

DR. DOTSON MCGINNIS NELSON

A Biographical Sketch

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President of Mississippi College of Clinton, Hinds County, Mississippi since 1932, his name is a synonym for Christian education in Mississippi. He was born near Charleston in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

Dr. Nelson received his Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi College in 1907. After his graduation he became principal of a large consolidated school in Lincoln County.

Dr. Nelson studied law at the University of Chicago. Upon completion of his work there he passed the Mississippi State bar examination and was admitted to the bar in 1910.

He returned to Mississippi College in the fall of 1911 as assistant professor of chemistry, holding this position until 1914 when he became professor of physics at the same institution.

Dr. Nelson continued the study of physics and in 1925 he received the Ph. D. degree from Indiana University in that field.

President Nelson is a member of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Learning, Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, American Council on Education, Optical Society of America, American Association of Physics Teachers, American Association of University Professors, and is a contributor of scientific articles to several scholarly publications. He is also a Mason, a member of the Odd Fellows and Woodmen of the World.

The institution which Dr. Nelson has led for 23 years holds a remarkable record among Christian colleges of our nation. Founded in 1826, the school celebrated its centennial as a Baptist college in 1950 and 1951 marked the observance of a century and a quarter since its founding. This gives Mississippi College the record of teaching longer than any other college in America which is now Baptist controlled. The historic school was first in America

to confer a degree upon a woman; the year was 1833. It is the 13th oldest denominational college in America.

CONFLICTING VIEWS
ON A VEXING ISSUE

by
D. M. NELSON

Herewith is some correspondence between an alumnus and the president of his college. The problem presented and discussed is an ancient one and still unsolved. It is hoped that these divergent views, honestly and calmly expressed, will throw some light upon the oft-recurring problem, if it does not contribute to the solution thereof. While the issue at present is more acute in some areas than others, it has nationwide interest and implications. It, therefore, deserves the calm and considered judgment of all patriotic Americans. The letters follow:

May 18, 1954

Dr. D. M. Nelson
President of Mississippi College
Clinton, Mississippi

My dear Dr. Nelson:

You will recall me as a member of the class of 1917 and a former resident of New Haven, Connecticut. I retired last June and am now living near Poplarville, Mississippi. If at any time I can be of service to Mississippi College, I would be happy to have you call on me.

The purpose of this letter is to mention the "White Supremacy" now before the people of the South. Insofar as this issue applies to education in general, and Mississippi College in particular, I feel sure in your heart you will agree with me that there should be no racial differences. In theory I can see no reason why negroes are not admitted to Mississippi College on the same condition as any other race. I suspect privately in your sincere thinking you agree with this last statement.

Yet, we know full well that in practice there is feeling in our State against such equality.

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Some day this issue is going to be forced to where concessions will have to be made, at least in publicly supported institutions. In the name of Christianity, a great institution like Mississippi College should take a lead and not find herself trailing in public thinking and acting. I covet for Mississippi College the honor of being a leader in this field. If Mississippi College would open her doors to negroes, at least to some extent, she would reach a high level of leadership in Christian education. So far as I am personally concerned, I would like to see any person without regard for color or sex admitted if other qualifications are met. If it is felt that the Baptist people of our State will not go all the way with me, then admit ministerial students. If that is too much, then admit married ministerial students who would live off the campus.

The Methodist and Baptist people are the leaders in Mississippi. Perhaps you could approach the proper authority at Millsaps College and see if they would take common action. In some way or other the leaders of Christian education should face this issue. As stated above I would like to see it done without reservation, but I would make concessions for the present in order to keep Christian leadership ahead of the Supreme Court and the politicians.

Remember me to Mrs. Nelson and your lovely daughter. I understand the latter is now married. I hear you met my son-in-law at some event in Arkansas.

Sincerely yours,
/s/ Tom

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1826

CLINTON, MISSISSIPPI
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 28, 1954

Dear Tom:

I have read your letter with interest and find myself in total disagreement with the sentiments expressed. At first I was slightly shocked to learn that one born, reared and

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