

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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educated in Mississippi should wander so far away in his thinking from the traditions and ideals and way of life of the land of his nativity. Then I recalled that you had spent twenty-five or thirty years in New England as teacher and supervisory officer in the public schools of that section. The manner of life and thought, of the people of that area have always been sharply different from those of this fair section.

You will recall, I am sure, that negro slavery in this country did not originate in the South but in New England. After a fair trial by our Yankee cousins, due to climatic conditions, African slavery proved to be a financial failure and the original owners began to bargain off their unprofitable holdings to the plantation owners of the South. With the money received from their shrewd trading they built stately mansions along the same shores where slave ships had been landing for a century. Many of these still remain as silent witnesses to the truthfulness of the statement that it does make a difference "whose ox is gored."

You will remember also, Tom, how well these Africans were adapted to the climate and way of life of the South and how prosperity followed and how happy, cordial and tender was the relationship that grew up between the benevolent masters and their slaves, the Stowes, the Garrisons and the Philippses to the contrary notwithstanding. Success where there had been failure was a strong provocation to action in reverse from the section whence the traffic had originated. The moral issue connected with human slavery was raised quite tardily and exploited. When it was pointed out that the Constitution recognized slaves as property, the response was immediate and dramatic: "To hell with the Constitution." Agitation continued unabated resulting in the War Between the States and the freeing of the slaves and the pauperizing of the once prosperous South. While in this helpless condition and under control of the carpetbaggers and the freedmen, the 14th and 15th amendments were

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passed as war measures to further humiliate a brave and proud people. To add to the loss of everything but honor and the right as the Southerners saw it, the victors set about to place upon the prostrate section a system of economic slavery more destructive, devastating and degrading than was the physical slavery which they professed so to abhor. The irony of this movement was that it was more severe upon the freedmen than upon the native whites.

Now as the South is beginning to prosper again and coming to be recognized as a part of the Union and proceeding with programs designed to enrich the life of all of its people, white and colored alike, we witness the sorry spectacle of a movement born out of the same wicked purpose, yet with a far more deadly design and devastating effect, to wit, to mongrelize the two dominant races of the South. The attempt is to do what the good Lord in His infinite wisdom did not do. He made the people into races, with racial characteristics, with inherent likes and dislikes, similarities and dissimilarities, and it would be as fallacious for mere man to try to improve upon the work of the Lord as it proved to be in his attempt to build a tower to heaven. A long life of study of people of different races, of different stations, of different strata, leads to the inevitable conclusion that there is something in lineage, in ancestry, in blood. Just as there are people with varying talents, there are inherently superior and inferior people. Shakespeare's dictum must continue to go unchallenged: "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." Close proximity of white and negro children in the schoolroom would ultimately lead to intermarriage and intermarriage of the two races would lead to racial disaster. For according to Pope, even:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Until now the High Court has favored the Southern position. Those who have sat upon

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its Bench for a century and a half have been profound, constitutional lawyers, passing upon issues that came before them in the light of precedent and according to the organic law of the land. The recent decision has ignored precedent and law and pushed aside all previous pronouncements on this great issue and based its findings upon the flimsy dictum of "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." We have reached a strange place in our history when social theories are substituted for law and long established precedent. Hereafter is it to be that learned men in the social studies will be sought for the Supreme Court instead of learned men of the law?

No, Tom, Mississippi College will not throw open its doors to negro students as long as the present president is permitted to direct its affairs. It shall be our purpose to protect the fair sons and daughters of the purest strain of the Caucasian race and save them the humiliation of close social contact with a race so different in origin, tradition, ideals and aspirations and in every other conceivable way.

We take this position for the good of the negroes as well as of the whites. They have many fine qualities and racial characteristics that should be preserved and developed without uneasiness or embarrassment. In class with young men and young women whom they would accept as superior the negro students would be repressed and ill at ease and frustrated. Herein might be applied the recent doctrine of the "separate but inherently unequal" with full force and effect.

We are dealing with an age-old problem, Tom, and it cannot be solved by maudlin sentimentality or fuzzy thinking or even the fiat of a high court. The South is far on the way toward solving this distressing problem if only let alone by outsiders who are entirely innocent of much that is involved.

We rejoice, Tom, that you have come back to beautiful, glorious Mississippi to spend the evening time of a long, rich and full life. We only wish that we had room for the millions of good people north of the Mason and Dixon

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line so that they might come and enjoy with us the warmth of our sunshine, the beauty of our landscapes, and feel the pulsebeats and handclasps of a great people who love their country and worship fervently the living God.

Abidingly your friend,
D. M. Nelson, President

September 9, 1954

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

My dear Dr. Nelson:

I received your letter dated 6 July in answer to my letter dated 25 June. It was kind of you to take time to write me. I do not wish to carry on correspondence indefinitely. There are a few points I wish to cover in the nature of explanations. This letter does not require an answer unless you have some special point you wish to make or review.

Your letter gave the impression that you might have felt that I commented unfavorably on the quality of your Christian views. I certainly never meant to make such an impression and am most sorry if I phrased a statement which would make one think I made an improper personal remark.

No one has made any reference to my long residence outside of Mississippi. I feared someone might brush aside my views with the comment that I picked up those ideas outside of the state. When I was a student at Mississippi College—prior to 1917—many times I walked over to Dickey Institute and talked with the people there. My views then were substantially the same as they are now. The promotion of the Missionary Work in the Baptist Church and the teaching at Mississippi College, then, seemed to be out of line with our practice of excluding negroes from our Colleges and churches. There are many well informed people in Mississippi today who have never resided outside the state and who share these opinions with me. So far as I am concerned this idea carries the label, "Made in Mississippi."

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