

Are Presbyterians Asleep to Opportunity?

Education in America has never been as completely democratic as it might be; yet it never has been extended to as many as it now has been. Every year there is an increase in the number of people who seek an education. It is the avowed philosophy of our educational system to provide the opportunity to all who seek it; providing opportunity, however, does not necessarily mean supplying the funds needed to attend college. It means providing a college which may be attended. I doubt that there are young people so rash as to DEMAND that someone else—society at large—provide them with an education. I also doubt that they would say that society OWES them an education. Rather, I would expect them to consider that they owe it to society to provide themselves with an education. Now, it is no small thing for many young people to spend from 3,000 to 4,000 or more dollars and four years of their life studying not only for their own good, but for the good of society. It is no small thing for young people to struggle and work and save in order that they may be in a position to take their place in society as responsible citizens. In turn, society owes it to young people to keep colleges open so that they may obtain the education they desire.

Each college has its own type of program and turns out its own type of students. These students go out in life and reflect, so to speak, the ideals of their college. They are indoctrinated with the hopes and aspirations of their college. And each reflects, too, the individual place of that college in society. To bring these ideas home, let us consider the colleges of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. There are many and varied, scattered throughout the Southland. Without any one of these schools, the education of the people of that area would be neglected. The place which that school fills in society would go empty. The good of its services to the Church would be lost forever, irreplaceable. And yet, in spite of the shortage of colleges and trained college personnel, there are some schools which must close their doors. Is this? Who must answer for it? Is it you? Have you fulfilled your entire responsibility to the college which serves you, along with its young people? Can we assume that there is neglect on the part of some of those who share this responsibility? What answer can you give in later years when you look over the leadership of the Church and nation and see that many places of leadership have not been filled? Or possibly the places have not been filled with the most capable people simply because some of the most capable did not have the opportunity for higher education while in their youth.

It will be a sad thing if, in a land where so many are unable to gain entrance to our crowded colleges, the doors of Montreat College should be closed. We know that there is a dire need for a good, accredited, four-year college in this area. There is not another within a fifty mile radius of Montreat. Here is a golden opportunity for the Southern Presbyterian Church. Here, at the heart of Southern Presbyterianism, we could maintain a college that would make every Presbyterian proud to say, "I support Montreat College." Montreat College, as an accredited senior college, could reach far into the area and help those who cannot help themselves. Because of its accessibility, it could reach far out into Presbyterianism and help those who cannot afford to attend other, more expensive, colleges of our Presbyterian Church. Montreat gave the opportunity of higher education to many day students of this area who could not possibly have moved with their families to another college. It gave this opportunity to many who would not have gone to any college at all had they not been helped here. Because of Montreat many students who would have otherwise only attended one or two years have completed their college education and are even now skilled workers and leaders in the Church. There are many who, though not working directly in the Church, are contributing their services as Christian teachers, nurses, and secretaries. What if these had been denied the opportunity for a Christian education? What if many young people—our young people, the leaders of tomorrow—had found it impossible to attend one of their own schools? Where would they be today? If WE deny the opportunity to our own, how can we expect it to be granted by others?

Here we have our word again—opportunity. The opportunity for a low-cost Christian education has been taken from these and many other young people. We speak especially on behalf of those who would not have attended any college had it not been for Montreat. Where would they find another institution such as Montreat? They could not, for even as every other college has its particular place to fill, so Montreat has its own. And this place is not as a junior college, but as a senior college. Reducing Montreat College to the junior level will leave a great void in the educational system of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. This void can be filled by no other college, either Church or state supported. Montreat alone can accomplish the goal of a liberal Christian education for those who were destined to enter its gates.

—TA

The Dialectic

February, 1959

Second-Class postage paid at Montreat, N. C., under the Act of March 8, 1879. \$1.00 per college year. The verbal heart of Montreat College.

MONTREAT, NORTH CAROLINA—Box K.
Return Postage Guaranteed.

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THE CHURCH COLLEGE

I like colleges that nestle
In quiet little towns
And seem to offer something more
Than credits, caps, and gowns.
I like classes filled with friends
Who have a smile for me;
I don't like profs who know me as
Row 31 Seat 3.
I hate to meet a former prof's
Unrecognized stare;
I like the kind who knows your name
Your hopes, your love affair.
I like Church-college profs who teach
Likewise, inspired crusaders;
Who take the time to read your themes
And don't hire student graders.
I like colleges which strive to learn,
Years later, where you are;
Yes even tho' you've never been
A campus queen or star.
A mammoth institution holds
Within its office space,
Along with proof of my degree
A photo of my face.
The most it knows about me is
My city, birth and class.
I like my old Church-college best;
She doesn't think en masse.
She'll gaily cheer each grad's career
With faith that's optimistic;
To her a former student is
No musty old statistic.

—Helen Ruhenbrod

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