

1802

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CENTENNIAL

1902

OF

HOME MISSIONS

IN CONNECTION WITH THE ONE HUNDRED
AND FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEW YORK CITY, MAY 16-20, 1902



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FROM THE BOARD OF AID FOR COLLEGES

BY THE

REV. HERRICK JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

CHICAGO, ILL.

Mr. Moderator and Brethren:—

THE last of the boards and the youngest, the Benjamin of the family, brings to the oldest brother hearty greeting and the most joyful congratulations. The youngest brother, the Board of College Aid, is only eighteen years old and still in his teens, while a century's record has been made by, and a century's honors are on the head of, our oldest brother, Home Missions.

This is called a "Fellowship Meeting." It is well named, for there is not only a wideness, but a oneness of interest represented here to-day. All our Church Boards are unified in the great commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." These boards are the missionary scheme embodied in organization for the purpose of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to the whole creation, and though only three of them are named mission boards, they all are missionary in spirit and organized for the express purpose of giving the gospel to the whole creation, and without this there would be no justification for their existence.

Home missions was organized one hundred years ago,

and the first in the field. For the gospel must begin to be preached at Jerusalem. What followed next? Ministerial education. Presbyterians believe in culture, in discipline, in scholarship. They believe that as error is championed by the ripest scholarship, truth must be alike championed or leave the field. Whatever foundations may be laid, and whatever imposing superstructure may be reared, if in the building work you do not hear the constant click of the intellectual trowel, and the constant ring of the intellectual hammer, something is the matter with the building work. So we want men of education.

What followed that? Foreign missions. For the Church of God in this land could not keep between these two seas and obey Christ.

Publication the same year. Why? Because the obligation to preach the gospel by the living voice carried with it the obligation to preach it by metallic type, and through the publication boards we are scattering the gospel as the leaves of the morning.

Church erection next, because the mission church must have a house in which to worship.

Ministerial relief followed, because after a fight of years, enduring great hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, these scarred and war-worn veterans needed to be cared for in their old age, seeing that during all the years of their activity and service they have scarcely had a salary to keep them from want.

So these eight boards arch the ministerial life from the cradle to the grave.

The Board of College Aid builds the college, the Christian college, that is fitted to rear the Christian missionary. The Board of Education helps that man through the college. The Boards of Home Missions and Foreign Missions and Freedmen locate that man and give him a field. The Board of Publication arms and equips him for service. The Board of Church Erection gives him a house of worship, and the Board of Ministerial Relief tenderly and lovingly cares for him in his old age. This is the unity of the boards. They are our missionary scheme, you see, embodied in organization. Mission boards all of them. Each has its own work. The eye cannot say to the ear, "I have no need of thee." The hand cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of thee." Home missions cannot say to Education, "I have no need of thee." Foreign missions cannot say to the Board of College Aid, "I have no need of thee." The hand cannot do the foot's work. The ear cannot do the eye's work. Put a leg where the arm is. Lodge it in the socket at the shoulder, and what kind of efficiency would you have? Brethren of all the boards, keep to your own fields. Do your own work. Let us each in his own place meet his responsibility.

Then again, their proportion. If any man or board bulges large without proper consideration of the interests that are represented in the other boards, he is getting this system out of proportion. He has lost balance, and therefore so far injured the work. He is swelling unduly in one direction to the exclusion of this harmonious and beautiful proportion which lies in the com-

prehension of the whole situation. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were an ear, where were the smelling? Just think of that for a moment. Suppose home missions should absorb the situation, where would the foreign field be? Where would education be? Where would the men be that are to take the places in the home field and in the foreign field? If the whole body were an eye, just conceive what kind of a body it would be—a great, enormous goggle eye walking about on two legs. Suppose the whole body were an ear, and what kind of a thing would we have? An expanding, and ever expanding ear! You know what animal we see that is all ear. Samson could not have done half as much with a living ass as he did with the jawbone of a dead one.

Their mutual dependence. These eight boards are mutually dependent upon one another. How can the home missions or the foreign missions get along without men? How can they have the right men except they be educated? How can they be rightly educated except in a Christian college? And so we go, you see, from board to board, and place to place, and reason to reason, and we find them all interlocked, and interlaced, and marshaled together, unified, representing a single interest. I remember a saying by Phelps that expresses this relationship very beautifully with respect to two of these boards. He said in a very impressive way: "If I were a missionary in Canton, I would pray every morning for home missions in America *for the sake of Canton.*" And I remember reading in Rogers' Essays,

away back in my seminary days, an essay on "Reason and Faith," in which was another beautiful illustration of this same interdependence and mutual intimate relationship. He represented reason and faith as twin-born, but each, alas, suffering a sad privation. While reason had an eye of piercing intelligence, his ear was closed to sound; and while faith had an ear of exquisite delicacy, upon her sightless eyeballs as she lifted them toward heaven the sunbeams played in vain. And so the two, hand in hand, went through the world, the eye of reason by day the guide of faith, and the ear of faith by night the guide of reason. So these benevolent agencies of our beloved Church go hand in hand, each meeting a need not met by the others, and all mutually helpful and dependent.

What is the conclusion from all this? First, brethren, no pet cause in a pulpit or in a church. An offering for every cause. All the boards one cause. They constitute the arch, as I have said once before, in our scheme of Christian benevolence. The Board of College Aid puts the first stone in the arch; the Board of Education, the second; the Boards of Foreign and Home Missions and Freedmen, three great stones on beyond. The Board of Publication, the next. The Board of Ministerial Relief, the last. And there we have the completed arch from the cradle to the grave of the ministerial life. God bless the church that thus seeks to honor him in this great stewardship, and combines all her forces in the effort to take this world for Christ.