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The Legitimate Spheres of Influence for the Independent University or College in Education

Is one of series of topics on the Spheres of Influence of the State University, the Agricultural College and the Normal School, presented by their representatives at the State Teachers' Association in Portland.

The following paper was given by Pres. Fletcher Homan, A. M., D. D.

The independent college or university has no limits to its sphere of influence in education. Other schools may be limited by their recognition of their relation to their constituency or the plan and purpose of their existence, but the independent college or university, because it is independent, has perfect freedom to invade any realm of education, to teach by any methods it may choose, to investigate any and all lines of thought and to originate new methods of presenting old truths or new truths. There is only one limit to this freedom of the independent college in its educational spheres of activity and that is the limitation to the entrance of different fields of educational activity. Under such circumstances the independent college is usually organized for a specific purpose and under ordinary circumstances is very much inclined to foster its peculiar line of education.

Conditions may arise in a sparsely settled or new country where the necessities of humanity will cause the origination of schools or forms of education in connection with the college or university that would not arise in a well settled and rich country. In a new and sparsely settled state it is perfectly in accord with the necessities of the case that the independent college should develop not only cultural courses of standard collegiate education but might likewise develop a school of medicine or law or agriculture or industrial courses or any other school if men capable of teaching the various subjects were at hand. But it must be granted that while necessity may cause the development of such schools under conditions named the time may come when standards have risen, wealth has increased, strong schools in these lines have developed, that the independent school might withdraw from special fields, but if it can raise the money to successfully run standard institutions in all the lines that may be called professional or clinical, none can deny but that it has a perfect right to exercise its influence in these spheres of education.

In the next place I would say that the independent college or university has legitimate spheres of influence in its relation to the people. This influence may never be especially exerted in the political life of the state, yet as a measure of protection it is perfectly permissible for the independent colleges and universities to exert all of the influence that they possess upon the people and upon the legislators of the state. Sometimes there arise conditions fostered by the selfishness of a few men that threaten the very existence of the independent college, especially if it be a small institution. Methods of standardization should not be such as to crucify, but such as may inspire; legislation should not be such as to put a school out of existence but to lift it up until it can maintain respectable standards along side of other institutions of the state. The fact is that in political matters no institution has any more right than the independent college or university but political conditions sometimes prevail that compel some educational institutions to enter the domain of politics in order to protect their existence and to secure that assistance from the state that ought to be theirs without any political activity. Such institutions have a vital relation to high schools as their legitimate constituency is contained therein.

Again, the independent college or university has legitimate spheres of activity in relation to certain classes of people that may not be possessed by state institutions; for example, an independent institution fostered and developed by some denomination has a sphere of influence within or among the people of that denomination particularly its own. It is the business of that school to exert this influence to its utmost, it is the right of such an institution to rebel against any plans or schemes of all other institutions to deprive it of its rightful constituency. I believe it to be beneath the dignity of great state institutions to use personal solicitation with a legitimate constituency of the independent school in order to secure the attendance of members of that constituency upon institutions other than those of their own denomination. If people of a certain denomination having a school of their own deliberately choose, without influence being exerted, to attend a state institution that is their privilege, but for faculty members of other institutions or of high schools to exert their influence to divert the legitimate constituency of an independent institution to a state institution is a breach of courtesy and cannot be tolerated without protest on the part of the independent college or university. This especial relation of the independent college or university to a special constituency does not deprive it of the privilege of educating any and all students that may come within its doors. Still no effort is made upon the part of a legitimate, self-respecting, independent college to proselyte or to change religious beliefs of the students attending. Yet if an individual college is absolutely committed to the Christian propoganda it is always the privilege to endeavor to persuade every individual to adopt the Christian principles, Christian ideals, Christian living. That is a sphere of influence that it could not with any degree of self-respect surrender.

The independent school is free to enter the field of reform. In so doing it may suffer from the wicked devices of conscienceless sinners or the malicious misrepresentations of unscrupulous rivals. For the individual or the institution that speaks out forcibly against the poisonous cigarette is anathemalized by the cigarette user. If declaration is made against the winebibber, beer drinker, alcohol slave, brewer, distiller, or saloonkeeper, an appeal for breadth is made and fine scorn is exhibited against such

narrowness. If a question is raised as to the pleasures so-called that are a waste of physical or mental energy, "narrow" is the sarcastic but popularly effective weapon hurled at the offender. If forcible expressions of choice descriptive English are used against moving picture shows that have just enough good features to make them palatable and permissible, or against the corruptions of the theatre, proud contempt inveighs against the lack of breadth and sympathy with the masses.

Why should institutions that teach the pre-eminent ideals of the ages be deemed narrow? Why should instruction that purifies the fountains of life, classifies thinking, produces correct ideas of living, develops power of service, teaches devotion to mankind and to God, and enthrones a Christly love in human hearts ever be subject to criticism?

The Master Teacher of all time said "Thou shalt love the Lord the God with all thy might, mind, soul and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." To teach an intellect to **worship** is greater business than **simply** to teach it to **think**. To develop a spirit of Christlike service is greater than to stimulate minds to acquire the world's knowledge or explore the world's learning. But to develop both worship and thinking power, to inspire both Christlike service and intellectual attainment, to co-ordinate love and knowledge, to purify the spirit by cleansing it of its selfishness, and to displace ignorance with enlightenment is **greatest** of all. And this is **all** within the legitimate sphere of the **independent college or university**. Full **intellectual** freedom plus full **religious freedom** has a rightful place in such institutions.

The independent institution may boldly declare that brilliant thinkers who curse, and smoke cigarettes, and imbibe intoxicants, and ignore God, are a demoralizing force in society. On the other side it may freely teach that, to unite the finite mind with the infinite, to join the human spirit with the divine spirit, is to beget for the individual the **best partnership ever made**. And, in addition, to **teach** that this is **not** religious cant, **not** sickly sentimentality, **not narrow, bigoted** concepts of life, but **just good business sense**, is the **greatest privilege** given to teachers.

For what is stronger, broader, deeper in knowledge, than the mind of God? Who knows more about learning, or business, or society, or success, than God? Who understood life any better than Jesus Christ? Then why not exercise good common sense and get into perfect, harmonious, joyous partnership with God and Christ? To make these ideals **pre-eminent** in **all education** is the task of the independent institution. **Humanity** will never be its **best** until it adopts these ideals. To secure their adoption seems like a giant undertaking. But **faith** laughs at impossibilities and cries "It shall be done."

The independent institution usually has a definite sphere of influence in training and developing church leaders. Ninety-four per cent of the educated ministry of the Presbyterian church is said to have been educated within the Presbyterian colleges. Eighty-nine per cent of the educated ministry of the Methodist church is educated in Methodist colleges. Eighty-five per cent of Methodist missionaries are educated in Methodist colleges. The independent institutions are the mothers of practically all **great** Christian leaders. And they are usually the grandmothers or great-grandmothers of **all great** leaders. And where the colleges are not the churches are such maternal guardians.

All denominations today recognize the necessity of having independent colleges, as training centers for the captains of their hosts. I know one great university that in all its history has not trained twenty Christian workers including all kinds. Some independent institutions sometimes send out more than that number in a single year. When Paul looked upon the seductive life of a tumultuous city he did not say "seclude yourselves in monasteries, separate yourselves from this pagan putrid life." Rather he declared "All things are yours; the world and life and death, and things present and things to come," to be redeemed, spiritualized and made Christ-like. The independent institution is training leaders and saying to them, "The world is yours; conquer it, purify it, make it what it ought to be, transform it intellectually, socially, politically, industrially, spiritually." Such an institution seeks to train men in sincerity, genuineness, respect for law, chastity, purity, sacredness and purity of the home, deity to one's fellows, as foundational principles of a true civilization. Carlyle said, "The original man is the sincere man." Such a man has vision and to train such men is to train leaders.

This leads me to say that in the great realms of intellectual activity where the great ideals of life are involved and the fundamental principles of time and eternity are concerned the independent institution is about the only institution that dares to enter fairly, courageously, and with lofty plan and purpose. For the idea of God is the most tremendous idea entertained by the human mind; the ideals of Jesus Christ are the most wonderful ideals known; the positive Christian psychology, the positive Christian philosophy, the positive Christian teaching on lines that involve the world, such as missionary activity and the redemption of humanity, can be taken with perfect freedom into the class room of the independent college or university. In this matter other schools are limited, the independent institution is unlimited; other institutions are narrowed in a very large measure to that which enters into the temporal life of the students taught within their doors; the independent institution is not a narrow institution and it is not narrowed by the peculiar belief of any portion of society. The independent institution is the broadest institution, educating the young people of today. Only the cynic or the prejudiced mind of the rival teacher in other institutions or the unjust critic will believe that any independent institution ever tries to cram peculiar and special religious beliefs down the throats of all its students.

The charge that the independent college in matters of religion is narrow is in itself contemptible, and narrow, and unworthy, and false; for the independent institution stretches the intellects of its young people out into eternity, searches creation for every kind of a law, explores the depths of the human soul in order to understand, estimate, explain, every experience of the human heart, deals in most perfect reasoning concerning God and the Creator or the universe, and teaches fairly and with earnest insistence the ideals of Jesus Christ as the most beautiful, the most blessed, and the best adapted to the world's needs known to man.

When the independent institution, therefore, is a Christian institution, God is the heart center of its spheres of influence, Jesus Christ is the great teacher as to its ideals, plans and purposes, and Truth that will develop not simply human intellect but the strength and beauty and power of human character and will reveal the divinity of human service is freely taught. Instead of being a narrow institution the independent college or university may be the broadest and biggest and deepest and strongest, most effective for the development of the whole individual, for the enrichment of all of the tides of life of any institution in the world.