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Wednesday, October 27, 1909

Religion on the Campus

One of the hardest tasks in modern educational institutions is to free them from the dictation of outside influences such as capital, labor, church, or state. The slightest tendency in this direction will "eliminate" the most independent thinkers, for such "survival of the fittest" leaves only fools and diplomats. Certain persons in Eugene and elsewhere have in the past attempted to influence the University of Oregon and they will doubtless attempt to do so in the future. This, however, is another matter.

The present trouble is with some local preachers. While it is practically impossible to deduce from their platitudinous explanations any definite statement of their position, it seems to be only a recurrence of the ancient prejudice that refuses to tolerate free discussion of religion. This may be an unfair inference but it is the only consistent ground on which they can stand.

They can hardly confine their opposition to the general subject of religion on the campus for it was there before Professor Howe ever mentioned the subject. It is on the campus every time the Y. M. C. A. holds a meeting. Every time they hold a Bible class religion is on the campus. The professors take part in it every time one of them teaches one of these classes. When Professor Sweetser lectured before the Y. M. C. A. a few days ago, religion was on the campus. If the preachers object to religion on the campus, why did they not object to him?

Bear in mind that "on the campus" is not "in the class room." Of course when the church refuses to give up its favorite dogmas in the face of advancing science, it is hard for an institution founded expressly for research into and propagation of eternal truth to keep silent. Nevertheless, the subject is kept out of the class room as much as possible.

The present discussion, however, was not in class and therefore it is an exact parallel to the religious services of the Y. M. C. A. with the one exception that it was of a different brand. This shows the real trouble. The preachers do not object to religion on the campus and do not pretend to. If they could they would make every one major in Bible study. What they object to is unorthodox religion, religion that sees all truth no more in the Bible than in

the Vedas, religion that believes the science and philosophy of today superior to that of two thousand years ago. If Ralph Waldo Emerson were at the University of Oregon, they would object to him. If Tom Paine visited the campus they would "burn him at the stake."

If the preachers persist in their attempt to dictate to the University faculty in this matter, there can be only one result—the Y. M. C. A. will be swept away in the general ruin. This will not be the result of opposition to the association itself but to the necessity that all brands of religion be treated alike in a non-sectarian school.

These remarks concern only general principles. We would hold them good if Professor Howe were an atheist.

But he is not an atheist. He is not even anti-Christian. If the truth were known, he is a better Christian than many of the preachers. He is one who puts the teachings of Christ above belief in a miracle. We do not wish to become involved in a wrangle over particular creeds, however, and will therefore not criticize the beliefs that either of the parties uphold.

There is only one other point then that it is necessary to mention. While he refuses to accept it as the fundamental difference between Professor Howe and the Y. M. C. A., Mr. Mount does acknowledge that his main objection lies in the fact that the Professor differs with the majority of people in the state who are Christians. As we have already demonstrated, this is immaterial. But there is no proof even that it is true. Some of the greatest men, among them President Elliott of Harvard, declare that intellectual thinkers no longer accept the orthodox doctrine. How do the preachers know that a majority are on their side? The matter has never been an issue for division, but until it is they have no right to assume how it would be decided. It may be unfair to use the illustration—no more so than many that we have heard; but while the president of the United States is an avowed opponent of the so-called orthodox belief, how can anyone state with certainty that the people who elected him are not also heretics? Professor Howe is not nearly so unorthodox as President Taft.

The Emerald failed to report an important piece of news last week not because it was asleep but because it was requested to do so. Substantially the same story appeared the next morning in the Oregonian. Naturally we were disappointed. We speak of the matter now, however, only because the custom is so prevalent. The Emerald aspires to be more than a critical review. People are in the habit of holding news from it until it has lost its value and then expect it to be announced as a sort of historical record. Hereafter, therefore, the editor will be the sole judge of what is published, taking advice from no one. If college news is willfully held until its value is lost it will not be published.

The University of Missouri has decreed that from one to six hours is to be deducted from the student's credit if he leaves the University on either of the two days preceding or following holidays.

Miss Mabel Hazeltine of Baker City is the guest of Irma Clifford at the Gamma Phi Beta house.

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Ralph Cronise, University Correspondent

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