

# Christian Education

## INTRODUCTION

The discipline of Christian Education has a history which is, in its relation to theological study, unique in that it developed as a separate subject in relatively modern times. Moreover, its development as a separate and distinct discipline occurred during the period in which theological development followed, in the main, the lines of the liberal-modernist tradition. This, coupled with the fact that general education was at the same time undergoing a radical modification, has contributed to a situation in which the major writings in the field tend to be oriented in other than Evangelical context. Works in the area which are distinctly reflective of the position of historic orthodoxy are therefore of relatively recent date.

In compiling this bibliographic list, the writer did not seek to give a specific rating of the works in terms of their excellence, nor to imply that any given volume is necessarily on a "must be read" list. Nor has he sought to limit surveys to recent publications, for some of the older titles are of distinct merit. Moreover, many excellent books could not be included. It is designed that those surveyed should afford helpful ports of entry to the several areas of emphasis.

## Principles of Christian Education

**Abiding Values in Christian Education**, by Harold C. Mason.  
Westwood, N. J.: Revell, 1955. \$2.50.

This volume, written by a distinguished writer who was for years Chairman of the Division of Christian Education in Asbury Theological Seminary, has for its purposes the exploration of the manner in which religious educational theory is guided by controlling concepts, is a critical treatment of the role which distinctly Evangelical principles should play in guiding educational practice. He is critical of the view that

religious educators should be mere imitators of secular education, or that they should be overawed by the claims of educational theories to serve as controlling for all education.

Dr. Mason presents no blind apologia for traditional education; he is aware that transmissiveness may be little more than the perpetuation of stereotypes. At the same time, he has a keen awareness of the validity of the contemporary "quest for fundamentals," and believes that in historic Christianity can be found an abiding set of valid controlling concepts for a Christian Education worthy of the name.

*A Christian Approach to Education*, by Herbert W. Byrne. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961. \$4.95.

Dr. Byrne's volume represents a broad deviation from a conventional structure of philosophical study in Christian education, since it attempts to find a valid center in the Bible for everything relevant to it: for culture, for the educational system with everything that implies, and the "secular" sciences and skills. Essentially, it is a book by a conservative, written for those of a conservative theological orientation. The author shows great originality in his charts and diagrams. The volume has many usable lists in the areas discussed. The work is well documented, and its bibliography is excellent.

*Education for Christian Living*, by Randolph Crump Miller. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1956. (Text ed. \$7.95.)

Many teachers of Christian Education have labelled this work a classic in the field. It does have, in the judgment of this reviewer, some outstanding sections; but it encounters the usual difficulties which beset a work written from a middle-of-the-road theological position. That is, it tends to displease both the militant liberal and the extreme conservative. Those who can, however, read it relatively objectively will derive much profit from this high-content work. It requires supplementation by some such work as Harold C. Mason's *Abiding Values in Christian Education*, or James DeForest Murch's *Christian Education and the Local Church*.

Religious Education--A Comprehensive Survey, by Marvin J. Taylor, Ed. New York: Abingdon, 1960. \$6.50.

This is a general work, and brings together a comprehensive treatment of a large number of topics in the field, including most of those included in this present bibliography. While any symposium tends to suffer from the lack of a unified point of view which characterizes the writing of a single author, Dr. Taylor has done a notable piece of work in organizing the work of a number of contributors, and of bringing within the scope of a single volume the thinking of highly able and authoritative scholars in the area of Christian education.

This is no easy "how-to-do-it" manual of operations for the schools of the church. It is, rather, a solid volume designed for serious students of religious education. It is a work which can be supplemented with profit by such works as Philip Henry Lotz' symposium, *Orientation in Religious Education*, and the volume, *Fundamentals in Christian Education*, under the editorship of Cornelius Jaarsma.

The Teaching Task of the Local Church, by Harold C. Mason. Winona Lake, Ind.: The Light and Life Press, 1960. \$3.25.

Harold C. Mason, Professor emeritus of Christian Education in Asbury Theological Seminary, and currently Visiting Professor at Grace Theological Seminary, has in this volume combined two elements: first, the setting forth of the possibilities afforded to the local church in its program of Christian education; and second, the development and utilization of leadership at the local level.

A survey of the Table of Contents reveals that Dr. Mason has here covered a wide range of practical matters relating to Christian education, as well as the theoretical subjects with which he deals. One master motive guides the author in the presentation of his material, namely, that one glad day, all of education may be penetrated by Christian principles. Until that time, he seeks to make the Church School as effective a unit as possible.

Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum, by D. Campbell Wyckoff. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961. \$4.50.

Dr. Wyckoff is splendidly equipped for the task of writing a book on curriculum, as he has been for years involved in inter-denominational activities centering around curriculum building, and has written extensively for his own church publications. Here is the happy situation of a theorist who has already applied and tested his theories. The work follows the standard practice of beginning curricular construction with the stating of a set of objectives. Those set forth here are fairly well standardized, and the author shows how modifying influences produce rather sharply contrasting finished products. The work brings together in good fashion theory and practice.

### Administration and Methods

*Audio-Visuals in the Church*, by Gene A. Getz. Chicago: The Moody Press, 1959. \$2.75.

This highly practical work is standing up well in the test of time and use. Upon its release from the press, it was commended without reserve by members of the Research Commission in Christian Education of the National Sunday School Association. The volume is not concerned with theory. It is a completely usable and useably complete manual of instructions which are practical and practicable for persons of modest educational attainment. The graduate student or the professional director of religious education will, however, also find it helpful. It ranks in usefulness alongside O. J. Rumpf's volume, *Use of Audio-Visuals in the Church* (Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1958).

*The Church School: The Organization, Administration, and Supervision of Christian Education in the Local Church*, by Paul Herman Vieth. Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1957. \$3.50.

One of America's most respected authorities in the field has written a book built on fully accepted principles, embodying years of observation and experience. The finished product of Professor Vieth's work must be classified as one of the most complete and usable volumes on the Sunday School ever written.

There are no discernible flaws; it appeals to this reviewer that to look for them is to be picayunish. The person seeking help in establishing a new school or working in a very small one may find other writings more useful, but for the person seeking to guide the average, well-established school, this is a fine procedural guide, conservative and sane.

*Helping the Teacher*, by Findley B. Edge. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959. \$2.95.

For the teacher who has become imbedded in an instructional rut, or for the administrator who realizes that his staff needs new impetus, Dr. Edge offers a volume of genuinely helpful nature. The most thoroughly usable methods to enliven and to make efficient Sunday School teaching are so clearly described and suggestively applied that any one with the slightest flair for instruction can be helped to improve his procedure and to make his classes more interesting and more worthwhile. From the dozens of distinct procedures available, the author has chosen most wisely; those treated here are within the ability range of the average teacher who wants better to serve his pupils, his church, and his Lord.

*Improving Religious Education Through Supervision*, by Frank M. McKibben. New York: Abingdon, 1931.

This volume deals with the greatest need in the schools of the church today--improvement; it provides many practical suggestions for the attainment of that end. Supervision has been mentioned by writers for years, and has been applied vigorously in public education. Christian education has lagged in developing effective supervisory procedures. This book deserves wider reading and application than it seems to have had--possibly a re-printing is in order.

*Leadership Education in the Local Church*, by Price H. Gwynn, Jr. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952. \$2.75.

This volume deals adequately with the recruiting and training of potential leaders, the organization and content of leadership training courses, and the application of trained leadership in

the work of the church. The work demonstrates extensive knowledge of leadership training courses available for churches. It may be supplemented by W. F. Crossland's volume, *Better Leaders for your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955).

*Organization and Administration of Religious Education*, by John Elbert Stout. New York: Abingdon, 1925.

It is difficult to imagine a more thorough piece of work dealing with this aspect of Religious Education. The professional and the advanced student will especially appreciate it. The average worker will find his needs met in sections from some of the more general writings which are surveyed in this bibliography.

This volume by Professor Stout should not be slighted or written off because of its publication date, for it is thoroughly usable today. That is, it embodies insights which are abiding for the development of the program of religious education in the church.