Young Men's Christian Associations and Foreign Missions

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PUBLISHED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS,
40 EAST TWENTY-THIRD STREET, NEW YORK CITY.

1890.
Association Work in Foreign Mission Lands and the Relation to it of Officers and Members of American Young Men's Christian Associations.

I. — Let us consider four things concerning the American Young Men's Christian Associations:

1. Their pledge to a distinctive work.
2. Their agreement with the churches.
3. Their place among the Associations of the world.
4. Their call to work in the foreign field.

1. — Our Associations are pledged to a distinctive work for young men.

(1). By their origin.
(2). By their history.
(3). By their convention resolutions and Association constitutions.

(4). By their possession and use of trust funds, given solely for that purpose.

(1). First, by our origin.

In a sea of conflicting opinions we shape our course, not only by looking forward to our destination, but by looking backward to our point of departure, and about this, in reference to our Associations, there can be no dispute. We had at the beginning, and can still have, no right to an organic existence as Young Men's Christian Associations, except to accomplish that distinctive work for young men for which our Associations have been called into being, and to refrain from entering any other field of Christian work, however commendable such field may be.

(2). Second, as Associations, we are pledged by our history to hold our organizations to a distinctive work for young men.
We learn by experience, not only as individuals, but also as organizations, and we correct our mistakes of yesterday in our work of to-day and our plans for to-morrow. One of the most serious and costly mistakes ever made by the American Associations was in the turning aside, not only of some local Associations, but also of some State Committees, from their work for young men to a general evangelistic work for all. While in itself this was a good work, and many evangelists and successful Christian workers were developed in it, yet no Association man, appreciating the errors of the past, would advocate that the Associations should undertake that work to-day. This was a mistake through which the Associations in many states were nearly swept out of existence. But, on the ruins of these failures, the return to a definite work for young men has built up hundreds of what are now among the strongest Associations in
the world—Associations which are yearly bringing many young men to Christ and leading them into church fellowship.

(3). Again, the resolutions of our representative conventions and the terms and provisions of their constitutions hold our Associations to a distinctive work for young men.

There can be no ambiguity or vagueness regarding the meaning of the "Paris Basis," which was re-affirmed by the Montreal and other International Conventions, or concerning the resolutions of the Portland International Convention in 1869 on the evangelical and sex qualifications for active membership in our Associations. These resolutions are embodied, either verbatim or in substance, in the constitutions of nearly every Association in America, and also form the constitutional basis of all of our state organizations. Our constitutions define our work and hold us to our mission "to unite those young men who, re-
garding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples, in their doctrine and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom among young men.

(4). Fourth, our Associations are pledged to a distinctive work for young men by their possession and use of trust funds, given solely for that purpose. The large amounts of money that have been given to our local, State and International Committees for the regular expenses of our work have, in nearly every instance, been given in response to the plea that it was to be used in work for young men, and largely by men who felt that they were already giving as much as they should give to other and general Christian and missionary work. Then too, the eight million dollars invested in buildings for the use of the American Associations have been put into the hands of the Associations to be held in trust and used for this clearly-
defined purpose. On principles of common business honesty we cannot as Associations use these funds for other enterprises.

II.—The second thing concerning the American Associations is their agreement with the churches.

Officers and other members holding positions of influence in the American Associations, are not free to make the Association what they may choose to make it. The Association was organized and acquired an historic significance before they came into it, and when they became members of it they practically accepted and agreed to carry out certain fundamental agreements for the fulfillment of which the American Associations as a body stood pledged before the world. One of these, was a solemn, public, and reiterated agreement with the evangelical Christian churches. This agreement was made and re-affirmed at four representative International Con-
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holm, Geneva and others, are modeling their Associations on the American plan, and with the help of agents of the American Associations.

Even the old universities of Europe, which have never been touched by Association work or influence in their own countries, are sending yearly delegates to our students' conferences, have welcomed the visits of the representative of the American College Associations, and, during the present college year, have organized the first Young Men's Christian Association in a European university, and on the American basis. The fact of the matter is that the representative American Association, by its devotion to its distinctive work, its recognized relation to the churches, its simple and effective organization, and its loyalty to the Son of God, the Spirit of God and the Word of God, has reached that point in its development where it is not only adapted to the needs of the young
men of America, but is also being recognized as an agency which, under God, is calculated to meet the crying needs of the young men of the world.

IV. The fourth thing to be considered regarding the American Associations is, their call to work in the foreign field.

(1) As a matter of obligation.

It should be clearly understood that the call to an individual is an entirely different thing from the call to an organization. When the call comes to the individual, he is requested and expected, in that call, to betake himself to the field to which he is called; but the call to an organization is, not that it send out individuals to the field to represent nothing but their individual responsibility, but that, as an organization, it take itself to the field to which it is called, by sending out individuals who shall represent and reproduce the organization in that field.

This, in fact, is the exact nature of the
calls that have already come to the American Associations from the colleges and universities of the Orient, from Japan, from India, from Madras, from Calcutta, from Ceylon, from Brazil; and, as Associations, we are called to give to the young men of these foreign lands, not what we can give to them as individual Christians, but that which no other body of men in the world can give them—the organization of the American Young Men's Christian Association, with all that is peculiar to and characteristic of that organization, in its relation to the churches and its devotion to its distinctive work for young men.

The difference between the home and the foreign fields in our Association work is simply one of geography. The principles remain the same. The logical result of doing other than Association work abroad would be to very soon undertake the same kind of work at home.

This, we have seen, would be contrary
to our origin, history, constitution and obligations, as an organization; would violate the principle of common honesty, in breaking our agreement with the churches and with those by whom we hold our property in trust; and if carried to its logical conclusion, would destroy the unity and the integrity of the Association work, and eventually our very existence as an organization.

(2) As a matter of history.

First. In the development of the missionary department of the College Association work. Thirteen years ago, before the organization of the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association, when there were but twenty-five instead of three hundred and five Associations in American colleges, there existed in many of these colleges student missionary societies, for the spreading of missionary intelligence and the cultivation of missionary interest among the students. With the organization of the
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deliverances and instructions of the International Conventions.

"5. The work of such representative should also be carried on, not only in harmony with the evangelical missionaries and pastors of churches on his field and with the various foreign mission boards they represent, but most earnest effort must be made by him to secure their approval, sympathy and cooperation.

"6. This American representative shall be known as Secretary of the International Committee for the field to which he is sent.

"7. This work upon the foreign mission field shall be placed under the direction of a special sub committee of the International Committee."

Second. The call of the American Associations to work in the foreign field is indicated by another line of historic development, in the extension of the organization of the American College Young Men's Christian Association to foreign missionary lands.
Beginning with the formation of the Association in Jaffna College, Ceylon, in 1884, by F. K. Sanders (now editor of the "Intercollegian"), then a teacher in that institution, and largely increased in number in response to the letter of greeting sent out to the foreign missionary colleges by the students at the first Northfield Conference, at Mount Hermon, Mass., in 1886, this movement has been greatly strengthened by the work of J. Trumbull Swift in Tokyo, Japan, and by the recent visits of our first College Secretary, L. D. Wishard, in Japan, Ceylon and India, in his official capacity as "Student and Foreign Secretary" of the Central International Committee, until in the Association Year Book for 1890 there are reported twenty-nine College Associations in foreign missionary lands. A prominent Christian missionary writes from Japan: "The leading government schools of Japan have been made the objective point of Christian evangelists,
from the time of their establishment, eight or ten years ago. But the doors have been kept closed, while from an elevation of an almost unendurable self-complacency and assumed superiority, the students have condescendingly smiled at Christianity as something entirely beneath their notice. * * If the Young Men's Christian Association ever confirmed the judgment of its founders and promoters, if ever it verified its claim to having a special field, and an all important one, which no other Christian organization could fill, it has lately done so here in Japan, among the class of young men just described, by persuading them to get down from their pedestal of assumed superiority and disdain and to open their doors and hearts to the ambassadors sent to them in the name of Jesus Christ by the students of England, Germany, Sweden and America.

* * The doors of these government schools were opened for the first time to the knocking of Christianity simply and solely through Mr. Wishard's relations to college students in the western world."
The third phase of the historic call of the American Associations to work in the foreign field is seen in the direct calls from Japan, India and South America to the American International Committee to send representatives of the American Associations to organize Associations in those fields. In response to these calls and in accord with the missionary resolution of the Philadelphia International Convention, the committee has already sent out J. Trumbull Swift, formerly general secretary of the Orange (N. J.) Association, and David McConaughy, Jr., formerly general secretary of the Philadelphia (Pa.) Association, as secretaries of the American International Committee for Japan and for India. Already two additional secretaries are wanted for these two countries and another for an important center in South America.

II. The relations of the officers and members of the American Associations
to Association work in foreign lands is precisely the same as their relation to any other department of the American International work.

1. They should clearly grasp and understand the unity of the Association work at home and abroad, recognizing that in foreign lands it is as distinctly and exclusively a work for young men as on the home field.

2. They should sustain a relation of sympathy with Association work in foreign lands, by allowing no local or race prejudice to prevent full recognition of the needs and claims of the young men of unevangelized lands and of the adaptation of the Association to their condition and needs.

3. They should sustain the relation of students of this work in foreign lands by informing themselves concerning:

   (1) the condition of young men in these lands;

   (2) the Christian agencies already at
work in these lands and the results of such work;
(3) the opportunities for Association work in these lands;
(4) the history of Association work in these lands, its methods, results, etc.

4. They should sustain the relation of educators to their fellow members and others concerning Association work in foreign lands,
(1) by personal effort;
(2) by circulating marked copies of periodicals, such as missionary magazines and letters and articles in the "Intercollegian," and the "Young Men's Era," especially the letters from Messrs. Wishard, Swift and McConaughy;
(3) by circulating Association publications on this subject;
(4) by regular missionary meetings;
(5) by a wise use of the local and religious press.
5. They should sustain a partnership relation to the Association work in foreign lands;

(1) by systematic personal contributions;

(2) by promoting systematic giving among their fellow members for the extension of Association work in these lands. This they can do

a. by maintaining the missionary department of the International Committee's work as now carried on;

b. by sending contributions to the International Committee, to be used at their discretion for this work;

c. by helping special enterprises indicated by the Committee.

6. They should sustain a prayerful relation to the Association work in foreign lands,

(1) personally;

(2) by promoting systematic prayer in the Associations for Association work and workers abroad, and for
the extension of Christ's kingdom among young men in all lands.

7. Some members and secretaries may be called to sustain a personal relation to the Association work in foreign lands, by going out, as Messrs. Swift and McConaughy have gone, to represent and reproduce the American Association in some particular foreign missionary field.

Let us "pray the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Let us also pray that, as Associations, we may have understanding of the times, and to know what we ought to do in this great work, and that, with the knowledge of our work, may be given also the grace, the wisdom and the ability, in method, money and men, to do it as it should be done.