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The Scope and Purpose of the New Organization

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It is a source of very great disappointment to all of us, and I am sure I may say especially to myself, that the eminent gentleman whose name was placed upon the preliminary program for the address this morning cannot be with us. President Butler of Columbia University, as many of you know, has been called by divine Providence to pass through very deep waters in these last weeks- the greatest sorrow perhaps which can come to a man has come to him- and has left him unable to meet the engagement which he would otherwise have been glad to fulfill. President Butler has been in close touch with the preliminary work of this Convention for the past six months, and it is the occasion of very great regret to him that he cannot be with us this meeting.

I thought that I should like to have my words this morning entirely within your reach; so I have had a syllabus printed, which the ushers will now distribute. It contains twenty propositions relating to the scope and purpose of the new organization.

I should like, first of all, to deny that I am in any way the author of any one of these propositions. This sheet is a composite affair; it contains, so far as I am able to understand it- and I think perhaps I understand a part of it- the consensus of opinions of many persons so far as it was possible to secure such a consensus. It may fairly and honestly be said that one hundred men, perhaps two hundred, have contributed to this small sheet of four pages. I shall do nothing but read the propositions, and the eminent gentlemen who follow will discuss them. The first proposition stands by itself:

1. The desirability of a new organization depends upon the scope and purpose conceived of in connection with the proposed organization. No new organization is needed merely to antagonize and to disturb organizations already in the field, or merely to duplicate the work of such organizations. Unless, therefore, there is a scope and a purpose for this proposed organization which will give it a field outside of and above or beyond organizations now in existence, there is no excuse for its establishment; and I believe that is the opinion of every man and woman in this Convention.

The second, third and fourth propositions relate to the service, which may be expected of such an organization.

2. The new organization, if established, will undertake to render service in unifying the efforts of the different agencies already engaged in various lines of work; in correlating the forces already established, to the end that these agencies may accomplish even larger results than have yet been accomplished. The acceptance of such service on the part of the other organizations and agencies will of course be wholly voluntary, and will in no case involve giving up of independent positions; for the work of the new organization will be something like that of a clearing-house.

You remember that the figure of a "clearing-house" was used yesterday by some of the

speakers; and some of us who are familiar with the work of charity organizations in the city, the bringing together of the various organizations under one centralized force, know what a clearing-house means in connection with an organization.

3. But the new organization will not simply unify, it will undertake to render service in stimulating present agencies to greater effort, such aid being furnished through suggestion; through the publication of information concerning the work at large; through the provision of larger and better opportunities for these agencies to confer together; and through the help derived from the personal contact with each other of those interested in the same divisions of work.

A body of men working together, looking out over the whole field, surely ought to be able to make suggestions to the different agencies in different parts of the field. What is needed more than anything else is a bureau of information, and organization to collect statistics and give information to those who desire it. A large part of our inefficiency is due solely to ignorance of the facts with reference to work now being done. Further, the beneficial results of such a conference as this, of men and women coming from different states and from different organizations, are easily understood. Thus this new organization will at once unify and stimulate, but more than this:

4. It will undertake to render service in creating new agencies where no agencies now exist- agencies for special lines of work in which as yet no united effort has been exerted; as well as in working out new plans which may be found helpful in lines of work already established. Here a long list of examples might be given. We may think of the educational work for the people at large in church art and architecture and in church music- a field that is almost wholly neglected; of effort from a new point of view in relation to religious and moral education in the public schools, according to the lines that were indicated yesterday; of the proposal of new plans of using to advantage the many libraries established in our villages and cities. Think what a power the Carnegie libraries throughout the country may be made to be if they are brought into touch with the Sunday schools and with religious work, and hundreds of these libraries have already indicated their willingness to come into such a relationship; all that is needed is a guiding hand to bring them together. Then, again, there are the fields of the Sunday school, the Young People's Societies, and the Christian Associations. It is perfectly evident- the speakers gave us this information yesterday- that much is to be done still in every field of religious education, and that some fields have scarcely yet been touched. This should be the purpose- to unify, to stimulate, to assist, to create. But now, how will the organization attempt to do this? A few propositions, if you please, upon that side:

5. This work would be undertaken in part through the holding of an annual convention. Such a convention will lead men to formulate and pronounce important thought upon these particular subjects; for example, a great text-book will have been given to the world when the Proceedings of this Convention are published. It will bring into sympathetic touch with each other those who are interested in subjects and who are able to attend the meetings; a convention held every year in some great center will quicken the life and interest of the community in which the convention is held. It will furnish literary material of the highest value for the use of those who are not able to attend the convention itself, but who desire assistance and information along these lines. There are many conventions being held- perhaps too many; but after all there is a work which a convention can do—a convention like this, an annual convention—that can be done in no other way.

6. Again, the new organization will work through the instrumentality of departmental

organization, in which each special division of the subject of religious education will form a separate department.

Sometimes I think we are prone to suppose that the Sunday school is the only agency; more emphasis seems to be given to that agency than to any other. It deserves all the emphasis that can be placed upon it, but I think we ought to remember that the Sunday school is only one of fifteen or sixteen departments of religious and moral education. Each department thus constituted will hold special conferences and conventions intended to further an intelligent interest in the subject; while the representatives of different departments, living with in a certain district, where a county, or a state, or a group of states, will join in combined effort along all the lines thus organized.

Among these departments would be perhaps a department of Universities and Colleges, and there is no field today more open influence in this respect. Too many colleges, especially in connection with Christian denominations and in fact under ecclesiastical control, are doing less than they ought—to say the least—for religious education and for biblical study. Another department would deal with Theological Seminaries. We heard last night, indeed two or three times yesterday, of the need of a new kind of training in theological seminaries for the ministers of the future. Other departments would relate to Churches and Pastors, Sunday Schools, Public Secondary Schools, Public Elementary Schools, Private Schools—for the work in private schools must be put upon a different basis from that of public schools, Training schools, Christian Associations, Young People's Societies, the Home, the Libraries, the Press, Correspondence Instruction, Religious Art, and Religious Music. There are many others, but these are some of the great branches of the work; and of these it will be seen that the Sunday school is only one agency.

7. The new organization, in addition to the annual convention which it ought to conduct, and in addition to these various departments which it ought to establish and organize, will include the establishment of a central Board of Directors, which will constitute the executive body of the Association, and, as such, arrange the programs of special and general conventions, secure by proper means the co-ordination of the work of the departments, and carry into effect the decisions of the Association at large and of these several departments.

An Association, with this annual convention and its district conventions, with its departmental organizations along the lines suggested, and with this central body working and guiding and helping all, surely will be able to unify, to stimulate, to assist, and to create.

8. In this organization the Board of Directors should surely be made up of officers and members selected annually in open convention form among those who are deeply interested in the cause. The members of such a Board of Directors, who are given this responsible position of directing the work as a whole, should represent the various countries (for this work should not be limited to our own country), states, territories, and districts, which furnish the membership of the Association. But not only this; such a Board of Directors should represent as fully as possible also the various religious denominations, and the various schools of religious opinion recognized as Christian. Still further, such a Board of Directors must represent the various divisions of Christian activity, whether they are educational, evangelistic, or philanthropic.

9. A large Board of Directors, representing in this way all the different sides of the work, must of course have an Executive Board made up of the membership of the Board of Directors—a small body, which will act as the legal corporation for the Association, secure, and invest or expand the funds of the Association—since funds will be needed for the work—and will

represent the directors in the interval for their meetings.

10. Such an Executive Board will need Secretaries. Among these there will be the General Secretary, whose entire time will be devoted to the interests of the Association; an Editorial Secretary, to whose care will be committed the charge of all the printed publications of the Association; and a financial Secretary, who shall be charged with securing the means needed to defray the expenses of the work of the Association.

This will indicate the consensus of opinion gathered from conference after conference in many of the great cities East and West, concerning the scope and purpose, the whole extent and plan, of the proposed organization. But now let us go one step farther.

11. This Association, through its Boards and Secretaries, will have first the task of securing the funds needed for this work.

A large part of the Christian work carried on is greatly hampered by lack of funds. We do not wish such an organization as this to be in any sense commercial, or to be dependent in any way on publishing relationships; but there must be funds with which to conduct the work. These funds are needed for the defraying of the ordinary expenses of the Association; also, for conducting the special investigations proposed by the Departments. Investigation is one of the chief things, which should be undertaken, and it cannot be conducted without money. Money will also be needed for the printing and publishing of the proceedings, reports, and other literature of the Association; and for the endowment of special phases of the work, which will always require assistance. A large sum of money will be needed—as much as \$25,000 a year—to pay the expenses of this organization, if it is to do its work.

12. The Association will also print and publish reports, bulletins, documents, and books, including the proceedings of the annual and of special conventions, reports of committees appointed to make special investigations, and important contributions to the cause of religious and moral education, which the Association may deem it desirable to issue.

13. The Association, through its Boards and Secretaries, will aim to encourage in various ways individual and institutional effort in the direction of religious and moral education. This will include, for example, assistance in the work of grading Sunday schools; effort to secure the introduction of courses and instruction in the curricula of colleges and universities; aid in the training of teachers; preparation of lists of books on the different subject of religious work and thought; provision of special material for the use of the daily press; organization of work for mothers' clubs; and many other similar kinds of work.

Let us now look at the movement from another point of view.

14. The Association, through its Departments, will propose to make new contributions to the cause of religious and moral education, and this will be done through the light of scientific investigations. Some of these will attempt to define more closely the true relation of religious and moral instruction to other branches of instruction, and to indicate the part which religion should perform in the development of the individual and of society. Others will undertake to correlate religious and moral instruction with the instruction in literature, history, and science now provided in the public schools. Others will seek to determine the place of the Bible in religious and moral instruction, and to set forth the best methods of using the Bible for this purpose. Still others will endeavor to point out the application of the established results of modern psychology, modern pedagogy, and modern Bible study, as these stand related to religious and moral instruction.

There is work in these lines of investigation—real, definite, scientific investigation—to

occupy the time of thousands of men and women, if they will undertake it.

15. The organization must undertake, through these various departments, to carry on practical experiments. Perhaps we should not distinguish these from scientific investigation, but there may be a distinction. Some of these practical experiments will have to do with the application of religious and moral instruction to different stages of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development; others with the adjustment of the material employed for purposes religious and moral instruction to the needs of the special sociological groups included in the Christian Associations, Young People's Societies, Bible clubs, and the like; and still others with the working out of an approximately ideal curriculum for the Bible school—a curriculum which will embody the larger substance and the better methods of a religious and moral education that is in accordance with the present status of biblical, theological, ethical, psychological, pedagogical, and scientific knowledge.

16. The Association will from time to time present constructive propositions, which shall be intended to serve as the basis for lesson-helps and text-books on various portions of such curricula.

I doubt whether the Association will ever feel inclined to undertake the issue of lesson-helps or text-books—I shall hope that it will not undertake that—but it can certainly undertake to present the basis for such. Further, it can do in its way what has been done in other ways by other Associations toward securing the more adequate training of teachers—this certainly is a great thing to be accomplished. It can undertake to place religious and moral education on as high a plane as that on which secular work has come to rest; and that of all things is the necessary thing, for the boy and girl must be led to respect religious education when it is put in comparison with secular education.

17. Now, how shall the Association do all this, with what spirit? First of all, with the scientific spirit. If there is any one point to which it seems to me we ought to pledge ourselves, it is that all the work of this organization shall be done with the truly scientific spirit, and that consequently this Association, in all its undertakings, will proceed carefully and cautiously upon the basis of fundamental principles, seeking to observe accurately the facts and from these to make deductions, and aiming to co-ordinate and systematize the material presented for consideration. The time has come for such work to be done as it has not yet been done.

18. The Association must also be controlled by what I should like to call, for lack of a better word, the universal spirit, and this will forbid the placing of emphasis upon the distinctive views of any one denomination or any one school of opinion to the exclusion of others; it may be confidently asserted that those who hold different theories of biblical history will be able to unite upon a constructive teaching of the Bible from a practical religious and moral point of view. It will likewise forbid the limitation of the work to any single phase of religious instruction, inasmuch as the time has now come for the existence of an organization, which shall not aim to supersede any of the existing agencies dealing with special phases of religious instruction, but will undertake to study and develop the subject in its entirety; this spirit will also forbid the restriction of the control to any one section of the country, or those interested in any one division of the work, or to those representing any one school of thought.

19. The Association will cultivate, above all, the cooperative spirit, and thus manifest clearly its purpose to assist all organizations working in the same field; to refuse to enter into rivalry with institutions or associations of any class; and to perform that general service which will promote the efficiency of all institutions.

An important lesson may be learned from the policy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The Carnegie Institution, with its ten million dollars, is not a new University, but a body of men using the income of the endowment to co-operate with existing universities, and with men wherever they may be found in any state who are carrying on scientific investigations—a splendid example of co-operation.

20. And just one last word. It seems to me that this Association, if organized, must be expected to require time to plan its work, and still more time to execute it. There are some of us, I fancy, who think that something can be done at once—in a week or a month. My friends, anything done in a day, or a month, or a year, will be small. Let us plan work for decades; let us not try to do something at once, before plans can be perfected, before organization can be secured. The work we have in hand is not the work of days or months. Many years of careful preparation and labor will be required before large results will begin to appear. Let us not be disappointed, therefore, when the organization is established, if the work does not begin to show results at once. Let us remember that good work, strong work, requires time.

As I have said, I have merely embodied in this statement points that have come from hundreds of men and women interested in this work.