

A Seminary's Alumni and the Expansion Of Her Public Relations

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There is a text of Scripture which is relevant to the discussion which I plan to share with you today. It is Colossians 4:5, and reads "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." One might be tempted in addressing the alumni of a seminary to discuss the theories that are now advanced concerning the actual position of Wesley on Eschatology, or the relation between capitalism and Calvinism. It is not my purpose, however, to pursue such a course. I have decided to be as intensely practical as the responsibilities of a college president have forced me to be in my own work. And it is for that reason I am interested in discussing with you, The Alumni and the expansion of the public relations of your Alma Mater.

There is something in a name, and for that reason the institution which you represent and the institution which I represent have certain connotations as we think of the names of them. Taylor is named after one of the greatest missionary bishops of early Methodism. This seminary is named after one of the first American bishops of Methodism, whose life was poured out in the evangelization and the superintendency of the church among the new colonists. What these men stood for comprise the traditions and aims of the institutions that bear their name.

The need for Asbury justified its inception. There was a call for a con-

servative seminary with an Arminian approach to Christian doctrine. Asbury Theological Seminary is reputedly just that. The products of this seminary must justify her continuance as an institution. No seminary should go far without asking herself on occasions: First, would the kingdom of God suffer if I were suddenly interred? Second, are my products now quite well identified with the ideals of my founders? Third, just what are the arguments now for my continuance? A candid reflection upon the matters involved in answering such questions must ever be part of the life of an institution which would gear itself with the past.

The noble and heroic work of Dr. and Mrs. H. C. Morrison lingers fresh in the memory of us all. They labored and you entered into their labors. Remember, however, that seminaries get old and most of those who have gotten old are no longer as they were in their youth. In no small measure, therefore, the future of Asbury lies not in her present staff, nor in the sacred regard we hold for her founders. Rather, Asbury's future lies in the alumni. What you allow here and what you foster here will make the Asbury of tomorrow. The road for changing any institution is always a long one. Particularly is this true of an educational institution. All of us recoil from too much monotony in life and the cry for a change is never silent for long. The time will come

when someone of the alumni of Asbury will clamor for a change in something, and he will not have to do so alone. What I am trying to say is, what seems secure now in Asbury Theological Seminary both in its aims and objectives and in its traditional ideals will without any question be secure tomorrow only after successful effort. It will require more than debate, but rather much wrestling and heroism to insure the same security day after tomorrow. But it can be done! The Alumni can see that that is true. It cannot be done, however, with an attempt upon the part of the alumni to hold their own to maintain the status quo; but rather, it must be done in a manner similar to our techniques in war. Our best defense is an offense in war, and likewise our greatest opportunity in keeping Asbury what she now is is to enlarge her horizons through her public relations. The alumni are a vital part of that enlargement.

By public relations I do not mean just general ballyhoo. Circuses have need of a parade, but seminaries do not. Nor do I mean by public relations a form of propaganda. So often there is propaganda where there is much ado about nothing. In other words we can have an alarm sounding with no actual fire. By public relations I do not mean publicity. That, as commonly understood, means talking Asbury Theological Seminary everywhere you go, the issuance of statistics, and the setting up of comparisons and contrasts with other schools. This may have its legitimate sphere in publicity. I refer to something deeper and more important, namely, the buildup which you can give to Asbury Seminary that results in a favorable verdict from the public. I mean the ability you have of selling yourself as an example of the Seminary's product.

The techniques of selling an institu-

tion locally, let us say, in its campus outreach, are quite well defined. Public Relations are included in recruiting programs for new students, the fund raising programs for expansion, the publicity that comes from the issuing of brochures, and other forms of advertising that keeps the reading public abreast of what is going on. Our public relations directors are aware of a certain finesse that must be observed in an institution's courteous treatment of any and all who come and go from the campus. The indifference of the telephone girl, or the girl at the information desk, sometimes accounts for unfavorable reactions that prove costly. An institution might have a professor very loyal to its point of view, but who is a grouch so that only his jelled orthodoxy could be boasted of. I mention these things only in passing for the alumni's relation to the public relations program concerns itself with those vistas of opportunity that are out there where you have gone and where there are no ends of possibilities.

There are material possibilities. Not long ago an Ohio pastor brought a gentleman to our campus after having sold him on the worth of an institution that was producing men standing for the things which characterized his ministry. That man wanted to make an investment in an institution that was seeking to provide undergraduate preparation in an atmosphere like that to which he had been committed across the years. There is a large student loan fund of \$300,000 in an institution not far from here that came as a result of a \$100 gift to a student in that institution a few years ago. Before the close of the school year in which that \$100 has been given as a grant-in-aid the student who had been recipient of that gift sought out from the administration the name and address of the man who had helped to make her year in school a reality.

Sitting across from him she gave him her name, a report on her work, and expressed heartfelt thanks for the investment he had made in her. Upon learning this the donor inquired if there were others like her, and it resulted in a \$300,000 student loan fund being set up in that institution. Think of the \$100 gifts that have been sent in to Asbury students enabling them to carry on!

But spiritual possibilities loom up as your greatest opportunity to enhance Asbury's prestige and growth. Remember there is a mandate from God concerning these precious doctrines you have been taught here. Many people do not know what is wrong with human society now; they merely know that something is wrong. Dr. Compton of George Washington University has said, "Vision—Hope—Faith, are not a part of Science." Eisenhower recently said, "If society is to be saved it must be saved by the church." Now Asbury men know what these men mean. But you must become aware, if you are not already, that the rank and file of our ministers out in the field are trying other and devious methods of meeting the issues of our time. They are not interested in the prayer-meeting about which you have been taught and in which you have participated. They do not believe in the evangelism in which you have been encouraged to engage. The Sunday night service with them has long since been discarded. Nevertheless they have a program and a following, and frankly there is a veritable Mt. Carmel contest before you. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God" is a part of the verdict of modern times.

To put it another way, as an alumnus of Asbury Theological Seminary you must in your respective community vindicate the contention that God is God of revivals, the God of high

moral standards, the God of the prayer-meeting, the God who smiles upon the type of work you are doing as a minister who is committed to the ideals which were inculcated here. Remember if you compromise out there it will not be long before you will insist on a compromise back here. Many times a professor is introduced onto the staff of an institution with this sort of an explanation, "It is true that he does not stand exactly where the former professor stood and he has some ideas which are a bit foreign, I admit, to what the institution actually is supposed to represent or reflect, but in the main he is all right and any way, his position on the faculty will enhance the prestige of the institution, etc." You as alumni will need to maintain a ceaseless vigilance against such encroachments.

It must ever be your contention that there can be no compromise out where you have gone. Your object must be to enhance the justification of need for Asbury Theological Seminary by you yourself proving conclusively that men of your type are the type needed by the hour in which we live. If you yourself are a mountain of eccentricities, if you have a single tracked, hobby type of ministry, then Asbury Theological Seminary will be that in the eyes of a lot of people. On the other hand it will appear to be a great crusading institution fostering holy living and contending for sound doctrine, if you as an alumnus will follow that line in your ministry. Asbury must not just maintain her status quo. Asbury must abound, and you must help her. And at the same time let us seek to live in such a way that if God were to permit Dr. Morrison to come again in the flesh and observe this institution, he could exclaim. "Thank God."