

Character Building in Colleges

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of the religious life of modern students should be unified. These programs should be unified in such a way as to conserve all the good that all the agencies have to offer for the spiritual culture of college youth. They should be unified in such a way that they will make a united impact upon the heart and mind and spirit of students. There should be no competition, no jealousy, but, on the contrary, there should be co-operation and mutual confidence and respect. This integrated program of ministry to the religious life of students should be thoroughgoing in its scope. It should include religious instruction of a voluntary character, social activities, recreational and amusement projects, the financial support of the agencies on a budgetary basis, and all other efforts on the part of any agency to perform a spiritual service for the college or its community or to secure support of any character for such an agency.

3. Are these agencies able to adjust themselves to significant situations as they arise on the campus? Are they open-minded to discover the experiences in student life which call for spiritual treatment? The program of any particular institution's voluntary religious agencies should never be so hard and fast that it cannot be readily adjusted to the consider-

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ation of any emergency matter which may arise. It is out of such critical situations which occur in every college generation that real spiritual character arises. A program that is made in executive session, anticipating what are to be the problems and experiences and situations of a college year most likely to yield Christian character for those who take part in them, may under normal conditions turn out well. But anyone who is acquainted with college life knows that occasionally crises arise. Failure to face these crises and to adjust the religious program to the demands they make for the Christian solution of the issues involved, sometimes produces sad results. In a particular institution, for example, during a particular session, the race question had been smugly disposed of in various discussion groups that had been provided for in the stately and dignified program of the calendar of the year as outlined by the religious agencies. A Student Volunteer Convention, however, came to that campus and brought in representatives of the Negro race⁶ as regular members associating with the representatives of the white colleges—the first instance of its kind in the Southern States. Here was a real situation loaded with dynamite, or prophetic

⁶See *Christian Education*, vol. x, p. 495.

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with hope for a Christian solution of the question. That college campus became a laboratory in the race question for about a month. College classes, Sunday school classes, voluntary discussion groups, chapel services, social club and class gatherings, Sunday-evening mass meetings, the student voluntary meetings of every character, including the so-called "bull sessions" in dormitory rooms or elsewhere about the campus, seethed with animated discussion. A finer opportunity never challenged the students of any college to face a real issue of the Christian life. They faced it gallantly and with a reverent desire to know and to do the mind of Christ. Finally on a Sunday evening a mass meeting was held when the issue was presented from every standpoint. At the conclusion of that service the leader asked the students who had assembled if they had to face this experience again, would they be willing for these Negro delegates to come to their campus, and they voted unanimously that they would. Here was a vexing and ever-recurring Christian problem solved in a Christian way because the program adopted by the religious agencies serving the religious life of the students, was flexible enough to adjust itself to the consideration of a significant situation which arose normally and naturally out

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of the experience of the students. Unless these agencies are alert to adjust themselves to such significant experimental situations, though they may be the best intentioned, they will oftentimes hinder rather than promote the spiritual life of those whom they would serve.

4. Do these agencies construct their programs in such a way as to make it easy for the students to control their responses to the life situations that arise in their normal experiences in the direction of a truly and vitally Christian outcome? This is a real test, but public services alone, however inspiring and powerful they may be, however well planned and orderly executed, cannot possibly supply the atmosphere, the incentive, the *milieu* that will be conducive to this sort of control. Projects must be undertaken, some of them individually, some of them for groups, but all of them working together to provide a situation positively helping a student to control his responses in the direction of Christian outcomes for his conduct. Our reading projects, investigation projects, public worship, discussion groups, the cultivation of æsthetic appreciation, attendance on lectures, sermons, addresses, and stories attuned to the highest ideals of life, excursions, engaging in service activities of various kinds—these are some of