with a study of the pupil. The few books which are recommended appear to deal with general child psychology .

#### c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

The second unit in the course lists a bibliography for principles of teaching. The books which are listed are texts on general pedagogy. Therefore, it will be the instructor's responsibility to present each of the elements in such a way that a mastery of teaching principles and techniques will result.

#### d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

The textbooks and references for the unit on Sunday School organization and administration are meager in number and relatively

outmoded due to the fact that they were written quite some years ago and thus do not include the latest findings in this field. No suggestions are listed by which the instructor may be guided in the development of this subject.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

No recognition is given to this phase of a Sunday School teacher's preparation.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

No provision is made for an enrichment course on this subject.

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

The sixth unit in the course offers three alternatives: a course on Mennonite history, one on mission endeavors, or one on Bible doctrines. Source materials on Mennonite history are relatively scarce, a fact which is borne out in the suggested bibliography for this unit.

(3) Educational Evangelism

No provision is made for a study of the relationship between education and evangelism in the work of the Sunday School.

(4) Missions

One of the alternatives to a study of Mennonite history is that of missions. The bibliography is very short, suggesting two volumes on Mennonite interests in missions, and a few other books on a general treatment of mission endeavors.

(5) Others

The third alternative is a study of Bible doctrines. The lack of a statement of purpose and the apparent mediocrity of the books make this enrichment course questionable.

#### 4. The Organization of Materials

##### a. Form of Presentation

The content of the course is simply organized by listing the bibliography for each unit under one of two headings: textbooks and outside reference readings. No indication is given of the priority of any one course over the others; the instructor is required to develop his own plan of organization.

##### b. Guidance for the Instructor

Reference has been made above to the need for an expert instructor in the bibliography type of training course. Nothing other than the list of books is provided for the instructor; he must plan his own course of action and individual lessons. A few suggestions are offered regarding the duties of local committees in planning and organizing the training course.

##### c. Provision for Progress

It is suggested that two of the six units be given in one winter, thus allowing three years for the completion of the course. The studies are paired so that a class can begin with the need which is most apparent in its group.

##### d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

No recognition is given to this factor in the organization of the units.

##### e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

Since the course as outlined is so extremely general, almost any arrangement can be made for individual situations. However, the very fact of its generality presents a difficulty in that so little

assistance is offered in the matter of specifying the application of a single unit to a particular need.

#### 5. Provision for Certification

The only qualification which is presented is that of recognition by the Conference Education Committee, which acts upon the grades submitted to it and accordingly issues credit cards.

It is suggested that the instructor submit a list of at least twenty questions for the approval of the Conference Education Committee. If accepted, from ten to twelve of these questions are to be given to the students for satisfactory examination. A grade of seventy is required for the issuance of credits to the applicants.

# F. Christian Leadership in the Church

## 1. The Chart

NAME: Christian Leadership in the Church

AUTHOR: John Tosh and others

PUBLISHER: issued by Education Committee of the Middle District Conference

DATE: 1942

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .		✓		
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .		✓		
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .		✓		
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .		✓		
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School	✓			
The Development of Christian Personality . . .		✓		
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .		✓		
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch			✓	
Educational Evangelism . . . . .	✓			
Missions . . . . .			✓	
Others . . . . .		✓		
THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS... . . . .			✓	
Form of Presentation . . . . .			✓	
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .	✓			
The Development of Progression . . . . .	✓			
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.			✓	
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .				✓
THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .		✓		

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate

## 2. General Impressions of the Course

Christian Leadership in the Church was prepared by the Education Committee of the Middle District Conference of Mennonites of North America and was published in 1942. It presents a very short and meager consideration of the problem of leadership education, being a small pamphlet of six pages. As stated in its preface, the committee responsible for the course made use of suggestions found in the Plan for Western District Conference Training School for Church Workers and in the Series put out by the International Council of Religious Education.

Although the course is of the bibliographical type, it presents an adjustment to particular situations by suggesting a formal and an informal set-up of schools. In the formal plan various elements of teacher training are arranged for two class periods in a session. Each element has its own bibliography. The informal plan suggests themes for addresses with discussion periods to follow based upon the findings presented in the addresses. The informal plan lists bibliographical materials according to age groups.

The course reveals that the committee responsible for its development was aware of the recent trends in the underlying philosophy of religious education. The problem of "Bible-centered" teaching over against "life-centered" teaching is taken into consideration. The course also reveals an effort by the committee to make the course fit the needs apparent in the Middle District.

## 3. The Curriculum Content

### a. A Mastery of the Bible

Recognizing the fact that the bibliographical nature of the

course demands expert teaching by the instructor, it must be concluded that there is scant opportunity for a mastery of Bible content within this course. The texts recommended are few in number and partial in scope. The nature of the informal plan of addresses followed by discussion periods makes doubtful the degree of attainment of Bible knowledge.

The Bible texts suggested for the formal plan allow for a possible creative approach, although no reference is made to actual study of the Bible. Here, again, it will be the responsibility of the instructor to achieve this goal. One theme suggested in the informal plan is: "Eternal Values in the Bible" (p. 5). This suggests a possible challenge to creative teaching, depending upon the content of the address and subsequent discussion period.

b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

A study of the various age groups from a psychological point of view is recommended in both the formal and informal plans, but with a definite limitation as to texts. One theme in the informal plan suggests the friendship between teacher and pupil; it is: "The Teacher and the Individual Pupil" (p. 5).

c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

Whether sufficient recognition is given to the underlying principles of teaching is questionable because the books dealing with pedagogy are almost solely concerned with particular age groups.

Although methods used in teaching are always a major consideration in teacher training, this course gives no direct attention to the issue, except for the theme: "The Teacher's Tools and How to Use Them,"



(p. 5) in the informal plan.

d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

This major element of a teacher's training is completely ignored in the course under consideration.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

Two books on Christian personality are suggested in the bibliography on adult psychology. Indirectly they may be applied to the need for Christian qualities of character in a teacher, but no such application is made. One theme in the informal plan does suggest a consideration along this line; it is: "The Cost of Discipleship," (p.5). Nothing is offered in the course that might be a motivation to further growth in Christian character and in an understanding of his task as teacher.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

A few texts in the formal plan deal with the history of the Church.

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

Two of the basic texts on Mennonite history are suggested in the bibliography of the formal plan, and one theme for use in the informal plan is: "The Unique Contribution of the Mennonite Church." (p.5)

(3) Educational Evangelism

No attention is given to the emphasis of evangelism in Christian education, although the course is recent enough to give some thought to this contemporary trend.

#### (4) Missions

The study of missions is recognized, both from the general and Mennonite points of view. The texts recommended deal with background and biographical studies, and two themes in the informal plan deal with the subject.

#### (5) Others

Suggestions for the study of worship in the Sunday School and the use of religious drama and visual aids are made in the formal plan of study. However, these suggestions are definitely limited and must be supplemented if they are to provide an adequate consideration of the subjects.

### 4. The Organization of Materials

#### a. Form of Presentation

The content is divided into two primary parts: the formal plan and the informal plan. Each has a suggested order of meeting. The formal plan has a list of courses for each of the two class periods carried on at one time. Under the heading of the course the bibliography is given. The informal plan lists the suggested themes for addresses with textbooks on various departmental problems suggested below for the discussion periods. No suggestion is made as to the priority of any one course over the others; although the formal plan includes the content courses of Bible, church history, and missions in the first period, while the procedure courses like psychology, pedagogy, and special interests are in the second period.

#### b. Guidance for the Instructor

As in the other bibliography type courses, it is the instructor upon whom the burden of organization falls. No help is provided for the

planning of a unit of study nor for the development of individual lessons. The variety of texts is not adequate. The themes for addresses are very general and demand thorough preparation and wise application if they are to be of value to the student teachers.

c. Provision for Progress

No provision is made for individual progress by the teacher.

d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

The bibliography for the study of psychological and pedagogical interests, as well as for such special fields as visual aids and drama, are listed according to the major divisions of the graded system. In certain fields, however, the list is not complete in that some age groups are omitted without reason.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

The fact that this course is divided into the formal and informal plans denotes the recognition of the need for adapting a course to various situations. Where an address followed by an informal discussion is desired and appropriate, the second plan will be welcome and useful. The general character of the course organization allows for flexibility and easy adaptation.<sup>1</sup>

5. The Provision for Certification

The Education Committee of the Middle District Conference provides certificates to those who desire them. Credits are offered to those who complete a unit of six periods of class work, each session to include one study period on content and one on procedure.

Nothing is provided for measurement by means of examinations.

. . . . .

1. It must be understood that the adequate rating in this respect is relative; that it is adequate only to the extent to which it has gone.

G. The Preliminary Training Course

1. The Chart

NAME: The Preliminary Training Course

AUTHOR: Clarence H. Benson and others

PUBLISHER: Evangelical Teacher Training Association

DATE: 1935, 1942

	*	**	***	****
THE CURRICULUM CONTENT . . . . .			✓	
A Mastery of the Bible . . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil . .			✓	
A Mastery of Principles and Techniques . . . .			✓	
An Understanding of Organization and Administra- tion of the Sunday School				✓
The Development of Christian Personality . . .		✓		
Special Areas of Interest				
A History of the Christian Church . . . . .		✓		
The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Ch	✓			
Educational Evangelism . . . . .				✓
Missions . . . . .				✓
Others . . . . .	✓			

THE ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS. . . . .			✓	
Form of Presentation . . . . .			✓	
Guidance for the Instructor. . . . .			✓	
The Development of Progression . . . . .			✓	
The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups.		✓		
An Adaptability to Individual Needs. . . . .				✓

THE PROVISION FOR CERTIFICATION. . . . .			✓	
--	--	--	---	--

\* No Material  
\*\* Poor

\*\*\* Fair  
\*\*\*\* Adequate

## 2. General Impressions of the Course

The Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association is a set of eight volumes, each one about eighty pages in length. Each volume deals with a specific field of teacher training, and the course presents its own textbook by giving this material without any references to other sources or collateral readings. The material within each lesson is detailed and well-organized. However, no table of contents or comprehensive outline of the entire course is available, which makes it difficult to check for particular facts or interests.

## 3. The Curriculum Content

### a. A Mastery of the Bible

Three of the eight units deal with the Bible: one and two present the Old Testament, and the third deals with the New Testament. Each lesson offers some of the basic facts in outline form and then proceeds to give detailed information upon the subject. The material on the Old Testament is more detailed than that on the New Testament. In addition, selected readings in the Bible are suggested for related study. At the end of each lesson questions are listed to point up the main facts. Since no reference is made to other authorities, the presentation is quite arbitrary. A thorough study of the materials will result in a relative mastery of Bible facts.

Since the commentary on the Bible is so detailed and factual, the possibility for creative study is limited. Some of the questions at the end of the lessons do offer a challenge to further individual study of the Bible itself, and this opportunity may lead to a creative

approach to the Bible. However, no indications are given that the editors of this course recognized the necessity for such an approach.

b. An Understanding of and Love for the Pupil

Unit Four presents a psychological study of the individual from infancy to later adolescence. Each lesson suggests a list of factual and thought questions for the teacher's and student teacher's consideration. Elements in this study besides the ones on each of the various age groups deal with the phases of religious education, the importance of child study, and forces that make for life building.

c. A Mastery of Principles and Techniques

Unit Five is entitled "A Guide for Pedagogy" and deals with the elements of teaching principles and techniques. As in the other units, guide questions are offered at the end of each lesson, and the material within each lesson is well-organized.

The underlying principles which every teacher must be aware of are considered to some extent in the discussion on "The Laws of Teaching," (p. 25).

One of the first lessons in the unit on pedagogy deals with the teacher's aims. This lesson sets up the general aims which are to be kept in mind. A later lesson shows how to organize the lesson materials, and this includes the matter of formulating specific aims in the light of the more general aims.

The presentation and application of teaching methods is one of the stronger points of this course. Most of the material is offered in such a way that the teacher will be able to make good use of it. The lack of collateral readings must be recognized, however, for without

them the course cannot be considered representative of all possible educational views and applications. Some of the elements which are considered are story-telling, questioning, discussion, research, lecture, and the use of illustrations.

d. An Understanding of Organization and Administration of the Sunday School

The sixth unit deals with the matter of organization and administration in the Sunday School. The history of the Sunday School movement, its functions, and various forms of organization and administration are dealt with in the study. The matter of standards and the curriculum are also considered. Each lesson again closes with a list of pertinent questions for review and further study.

e. The Development of Christian Personality

The unit on pedagogy is introduced with two lessons which are related to the necessity for a Christian personality on the part of the Sunday School teacher. They deal with the meaning of a teaching ministry and the spiritual preparation of the teacher. However, the fact that these lessons actually introduce the study of principles and techniques in teaching causes them to be overshadowed by what follows. Little reference is made to truths which the Bible offers in regard to the spiritual characteristics of a teacher.

Since the course makes no reference to other source books and literature on Christian education, there is danger that the teachers using its content will be satisfied with that which is offered. No real incentive to further study beyond the material in the course is provided.

f. Special Areas of Interest

(1) A History of the Christian Church

The only reference to historical study is the summary discussion of it as a part of the missions unit, where the historical development of missions is traced.

(2) The History and Doctrine of the Mennonite Church

Not being denominational in character, the course makes no reference to the historical study of any particular group.

(3) Educational Evangelism

The unit most recently issued deals with the present trend of relating the educational program of the Sunday School to the evangelical force of the Gospel. Instead of listing only questions for review at the end of each lesson, this unit provides suggested topics for discussion and further study, as well as references to related Scripture passages. A feature of special interest and value is the application which is made to the evangelistic appeal for the various age groups of the Sunday School.<sup>1</sup>

(4) Missions

\* The unit on missionary endeavor is comprehensive in scope and practical in application. First the Biblical basis for missions is presented, and then the development of the missionary enterprise is followed through the centuries from the time of Christ to the present. The relation of Christian missions to other religions of the world is considered. Some lessons suggest personal and discussion questions.

. . . . .

1. The rating of adequate given to this unit is considered in the light of its relation to the other units of the course and to similar units in other courses. This rating does not imply excellence.



(5) Others

No other enrichment interests are dealt with in the course.

4. The Organization of Materials

a. Form of Presentation

The organization of content is good to the extent that each volume deals with a specific topic. The plan of organization is based on the assumption that Biblical study precedes all other training and preparation. However, no outline covering all eight units is provided.

b. Guidance for the Instructor

Partial guidance is provided through the detailed material which is put into the hands of the student teachers. The instructor is not required to plan or organize the individual lessons. Thought questions and topics for discussion are provided. However, no practical applications of the theoretical content or suggested collateral readings for wider understanding and appreciation are given.

c. Provision for Progress

Provision is made for progress by the development of the eight units of study, each upon a particular subject of teacher preparation. It must be recognized, however, that this course is a preliminary general course and that the teachers may need more specialized training to follow the study of any one of these units.

d. The Inclusiveness of Sunday School Age Groups

In the psychological study and the discussion of educational evangelism recognition is given to the greater share of the different age groups. Young people and adults are not included, however.

e. An Adaptability to Individual Needs

Since each unit is a volume by itself, it is easy to use one unit apart from the rest. Each one is developed independently of the others, and this makes it possible to adapt it without too much trouble to the particular needs of a group or locality.

5. Provision for Certification

The course is accredited by the Evangelical Teacher Training Association. Registered certificates of credit are offered to the students who have completed satisfactorily the requirements of the Association. These requirements include a minimum attendance at nine of the twelve sessions of a unit, an hour of study on each lesson, and a satisfactory grade in the final examination.

No examination forms or suggestions for such are provided in the course.

H. Comparative Evaluation

1. General Comparisons

In checking the charts of each of the courses considered in this study, the most striking fact is that no course attains to an adequate rating in all of its elements. In fact, only one course receives this rating and that is in the organization of its material. The element which is of primary importance, that of curriculum content, fails to be adequate in every course.

It may be well to make a brief statement here about each of the training courses in the order of their rating. The Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education ranks first by attaining to a rating of "adequate" in its

organization and that of "fair" in curriculum content and certification. Two of the textbook type of courses, The Evangelical Teacher Training Course and the Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association, follow in the degree of recognition given them. Both rate "fair" in their curriculum content and in the organization of materials. The former fails to attain to this degree of evaluation in its certification. The two attempts by Mennonite leaders to develop their own material for the training of teachers and workers appear to have failed to rate high in almost every detail. In curriculum content both courses rate "poor." The Plan for Western District Conference also rates "poor" in its organization of materials, while the course developed by the Middle District leaders, Christian Leadership in the Church, is "fair" in its organization but "poor" in certification. Oliver's course, Preparation for Teaching, appears to be the least usable of all the courses evaluated and for this reason might well be discontinued.

## 2. Application of the Evaluation to General Conference Needs

The fact that none of the courses attains to the standard set up does not imply that all of the courses are to be discarded. The three courses which rank the highest have definite values and contributions to make and should be considered in the light of their strong points and in relation to the particular situations in which they might be used.

In the light of the results of the evaluation it appears that the Board of Education of the General Conference is the logical and proper channel by which a unified and aggressive program of

teacher training can best be carried on. This Board must recognize its responsibilities in this respect and make provision for dealing with them adequately and surely.

There needs to be a constant and active relationship between the Board of Education of the General Conference and the individual units where teacher training is carried on. The members of the Board ought to be aware of what is being done in the Sunday Schools of the Conference in this respect, and they should make every effort to assist these local leaders in the supply of the best materials available for the various situations. The Board might maintain a constant effort of helpful guidance and assistance to the local leaders after it has given initial recognition to the establishment of one of the approved courses. In too many cases the local leaders have not received such specialized assistance and guidance in the choice and administration of their training courses.

Since the course with the highest rating is of the bibliographical type, a further implication is the need for specialized and trained leaders to organize and administer the courses so that the greatest degree of efficiency and profit will result. Here, again, the Board of Education may be instrumental in providing such a leadership for the training courses.

Finally, this evaluation presents the need for the development of a program which will supply the particular needs of various units who may wish to carry on a training program. The courses which have been found to be useful do provide possible approaches to various situations. It may be an individual Sunday School, a community effort,

or even the desire of a larger group to have a training course. Recognizing the strong and weak points of the courses which may be used, the Board might well develop a program in which the course most appropriate to a particular situation or group might be prepared for use in that place.

### I. Summary

This chapter has presented an evaluation of the six teacher training courses which are popularly or officially recognized within the General Conference of Mennonites. Each course was judged upon the basis of the standard developed for that purpose in the previous chapter; no attempt was made to compare one course with another in this basic evaluation.

In the evaluation of the courses the strong and weak points of each were determined upon the basis of the elements listed in the standard. The content of the curriculum was made the first consideration since the material within a course is of primary importance. This was followed with a survey of the ways in which the material was organized and its application to the various demands which are made upon such a course. Finally, the evaluation dealt with the necessary provision which must be made for certification if the course is to provide the teacher with the recognition which he deserves.

In closing, a comparative evaluation was made in order to note the courses which rated the highest and were thus of greatest value to the Conference. This rating was then applied to particular needs of the Conference and recognition was given to further implications which this application demands.

#### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION FOR TEACHER TRAINING WITHIN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION FOR TEACHER TRAINING WITHIN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

#### A. Introduction

This study on the issues of teacher training in the General Conference would not be complete without a consideration of some possible types of application to the findings of the study. Of the six courses evaluated three have been found to be more usable than the rest; and, although these three are not identical in approach or emphases, they suggest some practical approaches to the problem of providing training for the teachers of the Sunday Schools within the Mennonite churches of the General Conference.

The evidence presented in the previous chapter reveals the need for an agent through which a unified and aggressive course of action on teacher training can be developed. Within this chapter an attempt will be made to present the Board of Education as the logical and most appropriate agent for this responsibility. To some degree the scope and form of the administration by the Board will be set forth in this chapter.

In addition, various specific suggestions will be made with the purpose of proposing some practical channels for the administration of an adequate teacher training program. These channels may be within the local congregation, a community endeavor, or a part of the District or total Conference program.

## B. The Board of Education as Agent for Teacher Training

As has been suggested in the previous chapter, the Board of Education appears to be the logical agent for carrying out the responsibilities of teacher training within the General Conference. The Board is representative of the various districts by the fact that its members come from these districts. It has dealt with the problem of teacher training in the past by its official recognition of these various training courses and the issuance of certificates. However, in order to become an adequate and efficient agent for the establishment of this service to the teachers of the Sunday School, the Board should recognize and make proper provision for certain features which are lacking at the present time.

### 1. Formulation and Clarification of its Standard

It appears that the Board of Education has not set up a standard by which the various courses used in the Conference have been judged. Such a standard might be of great value in that it would serve to clarify the purpose for this particular area of the Board's responsibilities. It would also help to bring about a greater uniformity among the Sunday Schools of the Conference in that it would set a uniform pattern before the individual and local groups. Allowance would need to be made within this standard for the characteristic emphases and interests of the various local and regional groups which comprise the Conference.

### 2. Development of a Uniform Program

Where now the Board of Education allows for the use of almost any teacher training course which a group within the Conference might



desire to use, recognition should be given to the need for establishing a comprehensive and unified program for the entire Conference. Such a program would suggest the best training course to use in a particular situation and would limit the possible choices of course which might be used.

The evidence within this study points to the fact that the bibliographical type of course, The Standard Leadership Curriculum issued by the International Council of Religious Education, offers the most material for training the teachers. However, such a course demands expert guidance and instruction and requires an extensive library. The two textbook type of courses found to be useful to some degree present a possible program of training in which the local, un-specialized leadership can take the initiative. Both of these types of training course for Sunday School teachers should be recognized and utilized in the program set up by the Board of Education.

It might be advisable for the Board to suggest alternative courses of action, the choice depending upon the locality and immediate demands of the situation. This would call for a program which would be flexible and practical, and which would at all times be within the jurisdiction and under the surveillance of the Board.

### 3. Provision for Trained Leadership

Although the responsibility for carrying on a program of teacher training within the Conference is placed upon the Board of Education, it is not concluded that the Board be responsible for the actual administration of such a training program. In order that this be carried on most efficiently, provision should be made for trained and

qualified leaders to deal with this matter. This is especially true of the administration of the bibliographical type of course where expert instructors are required.

Just how such a program of teacher training with qualified instruction should be carried on is not the issue in this study. The need for such a leadership is apparent, as is the justification for it. It would be the responsibility of the Board of Education to decide whether the leaders should serve in local situations, in the training of local leaders, or in some other way. The possibility for such a leadership will be determined by the recognition and support which the Board members will give to this needy area in the Conference, and by the availability of personalities who are interested and qualified to serve in this endeavor.

#### C. Suggestions for the Program of Teacher Training

Early in this study it was found that certain localities within the General Conference have carried on a program of teacher training for an extended period of time. Others were found to have given sporadic consideration to the matter. There are various established channels within the Sunday School and church organizations which provide possible approaches to the development of training courses for the teachers. These must not be ignored. In addition, there may be further possibilities by which, in particular instances, efficient and worthwhile programs of teacher training may be set up.

##### 1. In the Local Sunday School

Since the local Sunday School is the place which requires the teachers to be trained for the classes, it is the most practical

and logical approach. There are various ways in which this may be done. The choice for the proper course of action in any situation must be determined by the needs of the group and the appropriateness of the course.

a. The Teachers' Meeting

In many of the Sunday Schools of the General Conference it is the custom for the teachers and superintendents of the School to meet weekly for a period of study and fellowship. These are called "The Teachers' Meeting", and they provide an excellent opportunity for training the teachers on the job. However, it is questionable whether full advantage has been taken of this opportunity in the past. It appears likely that too many of these meetings are used primarily for the exposition of the Scripture for the coming Sunday's lesson. Although this is necessary and quite profitable, it is by no means the only preparation which a teacher must make. A wise superintendent or pastor will utilize this established channel for the introduction of the other elements in a teacher's preparation; such as the understanding of the child and relating the material to his needs, the development of skills in a variety of methods which may be used, and a challenge to the teacher's own growth in his spiritual life.

b. The Workers' Conference

The workers' conference has become very popular in many circles, and it suggests an excellent way to carry on a training program, if the leaders of such a conference are methodical and thorough. Sherrill lauds this particular approach by saying: "Experience suggests that we have here one of our best opportunities for continuing the education of

the workers while they are 'on the job!'"<sup>1</sup>

Knapp defines the worker's conference as "more or less regular meetings of church-school teachers and officers in the local church."<sup>2</sup> This definition suggests that the worker's conference is definitely a local church organization with a definite schedule and personnel. However, Knapp fails to suggest the purpose for such a meeting. A three-fold purpose has been offered by the International Council of Religious Education. It is recommended that the purpose be to provide opportunity for fellowship, to offer inspiration and information, and to suggest a plan for the work with the emphasis upon this last point.<sup>3</sup>

The frequency of meetings and the agenda for such a meeting would depend in a large measure upon the local situation. In some localities these worker's conferences are held monthly, while in others they are called once in three months. Sometimes they may become departmental meetings where the issues of the particular group are considered. Always they ought to be practical in their development so that immediate application can be made of that which has been gained by the teacher. One leader dealing with the administration of a conference says:

"The success of such meetings is dependent upon the careful thinking of some group in determining the problems which should be discussed. Such problems usually are drawn out of the ongoing experience of the school itself. Persons should be prepared to present particular problems; to give information as to the way in which they may have been solved in other situations; and to lead to a careful study and discussion of them by the group, seeking some possible solutions.

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1. Lewis J. Sherrill: Religious Education in the Small Church, p. 73.
2. Forrest L. Knapp: Leadership Education in the Church, p. 119.
3. Cf. "Enlisting and Developing Church Workers," Educational Bulletin No. 507, issued by the International Council of Religious Education, p. 25.

Worthwhile conferences make provision for determining a course of action and then for later checking upon the action which has been followed through."<sup>1</sup>

c. Supervision and Observation

Closely related to the efforts of a workers' conference is the need for supervision and opportunity for observation in the local Sunday School set-up. As the above quotation suggests, it is necessary to provide for a constant check on what is being done. The teachers may have gained inspiration and new ideas through a conference, but personal guidance may still be required to make these effective. Through observation and critical analysis, by means of suggestions for study and activities, through advice on books and other materials, and through personal counselling with the individual teachers the supervisor serves to bring about the greatest degree of efficiency and success in the Sunday School.<sup>2</sup> To be a supervisor is not an easy task and demands great insight and tact. A supervisor must be especially prepared for his work, which again suggests the need for trained leadership in this field of teacher training.

A teacher can gain much assistance and help through the medium of observing excellent teaching sessions. New concepts are gained, and patterns for his own work are suggested. In order that the practice of observation be most effective, certain factors need to be recognized: (1) preparation must be made beforehand to help the observing teacher to form intelligent judgment of what he observes, (2) a limit must be set as to the topics which will be considered in the observation, and

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1. "Preparing Workers for Your Church," Leadership Education, The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., p. 8.
2. Cf. Austen K. DeBlois and Donald R. Gorham: Christian Religious Education: Principles and Practice, p. 370.

(3) an attitude of openmindedness must always be maintained.<sup>1</sup>

d. Individual Reading

In many cases assistance can be given to the teacher by a planned and guided program of reading courses. Knapp asserts that there is no reason why this method may not become an effective form of leadership training.<sup>2</sup> This implies the need for a well-organized and adequate library, although it is not the number of books but the type chosen that determines its usefulness. Such a course of action requires a person in charge who is in a position to suggest specific books, magazines, or articles to meet the definite and practical problems of the teachers and to allow for progress in their independent study.

It is through a reading course that some teachers may be awakened to their need for further study in a regular training course.

In this respect Cope states:

"A school may well have a general educational committee which shall not only supervise the curriculum of the school, including the courses of study for teachers, but shall also from time to time set forth courses of reading for the teachers, shall call to their attention each new and worthy book that appears on their work, or on subjects which they are teaching. If you have teachers careless and indifferent, willing, apparently, to continue in their incompetency, you may often arouse them and begin the process which shall result in their steady labour of improvement, by giving them one of the many excellent, stimulating books on the modern Sunday school and its methods, or on the art of teaching in the Sunday School."<sup>3</sup>

e. The Teacher Training Class

One of the most practical and lasting ways to develop a

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1. Cf. C. B. Eavey: Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers, pp. 120-121.
2. Cf. Knapp, op. cit., p. 124.
3. Henry F. Cope: The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice, p. 182.

program of teacher training is the class of young people or adults that meets every Sunday morning during the Sunday School hour or during the week for a specific span of time. Such a class has the advantage of regular, consistent study for a definite length of time in which to complete a certain unit of work. In many cases the young people who have completed the regular curriculum of the Sunday School are interested in this study, even though they may never consider becoming regular Sunday School teachers. From this group the potential leadership of the Sunday School may be developed.

Moore throws out a warning in this respect. To quote him: "These young people should not be taken out of the training class to supply as teachers in the regular classes until they have had opportunity to study for approximately one year."<sup>1</sup> It is pertinent to heed this warning, for through such premature experience the beginner may lose interest or confidence in his own ability to teach.

## 2. As a Community Endeavor

Nevin C. Harner considers the training classes on a community basis as the best type of all. His reason for this assertion is that he considers the task of teacher training to be the responsibility of the entire community.<sup>2</sup> There are certain advantages in this approach. A greater choice for leadership of such a course is present and available. A greater variety of courses can be offered under such an arrangement. The support which such an undertaking requires, both in interest and finances, can be expected to be greater with an entire community backing the project.

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1. George V. Moore: Improving the Small Church School, p. 69.

2. Cf. Nevin C. Harner: The Educational Work of the Church, p. 209.

However, a community training course must not take the place of the more personal and specific guidance which the individual Sunday School is required to give its teachers. "General experience has shown that community training schools are successful and continue in existence if they are set up to supplement a carefully worked out plan in local churches which make provision for local church training classes."<sup>1</sup>

a. The Sunday School Convention

In some of the Mennonite localities the annual Sunday School convention is a regular and popular event. Such a convention provides an opportunity for a consideration of some of the major problems and current interests of the community in respect to a teacher's duties. Being limited in time, a convention presents outstanding leaders in the field of Christian education who offer stimulating addresses, and follows these with presentations of minor issues by local leaders and teachers.

These conventions attempt to accomplish much during a limited period of time, and therefore, are often criticised as being unprofitable and unjustified. However, they do offer certain valuable contributions; they provide for fellowship among persons interested in the same matters yet working in different situations, they serve to develop enthusiasm and greater interest for the cause, and they offer an opportunity for the delegates to share ideas and practical suggestions. Beyond that, an even greater contribution is the fact that these conventions become an incentive for further training within the local Sunday School, and consequently, training courses are set up.

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1. "Preparing Workers for Your Church," op. cit., pp. 11-12.



### b. The Teachers' Institute

To some people it may be difficult to note a difference between the convention and the institute. The former is a more general type of meeting, while the latter allows for discussion groups and forums in which the members of the institute may take a personal part. In some cases, the principles of the two types may be combined, so that the addresses by the principal speakers become the basis for further study and discussions in the more informal and smaller groups. It is out of these smaller units that the real and lasting values of the institute are derived.

In order to have a successful institute it must be planned for over a long period of time. Recognition must be given to the issues and needs of the various groups within the community, and these must be so organized that efficient and thorough consideration will be given to all. Teachers can aid this plan by suggesting topics for discussion, by providing practice sessions, and by sharing what they have found to be worthwhile in their own situations during the year's work.

### 3. District or General Conference Support

The nature of the district and General Conference organization and the fact that the Mennonite groups are scattered about the country make it difficult to administer any actual program of teacher training by which the largest number might benefit. However, any effort which is made toward bringing about such a program will in itself bring about greater unity and interest among the groups within the Conference and various districts.

a. The Young People's Retreats

Moore says that "the young people's conference held for a state, region, or district, has come to be a very vital means of training youth for leadership."<sup>1</sup> This is a fact which is popularly recognized and is, consequently, considered in the planning for a youth conference.

The young people's retreats of the various General Conference groups are a promising channel for teacher training. They are that, in part, because they are already established channels of activity. Further reasons for this can be seen in the following analysis of the values of such summer conferences to the local leadership cause:

- "a. Usually the leaders in summer schools rank high in ability and personality. Fellowship with these leaders is fraught with rich possibilities.
- b. In a summer school of ten days' duration there is opportunity for concentrated and uninterrupted work, with freedom from distractions. . .
- c. In these summer schools one meets the choicest spirits from local churches over a wide area . . .
- d. The worship life of the summer school or conference is very rich . . .
- e. Many summer schools and camps conduct laboratory or demonstration schools which offer opportunity for guided experience in leadership. Such experience is exceedingly valuable."<sup>2</sup>

Thorough planning and a wise choice of leadership are required to make these retreats a valuable avenue for the training of future teachers. In addition, such a unified program carried on in the various retreats can become an agent for bringing about greater

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1. Moore, op. cit., p. 69.

2. "Enlisting and Developing Church Workers," op. cit., p. 33.

understanding and unity among the different sections of the Conference.

b. Publications

An earlier suggestion for teacher preparation was that of reading at home. To that may be added the suggestion of reaching the teacher through the medium of the general publications which enter his home and library. The Mennonite publications might serve the teachers by supplying articles dealing with the issues and problems in which a Sunday School teacher is interested. These articles might well deal with specific activities and pertinent suggestions which offer practical help to the teacher.

Further, lists of books and other references on the phases of a teacher's responsibilities might be presented in these publications. New books on specific elements of a teacher's work, such as psychology, new methods of teaching, interpretation of the Bible, and other factors could be reviewed and recommended. Lists of helpful devotional books and practical materials issued by the agencies which are directly concerned with teacher training could be published. In this respect, the materials of the International Council of Religious Education and other similar agencies should be recognized.

4. Recognition to Teachers

Another course of action which will be found to bear fruit in the field of teacher training is the practice of providing recognition to the teacher for the task he is performing. He has a right to receive such recognition, not for his own sake but for the sake of the position which he has assumed. "The labourer is worthy of his hire"

. . . . .

1. Luke 10:7.

may in this case be interpreted as the due recognition which he is justified to receive. Moore, in giving attention to this factor, states:

"The teaching work of the church is so important that there should be a public service each year for the installation of the officers and teachers. This is an effective way of impressing the parents, the leaders, the pupils and the community in general with the significance of the task of the church school."

Such recognition serves to give encouragement and inspiration to the teachers as they serve from week to week.

#### D. Summary

A brief discussion of some of the factors to be recognized in setting up a practical program of teacher training in the General Conference was presented in this chapter. In the first place, the Board of Education was seen to be the logical agency through which an effective program could be developed. In order to bring this about it was suggested that the Board formulate its own standard for a training course and clarify its position in relation to this standard. Furthermore, it was recommended that the Board develop a uniform program using the training course or courses found to be most worthwhile and adaptable to the needs of the General Conference Sunday Schools. In this respect it would be well for the Board to recognize the divergent needs and emphases of the various sections of the Conference. Finally, the suggestion was made that a trained leadership be created to deal with this program of teacher training in the Conference since it is a matter important enough to merit such leadership.

There followed a consideration of various channels in the Conference through which a program of training could be established.

Although this discussion was not exhaustive, it did attempt to point up a number of logical and practical ways by which such a program could be achieved. The first and primary means was found to be in the local Sunday School organization, in which such efforts as a teacher's meeting, the worker's conference, supervision, individual reading, and a regular teacher training class might be the channel. A second possibility included the Sunday School convention and teachers' institute administered on a community basis. In the third place, the young people's retreats of the various districts were seen to offer excellent opportunities for the training of potential leaders, and the influence and support of conference publications was recognized. Finally, it was suggested that a teacher deserves to receive some form of recognition for his consecrated and willing service to the cause of the Sunday School, and this recognition rightfully belongs to the program of a teacher's preparation.

**CHAPTER V**  
**GENERAL SUMMARY**

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## CHAPTER V

### GENERAL SUMMARY

The purpose of this study has been three-fold: to discover the need for teacher training development within the General Conference, to evaluate the courses by which such a program has been carried on in the past, and to suggest a more unified and efficient program for the training of the Sunday School workers in the Conference. The impetus for such a study was gained through a realization of the fact that the teacher holds such a distinctly vital position in the whole program of Christian education and the contrasting lack of adequate preparation, or even the recognition for its need, in the Sunday Schools of the Conference.

It was found that various factors needed to be taken into consideration in making a study such as this. The first to be dealt with was a historical survey of the development of the program of teacher training in the Sunday Schools of the General Conference. Some of the characteristics of the Mennonite Church were noted in this respect since they have so definitely influenced the pattern of expression as well as the major emphases prevalent in the Conference. The manner in which the Conference was formed, its initial aims and its form of polity, and the channels through which the formation of the Sunday Schools finally became a reality were observed to be factors which must be considered in order to have a clear picture of the present teacher training situation. Since the Board of Education has become the agency to which the responsibility for the training of

workers has been delegated, the records of this agency were studied to find what steps had been taken to serve this particular cause. It was found that the Board has always recognized the need for teacher preparation, but its importance and support have been relative in many cases. Officially the Board has recognized four training courses, but it has never developed an actual standard by which to guide its action or judge its decisions in regard to these courses or their usefulness in the Sunday Schools of the Conference. In addition, two other courses of study were found to be popularly used in the Conference and were added to the list for an evaluation of the situation so as to make this study as representative as possible. The six courses were these: Oliver's Preparation for Teaching, The Evangelical Teacher Training Course, The Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education, the Plan for Western District Conference Training Schools for Church Workers, The Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association, and Christian Leadership in the Church prepared by the Middle District Conference of the Mennonite Church.

In order to have a fair as well as a comprehensive basis for evaluating the courses listed above, a standard of evaluation had to be set up. This standard was developed by making a study of the major qualifications which every teacher must possess so as to perform his task adequately and well. These qualifications were gathered from the writings of leaders in the field of Christian education. A vital, personal relationship with God in Christ was recognized as the basic qualification for every teacher. However, this qualification is not one that can be measured or rated in the course which a teacher may



take to prepare himself for his responsibilities.

In the study of the various qualifications which the teacher must display in addition to the fundamental quality of a dynamic Christian life, certain major elements were seen to be a necessary part of every training curriculum. In the order of their consideration in this study they are: a mastery of the Bible, an understanding of and love for the pupil, a mastery of teaching principles and techniques, an understanding of the organization and administration of the Sunday School, and the development of a Christian personality. Some courses also provided units of study for enrichment, but their inclusion was dependent upon the interests and emphases of the group. Such special areas of interest were also taken into consideration in the light of their pertinency to the needs of the Mennonite Sunday School teachers. The form of organization of a course and its certification were further factors which were dealt with in the development of the standard. The standard was organized into the form of a chart with degrees of rating, ranging from "no material" to "adequate."

In the actual evaluation of the six courses each was considered individually, and its rating was based upon the three main elements in the order of their importance; namely, curriculum content, organization of materials, and provision for certification. The courses were found to belong to one of two types: bibliographical and textbook. Each type has advantages for its use as well as certain disadvantages which keep it from being as practical as it might be.

In the comparative evaluation which was made after each course had been studied individually, it was found that no course attained to

a fully adequate rating in all its elements. The major element, that of curriculum content, was not adequate in any course according to the standard. The Standard Leadership Curriculum of the International Council of Religious Education, a bibliography type of course, achieved the highest rating with "adequate" in its organization, and "fair" in curriculum content and certification. Two of the textbook type courses, The Evangelical Teacher Training Course and the Preliminary Training Course of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association were found to be generally fair. The two courses developed by individual groups in the General Conference rated "poor" in almost every detail, while the course by Oliver was found to be the least useful of all.

In attempting to suggest some recommendations for a future course of action based upon these findings, the need for a central agency was definitely apparent. The Board of Education appears to be the proper channel through which a more unified and efficient program of teacher training can be administered. However, recommendations were made that the Board formulate and clarify its standard upon which further action could be based, that it develop a program which would provide unity of action while yet adapting the suggested course to the needs of individual Sunday School groups, and that it provide a trained leadership for the administration of this important task of the Church. This was followed by a brief consideration of the various channels in the local, community, district and conference organizations by which teacher training can best be carried on.

In conclusion, it is seen that it is a fine thing to have an adequate standard and to be concerned with the efficiency of that which

is available, but no amount of theoretical evaluation can take the place of practical application of that which can be used. Sunday School teachers need to be trained for their great task, and the material is available with which to do it; the need is to provide the proper channel through which this training can be offered.

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