

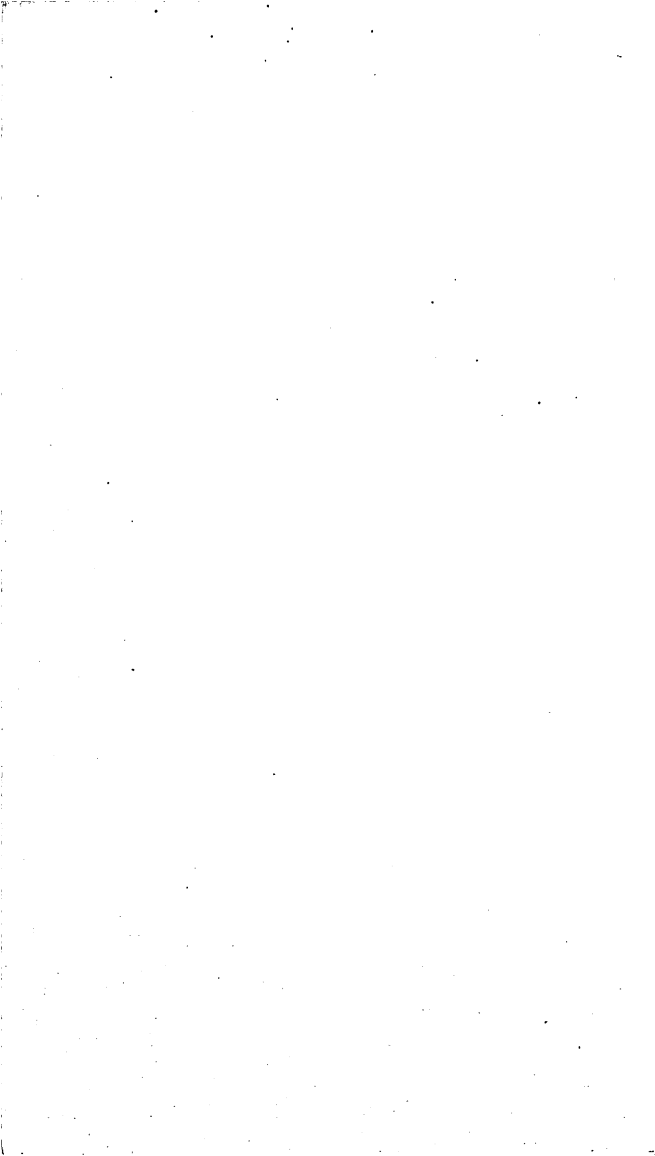
Student Volunteer Rev.

Theological Student Series. No. 1

THE
ASSOCIATION MOVEMENT
AMONG THEOLOGICAL
STUDENTS



Walden



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NEW YORK
The International Committee of Young Men's
Christian Associations

1-0-P220-12-98

THE ASSOCIATION MOVEMENT AMONG THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS



ON October 23, 1880, the American Inter-Seminary Missionary Alliance came into existence. For seventeen years this organization was used of God to promote among theological students an interest in city, home, and foreign missions. But while theological seminaries connected with the Alliance recognized the many advantages resulting from its annual conventions, yet so great was the dissatisfaction with the organization that for several years a radical change, or its abandonment, was desired. In 1896, among the general principles which were adopted unanimously by its members, were the following: That the individual seminaries should, in many instances, at least, be better organized; that the Alliance should recognize and appreciate its vital relation to the Student Volunteer Movement; that it should be affiliated in some way with the World's Student Christian Federation; and that there be a more central permanent element in its Executive Committee.

In seeking affiliation with the Federation the Executive Committee of the Alliance faced a serious difficulty. The Federation recognizes only one Christian student movement in a given country or group of countries. The Scandinavian University Christian Movement, representing the students of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, was admitted as a unit. Great Britain and Germany entered the Federation having each only one student movement which was recognized as in affiliation with the Federation. It was impossible for the students of North America to be represented in the Federation by more than one movement. Accordingly the largest and oldest of our four Christian student movements was admitted, namely, the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association. The Executive Committee of the Missionary Alliance saw that theological students could not come into affiliation with the Federation unless they should first form themselves into the Theological Section of the Intercollegiate Movement, which represented the Christian students of North America in the Federation. The committee also realized that, by entering the Intercollegiate Movement, the theological students would lose nothing essential, since they could continue to hold conferences limited to theological professors and students, and since each Association could conduct its local work as it thought best; moreover, such union with the Intercollegiate Movement would secure continuity and progression in policy, better

organization in individual seminaries, and other objects desired by the Alliance.

The first theological seminary to organize an Association, and thus join the Federation, was McCormick Seminary of Chicago. Subsequently so many other seminaries took similar action that at the meeting of the Alliance, February 28, 1898, the Alliance was discontinued, and delegates from theological seminaries that had formed Associations, proceeded to organize themselves into the Theological Section of the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association. A committee appointed by this meeting have nominated Professor J. Ross Stevenson, D. D., and Professor W. W. White, Ph. D., to represent the Theological Section on the Student Committee of the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations. These nominations have been approved by the International Committee. This committee has no legislative powers. It is appointed to serve and not to govern. It can do nothing to interfere with the independence, individuality, local autonomy, methods, spirit or genius of a given theological seminary, or of the Association in a given seminary.

The Purpose of this movement is to deepen the spiritual life of theological students; to promote interest in and consecration to the cause of missions—city, home, and foreign; and to bring the students of theological seminaries into organic relation with the World's Student Christian Federation.

The Extent of the Movement. During the

first year of its existence, twenty-seven theological institutions, representing fifteen denominations of evangelical Christians, organized Young Men's Christian Associations within them, and thereby joined the movement. Two more divinity schools may be added to this number, since practically every student in these institutions is a member of the Association of the college and university with which these divinity schools are in affiliation.

The Advantages of the Movement. First, to the Theological Section. It preserves the inter-seminary bond. After seventeen years of union with each other it would be most unfortunate for theological seminaries to become isolated units. At present this is the only movement which seeks to unite divinity schools. Moreover, it is a privilege for theological students to be connected with the strongest of the eleven Christian student movements of the world, a movement with which they became familiar in their college days, and which God is blessing abundantly. Over thirty thousand college men have been influenced through this Intercollegiate movement to become followers of Jesus Christ, and five thousand have been led to enter the Christian ministry, and over ten thousand are yearly searching the Scriptures in Association Bible classes.

A leading professor of theology has said, "Not only for its aims, but for the chief apparatus of its methods, the seminary is dependent on its contact with life." This new movement is bringing theological students into contact with

the student world, and is widening their horizon. It is bringing them into touch with practical methods and agencies already tested, and also with the best methods of similar organizations in different parts of the world. Its central committee will help them by arranging conferences, employing traveling secretaries, and issuing publications.

This new movement admits theological students to the World's Student Christian Federation, an organization composed of eleven national or international Christian student movements in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australasia, embracing twenty-four different countries, including associations or unions in one thousand two hundred student centres, and having a membership of fifty-five thousand professors and students belonging to all the leading branches of Protestant Christendom. What can adequately represent the inspiration and suggestion that will come from union with such a world-wide movement of Christian students!

Secondly, The Advantages to the Association Movement. Without its Theological Section the Student Association Movement would be the exception to the rule, since every other movement within the Federation includes theological students. In many of these movements divinity students are found conspicuously among the leaders.

The formation of the Theological Section will also insure a ministry which will be sympathetic with the Young Men's Christian Association Movement.

It will help to bridge the chasm between theological and other students. As members of the Association Movement there will be a mutual interest, which has too often been lacking between theological students and Christian students in colleges and other professional schools. Theological men believe that the Theological Section will aid the College Section, especially along the lines of Bible study and missions; that they can help win college men for Christ, and can influence leading college students to consider the claims of the Christian ministry. This unselfish argument has appealed most strongly to theological students in leading them to join the movement.

A professor of a Protestant Episcopal Seminary, in urging his students to form an Association, emphasized the opportunity which such an organization would furnish the men of his seminary to influence for good their state university. Only an inter-denominational organization can obtain entrance into a state university. The Seminary Association could send delegates to the University Association, and press home the claims of Christ upon university men. The professor added: "The prophet could not restore the dead to life by laying his staff upon him. Close personal contact was necessary. When mouth touched mouth, and eyes rested upon eyes, and hands clasped hands, and the prophet stretched himself upon the child, the dead lad came back to life." This movement enables theological students, through correspondence, visitation, literature, and con-

ferences, to aid the preparatory, arts, science, law, and medical students Godward. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The Requirements for Admission into the Movement. To a theological institution which wishes to join the movement, only three articles in the suggested constitution are essential, viz., those on the name, membership, and amendments. Each theological seminary or divinity school is at liberty to prepare its own constitution in accordance with its own local needs, with the above-mentioned exceptions. Copies of "The Plan of Organization for Theological Students," containing the three essential articles, can be obtained from the Student Department, International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 3 West Twenty-Ninth Street, New York City.

The prayer, "that they all may be one," is being answered through this movement, and the World's Student Christian Federation to which it belongs. The possibilities before these movements are limitless, because they are working for the world's evangelization in loyal obedience to the living Christ, who has all authority in heaven and in earth.

Some Publications Helpful to Theological Students

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- 332. **The Morning Watch.** John R. Mott. Price five cents.
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The Intercollegian.

The official organ of the Student Department of Young Men's Christian Associations, and of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions.

Published monthly during the academic year (October to June).

Subscription price, fifty cents per year, in advance.
Address,

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3 West Twenty-Ninth Street,
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