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UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THIS PRESENT AGE.

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*On the Occasion of His Inauguration as President of Union
Theological Seminary in Virginia, May 11, 1927.*

It has been a year now since I was called to become President of this Seminary. I wondered why you called one with such little acquaintance with theological education or the problems which confront a modern seminary. I had hoped to have the counsel and advice of Dr. Moore at least for a time, but within a little over a month after my election, and before I had an opportunity even to consult him once, he had passed from us. My study of the problems of theological education has been broken and fragmentary and I cannot hope to bring you much that is either fresh or original. Some things, however, have impressed themselves upon me with great force and I wish to share with you my thoughts on this subject: "Union Theological Seminary in this Present Age."

I. Development of Professional Schools.

We are fond of emphasizing the fact that the first college in America, Harvard, was founded for the purpose of educating ministers. The gates of Harvard carry the following quaint inscription:

"After God had carried us safe to New England, and wee had bilded our houses, provided necessaries for our livli-hood,

all others sustains preaching and secures the closest attention of every hearer". The reverent imagination!

In "the hours of greater visibility" the young minister sees that his new tasks call for powers far beyond his human nature at its best. He can gather the stones and build the altar; he can bring the wood and lay upon it the sacrifice; and then he can simply watch and pray for the fire to come down from God and consume the sacrifice. So let him dedicate himself anew to God, with all of his gifts and graces, as well as his handicaps and limitations; let him make the most of himself and his opportunities, resting assured that out from the earthen vessel dedicated to the glory of God and the service of men, will shine "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

THE COMMITTEE OF 44.

BY REV. ERNEST THOMPSON, D. D.,
Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Charleston, W. Va.

(Dr. Thompson was made chairman of the "Survey Committee" appointed by the Assembly at Pensacola, Florida, in 1926. He is also chairman of the "Committee of 44" appointed by the Assembly in session at El Dorado, Ark. He is well qualified, therefore, to write on the new plan for the work of our Church.)

Appointment of Survey Committee.

The General Assembly in session at Pensacola, Florida, in response to numerous overtures saw fit to appoint a "Survey Committee" composed of nine members, four of whom were Ministers and five ruling Elders. These men were from widely scattered parts of the Church—the Synods of Texas, Appalachia, Missouri, West Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. Four of these men were members of some one of the Executive Committees and one of the Stewardship

Committee. No one of these men sought membership on this committee, but, while all were busy men, no one declined to serve, even when it meant neglect of other duties. All were faithful to the task committed to them and spared neither time nor pains in their investigations.

The Directions Under Which the Committee Worked.

(I quote from the action of the Assembly.)

"These overtures all bear upon the duties and activities of our Executive Agencies and Promotive Committees. While different questions are raised, yet they are all of administrative character. * * * It is evident there is an earnest desire for a careful survey of the situation in order that our work may be done with the highest efficiency, and with the least expense, consistent with such efficiency. * * * It is perfectly plain that in developing and expanding work, overlapping of agencies is possible. It is certainly the wish of the whole Church that our organization should be adjusted to our task in the best way. * * * We therefore recommend: That a Committee of Survey be raised to take into consideration the matters suggested in the above overtures and to make a careful examination of all our methods and agencies of Work, and report to the next Assembly."

"Overlapping," "Efficiency," "Economy," "Adjustment to our task" were the prominent words in the overtures and in the Assembly's action, and our task seemed to be to devise some means to prevent the one and bring about the others. To this end we recommended first of all:

A Committee of 44

to be known as the Committee on the Assembly's Work. Why 44? Because we felt that this was the smallest number consistent both with efficiency and economy. To have made the number smaller would have decreased efficiency either by reducing the membership of the sub-committees to numbers too

small or by putting too heavy a burden upon a few men. To have made it larger would have been to increase overhead expenses.

We feel therefore that we have made for real economy in reducing the membership of the various Executive and Promotional Committees of the Assembly from about 100 to 44. We believe that we have not interfered with, but rather increased, efficiency by preventing overlapping and by a closer co-ordination of the Whole Work of the Assembly.

There seems to have been considerable overlapping and duplication, especially in the matter of promotion and the superabundance of literature from so many different sources, to such an extent as to be at times confusing, to say nothing of the vast expense involved. We believe that we have secured efficiency by the closer co-ordination of the work, in that the whole work of the whole church shall be planned by one Committee acting as a whole, and then carrying out in sub-committees the work in its various departments, as planned by the whole committee. The work will be no longer planned from the limited outlook of Foreign Missions, or Home Missions or Religious Education, etc., but will be conceived of and planned for in its larger aspects as one great cause of Christ, by one committee representing every phase of the work. The work as projected shall then be carried out by subcommittees which were a part of the whole committee which planned the work. These sub-committees will therefore be familiar with the whole work of the Church as it lay in the mind of the larger committee and can promote their own particular task in the light of the whole. This should prevent unnecessary friction and misunderstandings. The members of sub-committees will be prevented from becoming narrow in their outlook even in the promotion of their special task by the provision that members may be changed from one sub-committee to another so as to bring about the highest efficiency.

Ordinarily, however, it will doubtless be in the interest of economy and not militate against efficiency to designate as

members of sub-committees those who live in proximity to the headquarters of the various sub-committees.

We believe that we have secured efficiency also, as well as made for economy, in restoring the personal touch of the Executive Committees in allowing them to do their own promotional work either directly to the churches or immediately through the two promotional committees at such time as may be designated by the Committee on the Assembly's work. In this way there should be no duplication of effort or material, while at the same time the salient and essential facts would be presented at first hand.

We have guarded against the danger of the centralization of power in the hands of any clique by providing that no one shall serve for more than two consecutive terms, while at the same time through the system of classes a sufficient number will be retained each year who will have perfect familiarity with the work.

The amendment made by the Assembly giving to each Synod representation on the Committee of 44 will also guard this point, though it will add somewhat to the cost and perhaps decrease in some measure, through distance and time, the efficiency of those at a distance from headquarters.

At the same time the Committee is the creature of the Assembly and wholly responsible to it. The Committee may only plan and recommend. It does not determine. It has oversight and direction only between meetings of the Assembly. It is no Pope. We hope it may be, only what it was intended to be, an effective servant of the whole Church.

Sub-Committees.

The division of the whole committee into sub-committees scarcely needs any explanation. After the work has been planned as a whole, necessarily some one must be charged with the obligation of carrying out the plan in its application to the various departments of the work of the Church. We have kept therefore the same Executive and Promotional Committees, with some slight changes in nomenclature and with prac-

tically the same duties. We have changed the name of the Executive Committee of Sunday School and Publication to that of Religious Education as more in keeping with the terms of the day, and also as indicating our thought that this committee should have under its charge the whole task of Religious or Christian Education as its chief function.

The Assembly saw fit, and perhaps wisely so, to retain, with name and duties unchanged, the Executive Committee of Christian Education and Ministerial Relief. It seems to the Survey Committee that these two things could logically be separated, and that a committee on "Ministerial and Benevolent Relief" would have a big enough task in itself worthy of our strongest men.

In the Promotional Committees we combined Stewardship with that of Men's Work, believing that these two things could be handled from one office with coordinate secretaries more efficiently and economically than from two offices, with large overhead expense. In this way and through allowing the Executive Committees to do their own promotional work we believe that much of the large budget and overhead expense of the old Stewardship Committee will be eliminated. Whether these changes have been wise or not, only time can prove. And they are not so inflexible but that they can be changed.

We have assigned to each of the sub-committees from the Committee of the whole a sufficient number to do, we think, the work of that sub-committee efficiently and at the same time economically. The Assembly elects, as usual, the Executive and Associate Secretaries of each sub-committee but each sub-committee elects any other force it may need, subject to confirmation by the Committee on the Assembly's Work. In this way all unnecessary help or extravagance in the office force should be avoided.

The Committee at Work.

We hope the committee as a whole shall not have to meet more than twice a year—a few weeks before and a few weeks after the Assembly. Consider that the committee is set up and

in running order. Prior to its meeting to be held before the Assembly each member shall have received from each of the sub-committees a copy of its annual report and from each of the Executive Committees a detailed budget (of their expenses) for the coming year, which is not to exceed the sum actually collected by it the preceding year. In this way it is hoped that we may get away from that hampering burden of debt that hangs so heavily about the neck of much of our work.

But at the same time this does not hinder them from projecting their work on an enlarged scale since they may ask for an increased contribution from the churches and as the church responds to these "Askings" the work may be advanced.

The whole committee goes carefully over this budget and these askings and makes recommendation to the Assembly. The plans of the various sub-committees for the coming year are also submitted to the whole committee for report and recommendation to the Assembly. And the Assembly has in every case the final decision.

The Committee will meet as soon as possibly after the Assembly to consider and put into operation any of the Assembly's instructions and suggestions, and to apportion the total askings, allowed by the Assembly, to the Synods, with the request that these be handed on down through the Presbyteries to the local churches. In this way it is hoped that the local church may be brought to see the cause as a whole, the whole task of the Church and not simply its local features. It shall always have in view the aggressive and economical administration of the Assembly's Causes.

Educational Committee.

We believe that in the provision for an Educational Committee we have devised one of the very best agencies for disseminating the right kind of information, in its proper time, and in just proportion, and so tending to harmony and uniformity. At present the church is being bombarded from every side, "lo here" and "lo there", with programs, each of which

is the most important and imperative, until its poor dizzy head is in a whirl. This Educational Committee is to be composed of one member from each of the sub-committees, so that every cause may be represented. This committee shall get together as soon as possible after the meeting of the Assembly and prior to the meeting of the Committee on the Assembly's Work and make detailed plans for study books and Educational Programs covering the work of the church, sufficiently in advance, so that these books and programs may be carefully prepared and all causes presented in regular order without duplication or overlapping. These plans shall then be submitted to the Committee on the Assembly's Work for its approval.

Surely such a committee, functioning for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, rather than for any one cause, ought to mean much for our beloved Church.

Not one of the least things to which the Committee on the Assembly's Work is asked to give attention is the possibility and feasibility of housing its Executive and Promotional Committees in one building, at some central point and with one accounting system. This would seem to the writer to be a distinct gain in the matter of economy and efficiency of administration, while the psychology of the outward unity should have a good effect on the real oneness of the work. Other denominations have found this a distinct gain. I quote from a letter from Dr. Lewis S. Mudge, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.: "You are possibly aware of the fact that within the last few years, we have entirely reorganized the Executive Work of our Church. You will see that our Executive offices are now all located in one or other of two places: Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, or Presbyterian Building, N. Y. The above arrangement seems to give far more satisfaction than when we had something like fifteen different boards, Committees and Commissions which were located in many different cities."

Dr. F. W. Burnham, President of the United Christian Missionary Society of the Christian Church, bears testimony to the economies in overhead effected by the consolidation, under

one location and administration, of their various Missionary Efforts and Appeals.

The Survey Committee did not feel that its province was to reach down into Synods, Presbyteries and local Churches, and therefore it only suggested that in these the organization be made to conform to the Assembly's plan—that is to say that in each Synod, Presbytery and local church there be a secretary or committee on Stewardship and Men's Work, on Women's Work, on Religious Education, etc., that would be responsible for bringing the claims of these causes to the attention of the bodies which they represented and through whom the various sub-committees of the Assembly might get in touch with the lower courts and with the local church. Might we not in this way more nearly keep the balance between Assembly, Synodical, Presbyterian and local causes?

The Budget and Designated Gifts.

This has long been a bone of contention in the Church and perhaps can never be settled to the satisfaction of everybody. We believe however that this is the best solution that has been offered. Let us keep and stress the budget as the basis of our plan of collection for the benevolent causes, rather than go back to the old spasmodic, emotional appeal. That each cause may have its fair opportunity before the church, it is to have its definite month or months assigned to it, pastors and sessions are directed to present the needs of each cause in its month and at their direction give opportunity for free-will offerings to be applied either to that particular cause or some other—these free-will offerings to count on the budget of the church, if the budget has not already been raised. But at the same time realizing that there are men and women of means who desire to designate their gifts to some special work and believing that they should have this opportunity and privilege, the effort to obtain such gifts, not to be counted in the church's apportionment, is not discouraged. Thus, while the church works along a definite plan, a certain amount of liberty is allowed within that plan.

We do not believe that this plan for the reorganization of our Work is as radical as some of its kindly critics would have us think. There is in it no intended reflection on the workings of any of our former Executive or Promotional Committees. We were bidden to study the administrative work of our church with a view to its highest efficiency and with the least expense, consistent with such efficiency. We believe that we have presented to the Church, not a plan that is perfect in all its details, but one that is simple, workable, coordinated and harmonious, and one that will make for efficiency as well as economy. We ask for it a fair trial, a prayerful sympathy and a cordial co-operation. We believe that there are consecrated men and women in the church who will give the necessary time and thought to carry this plan through in the best manner possible.

At the same time we would reiterate again our conviction that the great need of the Church is more of the spirit of earnest prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit that both wealth and life be consecrated to Him—and that if we could have a moratorium on talk about surveys and committees and conferences and in its stead a year of talk about personal experience, the power of prayer, the sufficiency of divine grace, the glory of the cross, the friendship of Christ, the great Commission and the hope of heaven, a spiritual awakening would sweep across our church that would be historic.