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Y. M. C. A. AND COLLEGE.

HOW CAN THE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COLLEGE

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In order to approach a conclusion upon the immediate topic under consideration it may be worth while to recall a few elements in the history of the movement.

The Y. M. C. A. did not originate in a recognition of the needs of college students. It was distinctively a men's movement in the interest of city men. The early history therefore was marked chiefly by a consciousness of the religious needs of men, and an effort to meet these needs. The evangelistic and religious phases accordingly predominated in the early work of the association. The progress of the movement developed the belief that young men had a special mission to young men. It was seen also that no arbitrary line of years could be drawn and the Christian Association steadily became the organization of men of all ages in the interest of men of all ages. The industrial and social phases of the work brought organization and classification in the city association. It was entirely natural that in this movement the college man should be a participant and that the needs of the college student secured recognition. To meet these needs college men were called into the councils of the Y. M. C. A. for the specific purpose of organizing and developing the work in such way as to meet the needs of the college student. It was recognized at once that many of the accessories in the city organization were needless and impossible in the college. There arose at once the problem of the college Y. M. C. A. and the college student. Naturally enough again the religious phase took precedence and was the chief inspiration in undertaking association work in the colleges.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.

At the outset there were a good many prejudices to be met and overcome. The class feeling among students was well enough defined

to make it difficult for a lower classman to influence an upper classman. The fraternity man does not readily take to instruction from non-fraternity sources. The college man resents a little any movement originating among non-college men. What may be termed the conceit of education fills the mind of a young man so that he is apt to be indifferent toward any movement that is not strictly in the line of education or his personal desires. The supremacy of the vocational idea especially in technical schools has operated to eliminate everything which is not regarded as immediately contributing to progress toward the vocation. This is well marked in the indifference of the technical student toward culture courses or any other subjects of human interest that do not in his judgment belong to his profession. The devotion of these men to the vocational idea has made discipline less burdensome, but has narrowed the range of the student's vision while intensifying his work in certain subjects. The same law is operative in separating him from distinctly religious work. Again we are not to forget that the adolescent period is yet present and that its self-assertion,—amounting sometimes to waywardness and a certain headiness, renders it easy for the student to assume an air of haughty indifference to what older men regard as fundamental issues.

Certain other conditions mark student life. These have been frequently emphasized and urged. I refer to the enforced absence from home and the easy break which this makes possible with many home ties, and in particular the social and church ties in which the young man has grown up. The new alignments and the new associations as determined by classes, athletics, fraternities, and the new mode of living, bring the student into a new life in which naturally enough the new problems are emphasized and the value and importance of early associations, temporarily at least, are overlooked. The new method of work presented in the college, which has often been contrasted with that of the smaller circle of the secondary school, and the enlarged world of student activities of all sorts, combine to fully occupy the interest and attention of the freshman. These conditions make him a very much busier person than he has ever been before and the danger is that while troubled about many things he will neglect the one thing needful.

In many colleges the dormitory idea prevails and the student falls at once into the traditions and experiences that control. In the

state universities, speaking generally, the lack of dormitory facilities presents a much more serious and fundamentally different problem. Scattered at random over a city, these young men are without home culture or any very well defined consciousness of a relation to the religious organizations of the city in which they are living as students.

Another feature of the early student life is the sudden assumption of all sorts of financial obligations and an expenditure of money without any immediate supervision. Few of these students have ever had any systematic instruction in the expenditure of money, and very soon find themselves in the straits of financial embarrassment, unable to meet the demands without more generous provision from home, and very naturally draw the line of contribution just this side of distinctively religious work. It is so easy for social and athletic considerations to take precedence over religious work as represented in the Y. M. C. A.

No doubt much could be added to this statement of student conditions as presenting the problems confronting Christian work. This, however, will be assumed to be sufficient to form a basis for the following suggestions:

METHODS OF INCREASED EFFICIENCY.

To begin with, the financial problem is of more importance than is usually believed. The finances of most Christian associations have been so uncertain as to render any permanence in the organization impossible. The struggle to raise money for Christian association work the country over has been so serious a handicap as to make that problem one of very thoughtful study among the leaders. Recently in Columbus, Ohio, the several associations joined together in a campaign for money for current expenses covering a period of two years. This money was raised within one week, although the development of the plans occupied a week or ten days previous to the campaign. The distribution of the funds raised was made in proportion to the needs of the several organizations. This liberated the workers from the burden of money raising and made it possible for them to give their time to association work. Heretofore a large amount of the time, especially during the autumn, has been consumed in providing finances. This was the period when the association could do its most effective work among students. The success

of the financial campaign has liberated a large amount of energy to be applied in the association work. I mention this method for the purpose of emphasizing the fact that a Christian organization has been compelled to use too much of its energy and waste too much of its time in developing its subscription list. The worldly cares of the Christian association are particularly burdensome in the college. The opening weeks of the year, and indeed two or three weeks prior to the opening, are the most fruitful weeks of the year. The lack of a financial standing at that time has put the association too much in the attitude of a solicitor and not enough in the attitude of a helper. Furthermore, the limited resources have made it difficult to retain the services of competent men through a series of years. The value of such services is cumulative provided men can be retained. If a new organization or a new secretary appears annually or biennially the strength of the movement is greatly broken. The long summer vacation makes it impracticable for a new organization to become effective until many important opportunities have passed forever. This condition does not obtain in other departments of association work. The city is permanent, the main support of the work is available, and some one can be found to underwrite the association financially until money can be secured. This has not been true of the state organizations in their college departments nor often true in the individual college. It seems to me therefore that an efficient method of financing the association must be provided as the first condition of greater efficiency.

EDUCATING THE FACULTY.

A second suggestion lies in the importance of educating the faculty. Notwithstanding the fact that many of the younger members of our faculties have been educated since the college association work has been begun, it is true that many of them have not been much under association influence. Many of the older men were educated before such association work was undertaken. The result is that faculties often regard association work with indifference, and lack an intelligent appreciation either of the services rendered or of the service possible. Something needs to be said, however, in defense of the faculty. The cost of living has greatly increased and the agencies engaged in benevolent and charitable work have greatly multiplied. Most members of faculties are associated with churches,

benevolent organizations, educational associations, and other organizations, all of which make drafts upon their limited income. The increased demands of the modern college upon the time of the professor for committee work and the increased demands of the public upon his time in certain forms of public service and the intensity of social organizations, especially in the cities, combine to make it difficult for the average member of a faculty to give systematically a portion of his time to association work. It is not always a lack of sympathy, but a limitation as to time, strength and money. In spite of all these considerations, however, the fact remains that college faculties need to be aroused as to the importance of association work. The religious problems will always be present in the college and until some other better organization is developed the Christian Association will be the agency most effective in sustaining and developing the religious life of students.

In recent years an effort has been made to secure the cooperation of parents, especially in the financial support of association work. This is undoubtedly a good movement. Aside from any money so contributed, the fact that parents at home are contributing to the association work gives it new strength and must add to its efficiency. I venture to suggest as a development of this method that individual churches ought to take stock in the college association. From one church with which I happen to be acquainted as many as twenty-five students at one time were at one college. This, of course, was a pretty strong church. So far as I know, it has never been suggested that this church should support the college association. Why not? It is doubtful whether the church had a more important trust than the care of its own sons in a distant college. This suggestion, however, is not to be understood as limiting the interest of the church to mere financial support. An occasional visit of the pastor at the expense of the church, to the institution for the purpose of a pastoral call upon the young men from his church and from the city or community in which he lives, would be a great help. Many of these men could bring a helpful message and the time of their visits could be so planned as to make them most effective. The isolation of the college from its natural friends, the pastors and the parents, is unfortunate. We shall increase the efficiency of

religious work in the college by keeping the natural religious guides of the student in closest touch with the institutions of education.

TRAINING WORKERS.

Now a third general consideration is offered concerning the educational equipment of association workers. Up to date, the association worker has been too much of an accident. The courses of was a pretty strong church. So far as I know, it had never been shaped with a view of training young men for Christian work in the colleges. We have thought of the social efficiency of the Christian man in his community; of the efficiency of the missionary in the foreign land; of the efficiency of the pastor in a particular church. Ought we not now to begin to prepare specifically for association work in the colleges? The present methods of Bible study have done something, as we all concede. Familiarity with the traditions and history of the Y. M. C. A. has also done something. It will be recognized, however, that the religious problem of a young man in process of education cannot be permanently left in the hands of untrained men. The fact that a man is a college graduate does not of necessity prepare him to lead the religious life of undergraduates. I recognize that this problem has had some consideration in a few places. The church, however, as an institution, the theological seminary as an institution, and the colleges as such, have not sufficiently aroused themselves as to the possibilities of religious development among students. The recent effort to install pastors in college communities is a recognition of this need. Most of these men, however, will affirm that the problem is yet new and unsolved. The Bible conferences, usually held during summer vacations, have recognized the needs of students, but the training that they afford is entirely inadequate. It has usually resulted in developing enthusiasm without providing the basis on which the permanent enthusiasm may be sustained. The work hitherto done by the college association has been broadening in three lines, namely, industrial, in which students are aided in self-support; social, in which some provisions have been made for cultivating the acquaintance and social life of students; and religious, in which Bible study has been developing, and religious life cherished, and evangelistic efforts put forth. My judgment is that in general these three lines will be sustained for a long while to come. The most important service, as I see it, will be the main-

tenance of the religious life of the student, and its slow development, somewhat parallel to the development of religious life in the average citizen. The evangelistic service is too temporary to be of greatest service among students. It seems to me, therefore, that the better preparation of the permanent worker among the students is the key to the increased efficiency of the association as a religious force among students.

In conclusion, I suggest that the better organization of finances, the closer co-operation of pastors and churches, the better educational equipment of association workers, will lead to a more definite aim and a better program of work. It is true, and will probably always remain true, that each college has its local religious problems. The city university, the state university, the denominational college, the college on a private foundation, together with their antecedents, will always give a local coloring, but the essential religious problem will be the same in all of them. The open opportunity afforded by most colleges is a great encouragement to the better organization of association work. The difficulties in the problem are not more serious than elsewhere. The college will always remain the most promising field for social and religious betterment. It ought to attract to itself our most talented and consecrated workers. The enormous increase in enrollment that is sure to come in our colleges and universities renders this field even more important and attractive.