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No 61

Subject
Chances and Necessities of the U.S. Civil Undertakings
I. The Berlin Conference of the Y.M.C.A. Undertakings.

The Executive Committee of the Y.M.C.A., whose Headquarters are here in New York, during the summer of 1884, kindly gave to me the credentials of a delegate to their International Convention to meet in August at Berlin. Accordingly with the delegates from the different civilized Nations, a most profitable and delightful season of seven days. The President, Herr Von Behrensdorf, Chamberlain to Emperor William, presided, with ease and dignity, over the large convention, giving his opening address with equal facility in three different languages, the German, French and English. We were especially blessed in having with us, that honored man and charming Christian gentleman, who was the founder of the first Young Mens Christian Association, which he then a young man with a few coadjutors, started in London nearly forty years ago. 

George Williams

He appeared to be full of interest and energy, much like our own Wm E Dodge, of New York, who has so lately left us and gone to his reward. I had attended several of our International gatherings in this country, as those held at
Washington, at Detroit, at Lowell, and Portland Me.

No Christian Assemblies could have excelled them in the working power they seemed to represent; in the energetic measures they adopted; and certainly none in the spiritual impress they left behind them upon the community where they for a few days sojourned and labored for the salvation of young men.

In these respects, the Berlin conference was perhaps hardly abreast of the others. But it was a most remarkable body of earnest Christian souls, speaking various tongues, showing a perfect unity of the Spirit, praying God to lead them, while they sought to lay broadly and deeply the best foundations for awakening anew the zeal and energy of members of all churches, with special view to extending the helping hand of Christian love to young men.

The German and French delegates were especially persistent in questioning the English and American Secretaries concerning their methods of procedure.
How do raise so much money? How do you build so many costly structures? What about your Gymnasiums and other provisions for amusement? Tell us concerning your literary arrangements, your lectures, your libraries, your Evening-clases. What is that grand organization called the "Railroad work" in which even Railway officials take an interest, and to which the managers make large contributions?

And again how is it with the Bible-clases; who teach them? Is there not serious danger of introducing heresy? Do describe the Evangelizing process— the Meetings for prayer and conference; the neighborhood Meetings; the visiting Committees sent to the streets, the jails and the Almshouses?

Is there no danger of laymen in their blind zeal, getting up too much steam for the Engine? Will not the Y.M.C.A. forgetting the Church division lines, take away all the best workers from the Churches and so the Churches suffer a great loss? How shall we answer objections like these, coming from faithful pastors? Several times was our quick witted and well informed Secretary, Mr Morse of New York made to
stand on the platform and be bombarded with such queries as

these. All asked kindly, and answered most readily and

happily. I assure you this did me great good. It taught
me to appreciate better than I had done before, the wonderful
development of these Christian Associations, the grand
problems they were solving for humanity and the remarkable
catholicity of Spirit they were fostering and everywhere
diffusing. They, like the steam transportation and the
telegraph line, have already girdled the world. They, like
the skirmish line to an army, have searched out the
hedges, the pitfalls, the nooks and corners of the variegated
fields of operation. Behold the fruitsage!

They prepare the way by their week-day open-rooms, and
open houses for the Sabbath-day advance. The warm wel-
come is at the Steam-boat landing, the Railway station and the
Market gathering. To the traveler or the stranger, they say
"Come with us and we will do thee good." They introduce the
new-comer to Pastor, to Bible class, to Society of Christian
Endeavor, and to a respect social life.

But why does not the Church of Christ do all this? Or in other words why do not the churches, like the Synagogues of the Jews, take care of their own?

The answer to the objection is, Yankee like, to ask another question. What is the Church of Christ? What makes up the Church of Christ?

My layman's answer, to which I think all ought to assent, is however you define it, that Christ's Church is made up of all the believers in Christ both living and dead. And the churches are different organizations of believers of enough differences, like the distinguishing badges of divisions and corps in an army, to make them known and recognized along their line of useful work.

The Y.M.C.A. bands proceed from these organizations. They go and they come. They keep the fences between the churches full of open bars and gateways: but never, never are these true skirmishers disloyal to their own brigades or divisions.
Where is the single church that can run along 300 miles of Railroad, gather the young men into assemblies, give them proper books to read, and preach the simple gospel to them?

Where is the combination of churches that has weekday and Sunday machinery equal to this -- or equal to the religious wants of Colleges and Universities which progressive intellectualism is everywhere developing without God without Bible truth?

The Church at work. The agencies.

These Y.M.C.A. bodies are ready armed and equipped for business -- they are the pioneers of the Churches -- nay, my friends, they are part and parcel of the Churches themselves; they are the Churches at work. Look at the Home Mission Struggle -- that grand foreign Mission fields --

Glorious you say! Souls saved, women rescued from bondage of iniquity -- youth redeemed and built up in character -- in spite of the prevailing so-called scientific-doubting and literary scoffing which like the snow-capped mountains are often high
and lifted up, but handsome as they may be, cold and frigid, and over against the best interest of society.

Yes, as in the days of the Apostles, the Missions thrive and enlarge in face of the world. Yet are these grand results accomplished? Answer: By the Churches, the Live Churches working through their missions societies. The Bible Society finds its place.

The leaves of the Bible are like the leaves of the trees: for multitude -- and they carry the word of God to every nation on the globe. Who does this and so renders every man, who rejects God, without excuse? It is the Bible Societies whom the churches put forth so that they can penetrate every home and family that will open the doors to them.

How glad then must the churches be to add another much needed helper, the Association for youth, whose province it is to set youth to help youth; to make each young man his brother's keeper; and to put into the field an agency able to rescue those who have already fallen under temptation.
An experience of upwards of fifty years has shown me many men who have been drunkards, licentious men and hardened sinners, arrested in their downward course and brought back to the innocency of childhood. It is never too late to mend. Genuine repentance which of course involves the utter abandonment of criminal practices is always possible. I will not limit the mercy of God; for He loveth mercy rather than sacrifice. He is kinder than the noblest father? He is more tender than the gentlest, most self denying mother.

Yet the saved among the middleaged and old, who have long led abandoned lives, are lamentably few. It is hard for a poor soul withered by avarice to put on a generous expansion. It is hard for a debauchee to recover his lost strength or exclude the filth of his life from his mind! It is hard for the passion for gambling to subside — or for fraud to end in an honest life. Oh! Reform, reform, by all means! God give us reform. But more, a thousand times more, give us the prevention! Against trembling drunkeness, rotten vice.
vice, miserly avarice, gambling and cheating and all impurity
and degradation, let wise men
put up the bars and close the gates
before these vices come trooping to our enclosures. How?
Godliness is profitable to all things. Let the child
and the youth walk with God like Enoch of old, and the child
and the youth are safe for the Here and the Hereafter.

Men and women working for young men mean just this -- we will
lead them to God who manifests himself to people in Christ --
so that God through Christ may keep them from the evils depicted.

Oh! How they, the zealous working Christians, long to
adapt all their agencies to this end! They Y.M.C.A. is the
best agency for youth wandering away from home, the best
that I know.

The mother tells the Secretary in Berlin: My son is in Chicago
on such a street in business -- do what you can for him.

A letter is sent to the Secretary at Chicago. He finds the
son, leads him to friends and if possible to the Friend of friends.
The Lord bless your effort. A stranger in a strange land responds
quickly to the tone of genuine sympathy.

Come now -- let us look facts in the face. -- of the thousands of young men from seventeen to thirty five in this city, can you do too much! Even a vicious mother wants a good son;

How much more the good mothers! A father who rejects the Bible because it condemns him, still in his heart wants an honest and virtuous son. Then let us all come up heroically to lend a helping hand to this efficient society which embraces such a variety of methods.

Some of us herald life to get such glorious results, as we who are not pessimists, now plainly see -- Constitution:

laws; Congress, -- courts, -- Executive, -- schools, -- churches--
great parties -- rich states and territories and many of them; railways binding together eastern and western loyalties; revenues abundant -- unbroken currency; -- letters and papers brought to our very doors without delay or confusion; -- home-steads open to seekers, -- and pensions in profusion.
unlimited opportunities for the enterprising; and what not? sustain we entreat you, the sacrifice and labor which has been put forth, by fostering the good and wiping out the bad in men. Here is, in this society a good channel for merely patriotic effort. $ A call to duty... in view of Eternity! And now as we raise our eyes to Heaven and think of Eternity-
An endless life!
An endless day! An endless year! How can we grasp the
thought! unison with the Divine Spirit so that Eternity may be a perpetual joy! Then no matter how long!

If we ourselves get right, we will help the right.

In conclusion I want to do as I did during our war of Rebellion - I want to appeal to those who should be enlisted to accomplish the great work of covering the hills and filling the valleys of our country with a host of young men, who shall be as a whole, superior to any who have preceded them.

While in the summer of 1862, I was at home recovering from wounds, the Governor of Maine sent me to the sea-port towns where there had been a little backwardness in enlistments,
to canvass for volunteers. What did I say! Did I appeal
to them — showing them how easy was the work demanded of them?

Did I tell them that they would be kept in the rear where they
could have a thousand privileges and little or no danger!
No! No indeed! I called to their manhood. I told them
the country was in danger. She needed her sons as never
before. Our fathers had given us a rich inheritance —

There must be enough love of country in us to preserve it —
I told of constant toil, of prolonged sicknesses, of innumerable
wounds — of groans, ambulances and over-filled hospitals.

I told of the ability, numbers and determina-
tion of the foes of the Union; and then I said, "Men, Patriots,
you see me weary, worn and wounded; but not disheartened.

God willing I am going back to the front in a few days;
come and go with me." Great tears would roll down the
cheeks of strong men, as they cried out: "We will go; we will
go". They filled the quota speedily — and host after host
to canvass for volunteers.
stemmed the current of war, 'till there came victory and peace and a saved Union.

So, Christians call you, young men, to labor for the great Leader, Christ, and for his young men. Be ready to suffer -- not as recipients of big bounties, but as good soldiers ready for toil, hardship, self-denial, and ardent, persistent work. Blasphemous, avaricious, profane, Sabbath-breaking, gambling, back-biting, dishonest, covetous men may grow stalwart, and for a time cut a figure in the world because of the energy of mind and body that they possess -- but Oh! how much brighter another picture! What a magnificent spectacle to behold a God-fearing multitude of strong youths filling the ranks of America's workers, marching abreast to a clear-eyed and pure hearted victory.

In the name of Jehovah, our helping Lord, so let it be.
Given by Geo. at Y. M. C. A.
237th St. New York, Monday night.
Jan 20 /69.