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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii. 32.

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HOW FAR SHOULD WE ALLY OUR SCHOOLS WITH STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

By Rev. B. R. Smith, D. D.

(Paper read at the recent Presbyterian Workers' Conference, held at Johnson C. Smith University, February 2-5.)

The subject of our talk is put in the form of a question, "How Far Should We Ally Our Schools with State Boards of Education?" It is not a question of how far shall we ally ourselves, but how far beyond their requirements shall we go. When we measure up and simply duplicate the work which the State is doing it is hard to justify the expenditure of the money of the Church, and certainly there can be no justification in doing less than the State requires. Our schools and colleges should co-operate fully with State Boards of Education and, in addition to meeting their minimum requirements, they should so enrich the character of their work that both parents and students will know that they are getting infinitely more. We have come to this conclusion in view of the following facts:

First, the responsibility for the education of its citizenry has been definitely placed upon the States by the mandate of the people. Schools in America as in European countries generally arose as a child of the Church and the theory persisted for centuries that education was not the responsibility of the State, but the business of the family and the Church.

But in the growth of the nation, schools have gradually changed from an instrument of the Church to an instrument of the State. The principles of American education are established upon the theory that a democratic form of government depends for its value and effectiveness upon a citizenship educated sufficiently to understand all of its affairs, private and personal, public and civic. In keeping with this principle, each State has accepted the responsibility of the education of its citizenry. This responsibility has been confirmed by the courts and sanctioned by the mandates of the people. Today education is the largest public enterprise in the United States and the country's most important business. More money is invested in the physical plants of education than in any other public undertaking. More money is spent annually by cities, counties and States for school support than for any other public cause. With the problem of adequate rural education still to be solved, the enterprise is destined to become even larger. In view of these facts of State responsibility and State authority there is no other course we can intelligently pursue than to co-operate with the State Boards of Education.

Another ground for my belief that we should co-operate to the fullest extent with State Boards of Education is their attitude toward private and denominational institutions. Despite occasional agitation here and there for State control of all educational efforts and occasional attempts to take over control of all school facilities below college grade, the American people have not been led to believe that such control is either necessary or desirable. On the other hand, the State departments have been accustomed to regard private and denominational schools as useful and meritorious. They recognized their great work in the past as pioneers in education. Some of them realize that private institutions are in position to give the youth a training that public schools can not give. They know that the youth of today needs moral and religious instruction and that state-owned institutions can not give it. Because of this they are seeking to co-operate with our private schools and encourage

them in their program. Inasmuch as the boards representative of the authority of the State in educational matters are seeking to co-operate, with the view of making our work more effective, I see no reason why we should not co-operate. In fact, I think it is an opportunity to make our work even more effective.

It is true that State boards, while showing a spirit of friendly co-operation, have insisted that private schools meet the minimum requirements of their own schools. And this is at it should be. I think it is a legitimate requirement that all denominational and private schools and colleges be open for inspection by State authorities for approval as being approximately equal in sanitary arrangement, equipment for instruction and in quality of work done, to the public schools of the districts. There is nothing inherently wrong in State formulation of standards and State supervision of all units of education. Our States have enacted blue sky laws and provided for corporation commissions to protect the buyers of stocks and bonds, and the same idea might quite properly be applied to the buyers of the evidences of an education.

I am well aware that this works a hardship upon church-supported institutions, but this is no reason that the child should be deprived of what the State thinks he should have. Inasmuch as it is the purpose of the State boards to improve the character of our work and bring it up to required standards, we should accept the challenge and do our best to give as much as they give and more.

Another reason for cooperation with State boards of education is that they have been the life and saving of Negro schools and colleges. Until very recently it was the only recognized rating agency that would consider Negro schools and colleges. There are some States now that have no provision for rating Negro colleges. The rating of our institutions by State boards worked a great hardship upon our institutions and some were closed entirely. On the other hand, some of them put forth a major effort to meet the State requirements, securing better equipment, improving their courses of study and thus greatly improved the quality of their work.

Furthermore, the American public has been trained to accept the rating of the various State boards as final in determining the worth of institutions and the character of their work. Patrons of our schools desire to know if they are approved by the State. If they are not rated by the State they are under-rated by the public and the enrollment is invariably decreased. The primary consideration in the program of any institution is the need of the community and the pupils. We should have confidence in our program to prepare students for future service. To do this our schools must co-operate with State boards and meet their requirements. Regardless of the thoroughness of our work and the preparedness of our graduates the State will not permit them to teach. If they expect to continue their education they will be embarrassed upon entering higher institutions and will, perhaps, lose a year in the transfer. With State approval these difficulties are removed. The question might be asked in all fairness,

"Have we a moral right to maintain our institutions, spending money for equipment and teaching, taking the precious time and money of students, and at the same time not giving them what they need?"

There is still another reason why we should endeavor to meet State requirements in the conduct of our schools and colleges, namely, that they are operated under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church has always stood for the highest and best in education. The people take for granted that if an institution is supported and controlled by the Presbyterian Church, and especially the Northern branch, it is the best, and they never question the quality of the work. In view of this, we should give not only what the State requires, but more. Long before the States caught the vision of their duty and responsibility in education, the Church was emptying its coffers, and sending consecrated men and women into the cause of education for the underprivileged. We are indeed proud of the record of our Church. At the same time we have a reputation which we must protect and live up to. We have always contended for the best in education and we should be content with no less now. The quality of our educational work should never be questioned. When students and parents give up the public schools for private institutions it is not because they think they are getting less or the same advantages offered by the State, but infinitely more. When we receive students we should feel that we are giving them more.

In advocating that all of our schools should endeavor to meet State requirements and have their work approved, I am not unmindful of the misgivings in the minds of the Church and the difficulties confronting our Board.

In the first place, the high cost of meeting State standards makes it almost prohibitive for schools under our Board. New laboratory and library equipment must be purchased, the length of the term increased, qualified teachers must be provided and given adequate salaries. With the benevolence of the Church in arrears what shall we do? Perhaps a greater mind than mine will have to answer this question, but I am convinced of one thing, that it would be better to sacrifice the school than the pupil. The officials of the Board, Dr. Gaston and his associates, I know are eager to improve the character and standard of our work, and, if left to them, every school would be a standard school and every college "A" class. With them as with other churches, it is a question of funds. Yet something must be done. I suggest the following:

1. Eliminate schools, particularly the parochial, wherever the State, county or city has made provision for the children of the community. I know there are some rural communities where there is still little or no provision for our group. Schools in these communities should be continued. But where we are merely duplicating the work of the city or county they should be closed and the money used to support schools that are meeting a definite need in the community.

Another method of meeting this condition is consolidation. There is still a place for our boarding high schools and colleges and there will be for some time to come. But in the interest of economy and greater efficiency some of them could well be consolidated. In New Orleans two colleges of different denominations met their financial problems by consolidating. In Marshall, Texas, two of the oldest institutions in the State for our people, one

Baptist and the other Methodist, are meeting their problems this year by consolidating certain departments. The announcement has been made that these two institutions will affiliate and have one summer school. If these colleges of different religious groups can see their way in the interest of economy and efficiency to consolidate, why not consolidate schools of the same denomination for the same reason? It would surely be better for the students and the Board to have a few well equipped institutions at strategic points than a larger number maintained on a lower scale of efficiency.

There is still another way. In Texas several of the white denominational colleges which found it almost impossible to keep up with the State's program have been turned over to the State to be operated as State institutions. If the property ceases to be used for educational purposes it goes back to the original owners. But the point is that these Churches thought it decidedly better to transfer these schools to the State than to run them on an inferior scale. They realized that the greatest interest in the educational equation was the student.

Another plan which will help solve this problem is for the National Board to grant a larger percentage to the Division for Colored People. I am glad Dr. Morse is here and I hope he will give his moral support to this suggestion. So I repeat that while the cost of meeting State requirements makes it almost prohibitive with our limited resources, the situation can be improved by eliminating schools which are merely duplicating work in their communities, consolidating at strategic points existing schools over to the States, and by granting a larger percentage from the National Board for the Division for Colored People.

Aside from the cost of maintenance in meeting State requirements, there is, perhaps, another reason that our Board has some misgivings in regard to co-operation with State Boards; namely, the possibility of over standardizing and State interference with the Church's program of religious education. I am a firm believer in religious education, and if I thought State co-operation would limit our work in this field I would be forever against it. But I do not think there is any cause for alarm. There are only two States in which there seems to be a tendency to limit the sphere of Church schools. An amendment to the Michigan constitution was proposed to abolish all private institutions. This amendment was voted down in 1920 and 1924. At the general election in 1922 the people of Oregon adopted an initiative bill which provided that all private and parochial schools should give way to public schools. This case was finally carried to the Supreme Court which in 1925 declared the law unconstitutional on the ground that it interfered with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control. This decision is a bulwark of defense against unwarranted intrusion by the State in the program of private institutions.

Again, most of the States have certain required subjects which must be taught in public schools and private schools seeking their approval. To this there can be no objection. The rest of the curriculum is elective. The trend of education is to offer many electives in order that students may take courses best adapted to their present and future needs. In the high schools of Texas there are more than thirty-one electives. With this tendency toward electives it is evident that schools may teach almost any

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THE MEAGER CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON

By Dr. Carter G. Woodson

Mordecai Johnson is having trouble with his educational leadership in Washington, but he should not consider his case exceptional. All men who have tried to do things in Washington have had the same experience. You always find here a number of persons who, although they have never done anything themselves, nevertheless belittle and oppose what you are doing until they secure a following large enough to block the path of progress. For the support of his leadership Johnson, like others, must look beyond the borders of the District of Columbia.

Washington is a job-seeking and job-holding center. The people of the District of Columbia have no time for any such thing as an educational program. Nobody here quarrels about one's not knowing sufficient for a position. The chief complaint is that John is receiving more than James or that William should not have been advanced before Henry was rewarded. The people do not feel any need for an efficient school system or a great university. What they want is an increase in the number of available jobs, higher salaries for the job-holders, easier ways of securing such jobs, and additional opportunities for spending the money thus earned.

To insist upon high standards, ripe scholarship, and creative work makes an educator unpopular in the District of Columbia. He had better keep the needless tenor of his way that he may draw his own salary and enjoy it in peace as long as he can. If he starts too many reforms here and disturbs the well established agents for the distribution of local patronage he cannot long endure.

A great university, therefore, is impossible in Washington either among the whites or blacks. I am surprised to see such a thing undertaken with the aid of politicians. I was sorry indeed when I heard that a useful and promising young man like Mordecai Johnson had decided to throw away valuable time trying to plow in the sea. John Hope, at Atlanta University in Georgia, has a much better atmosphere in which to develop an institution of learning.

How many persons do you find in Washington who are studying physics or mathematics, for example, to learn about the subject all that men now know about it and to add to such knowledge by some great discovery? Such persons would be more acceptable here if they would forget research and specialize in auction bridge. To proceed otherwise will bring upon them the stigma of being freaks. George Washington Carver would be laughed at up and down the streets of Washington.

This situation explains why nothing outstanding has been achieved by the one hundred and thirty-two thousand Negroes in the District of Columbia. Those who have done well developed in other parts. Yet our trouble is due to an influx. We have too many leaders from without. Practically all persons in the foreground here were brought to the city to be rewarded in some way because of their successful leadership in smaller communities. We have, therefore, many who try to lead and few who desire to follow.

Here these politically selected Negroes have seen the "best" produced in the country. They have seen legislators and diplomats come and go, and a few of them in mental capacity have walked and

talked with Presidents of the United States. Their time, then, has been consumed largely in admiring the great things being done by others of a different race; and, developing an inferiority complex, they have always mocked any Negro who has come to town with the presumption that he can do something.

When I arrived in Washington in 1909 and began my researches in Negro history the people here laughed at me and especially at my "hayseed" clothes. At that time I did not have enough money to pay for a haircut. I went to a barber shop and had the work done before I informed the tonsorial artist as to my impecunious condition. He became enraged and wanted to pound me, but I was out of the chair then; and he decided he had better exercise a little patience until I could pay the bill. I borrowed some money from Wilson Bruce Evans and L. Melendez King, however, and paid this bill and other bills. That barber and I have become the best of friends.

When I in poverty had the "audacity" to write a book on the Negro the "scholarly" people of Washington laughed at it. When I started the Journal of Negro History in January 1916, a representative of this same group, expressing an opinion of Kelly Miller, made fun of me in public soon thereafter, saying:

"I have known you as an author, and now I greet you as an editor; but you must remember that some magazines do not reach the second issue."

That man is now dead but the Journal of Negro History is in its seventeenth year. This magazine, however, is not well supported by persons of African blood. Readers of the white race are more interested in it than we are, and do more for this work than we do. Thousands of our highly educated Negroes do not know that such a magazine is being published; and they would not take the time to read it, if they had the opportunity.

The people in the District of Columbia, as a large majority, find no need for such an effort as that of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Most of them do not know what I am doing. A Washington teacher whom I taught in 1915, thinking that I am still marooned at the same place, recently asked me how I am getting on at the Armstrong High School.

A small number, however, have always stood by this work and have thus enabled the staff to make some headway in writing and popularizing the history of the Negro that the race may not become a negligible factor in the thought of the world. Kelly Miller's prediction of failure, supported by that of W. E. B. Du Bois, therefore, has not yet come to pass. They could not see how the thing could be done.

I have seen too much of our people in the District of Columbia to become discouraged by anything which may happen here. When I first heard Roland Hayes in Washington he did not please his audience at all. The lady whom I accompanied to the recital tried to point out all his defects, saying that most of the time he was off the key. I did not know enough about music to understand whether he was on or off, but even at that time he impressed me as being the prince of singers; and the world since then has so acclaimed him.

Some years ago Richard B.

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