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**The Duty of the Churches  
to the State University:**

**By Charles Kendall Adams, Presi-  
dent of the University of Wisconsin**





THE

DUTY OF THE CHURCHES

TO THE

STATE UNIVERSITY

A PAPER

READ AT THE STATE CONGREGATIONAL CONVENTION  
HELD AT RIPON, SEPTEMBER 23, 1897

BY

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## The Duty of the Churches to the State University.

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From the first, the smaller institutions of higher learning in the United States have sought and secured the sympathy and the active support of the several Christian denominations under whose encouragement they were founded. Nourished by this fostering influence the colleges have done a work of unquestionable importance.

But while the churches have very properly kept alive their interests in the colleges, they have always been inclined to pursue a course towards the State universities which inevitably invites comparison with those ancient ecclesiastics whom the Savior described as passing by on the other side.

This method may have seemed for a time not unnatural. The State universities in this country have all had rather feeble beginnings, and to many persons it long seemed doubtful whether they would have any permanent strength or prolonged existence. While this uncertainty continued, it doubtless seemed questionable to many good people whether the perpetuity and influence of such institutions ought to be encouraged, or whether, on the contrary, they should be assisted, in what was supposed to be a facile path, to ultimate abandonment and annihilation. But that day is past. There are now few who do not recognize the fact that the State universities are a permanent and a very considerable element, in our educational system; and furthermore, that they unmistakably have the knack of perpetuity. They not only stubbornly refuse to perish, but they insist upon growing at a prodigious rate. It is not necessary here to consider the causes of this remarkable growth, it is only necessary to recognize it as a fact. "Yes, we know they are growing," some of you perhaps will say; but do you know how fast they are growing? Let us look for a moment at some of the figures

given in the catalogues and the reports of the Commissioner of Education. I have not myself verified the figures; but I present them as gathered from easily accessible sources by Chancellor McLean of the University of Nebraska in his inaugural address about a year ago, and I assume them to be correct.

During the ten years from 1885 to 1895 in the eight New England colleges: Amherst, Bowdoin, Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Williams, Wesleyan, Yale, the increase in the number of students was 20 per cent. In the eight representative colleges of the North Central States: Beloit, Carlton, Cornell, Hillsdale, Iowa College, Lawrence, Ripon, St. John's, the increase during the same period was  $14\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. In the eight representative State universities: of California, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wisconsin, the total number of students in 1885 was 4,230; in 1895, the number was 13,500, an increase in ten years of 320 per cent. Thus it appears that the rate of growth in the State universities during the past ten years has been sixteen times as great as the rate of growth in the New England colleges and universities, and twenty-two times as great as the rate in the colleges in the North Central States.

If we were to look into the matter of income and equipment, we should probably find the difference nearly or quite as great as in the matter of attendance; but, as I wish particularly to call attention to the student body only, I omit all other comparisons.

There is another phase of the matter, however, which is no less worthy of attention. I refer to the revelations made by the census of the State universities recently taken to ascertain the number of members and adherents of the several churches among the students of these institutions.

In several of the State universities, especially in those which have Christian Association buildings, and are consequently well organized for Christian work, efforts have been systematically made for some years past to ascertain the church mem-



bership and the religious preferences of all the students. In other universities the religious census has been less complete; but, for the purpose of obtaining approximate information, a careful census of the students in representative portions of the cities or towns has been taken, and the results have been applied for the purpose of estimating the numbers in the aggregate. It has been found that the results thus approximately obtained have not varied by any considerable amount from the proportions reached in those institutions where the census has been exact and complete. We are thus able to estimate with considerable confidence the number of members, and the number of adherents, of the several ecclesiastical denominations in all our State universities.

Professor F. W. Kelsey of the University of Michigan, has recently brought these figures together, and I am indebted to his generous courtesy for the use of his tables in advance of their publication. These tables relate to sixteen of the most prominent of the State universities of the country. Of course, it is not possible even to summarize these tables in any comprehensive manner. But a few illustrative facts may be presented. The census includes: (1) church members; and (2) church adherents: *i. e.* those who, although not members, have been accustomed to attend a certain church and still avow an adherence to it.

In general, it may be said that according to Professor Kelsey's tables the proportional numbers of church members in the State universities, varying slightly in the different institutions, amounts to an average of  $57\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the attendants.

Here then is the intensely interesting and very important fact that among all the students in the State universities more than one-half are members of churches. To specify with a little more particularity, we find, for example, that in Illinois the percentage is  $50\frac{3}{8}$  per cent.; in Indiana,  $63\frac{4}{8}$  per cent.; in Iowa, 60 per cent.; in Kansas  $55\frac{2}{8}$  per cent.; in Minnesota 57 per cent.; in Michigan  $57\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; and in Wisconsin

58½ per cent. In the University of Wisconsin the Congregationalists by profession are, according to these tables, 198 in number; the Roman Catholics, 118; the Baptists, 76; the Methodists, 124; the Episcopalians, 126; the Presbyterians, 148. Members of several other denominations are found in smaller numbers.

In the University of Michigan the total number of church members, when the census was taken in 1895, was 1,310, besides 686 additional adherents. These proportions are not exceptional; they are simply typical.

*Now, to sustain, to encourage in their religious life, what has been done by the churches for these vast bodies of Christian young men and women?*

In most of the States, beyond what is done by the local churches, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

What occurs in Wisconsin occurs in a majority of the other States. The Christian students are left to such voluntary and unaided associations as they may themselves organize for their mutual benefit. Students often come to the university with no letters of introduction from the pastors of their old churches to the pastors of their new churches; and if they bring letters, it often occurs that in the whirl and turmoil of the first weeks in college they neglect to present them, and drift into other associations that absorb or distract their attention, and too often monopolize their interest.

In every State university there is a voluntary students' Christian association. These beneficent organizations have for their object the gathering together of the religious forces in the university for religious companionship and religious work. The oldest and the largest of these is the one in the University of Michigan, and is in some sense the model of all the others. Its object is expressed in these words: "The purpose of this Association is to lead men to an earnest study of the Scriptures; to a renunciation of sin; to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Divine Lord and Savior; to the accept-

ance of His words and the Holy Spirit as the guide of life; and to the cultivation of Christian fellowship.”

These associations bring together a considerable proportion of the Christian young men and women, who are desirous of working earnestly, and of allowing no distracting allurements to beguile them from the general objects of their organization. The one in Madison has well attended meetings Sunday afternoons; during much of the year it holds a daily prayer meeting in one of the university rooms; it has eight or ten committees appointed to look after the different phases of the work; it canvasses the student body for the purpose of keeping alive and encouraging every religious sentiment and aspiration; in short, it is the head and center of religious life and work in the university.

It would be strange indeed, if, under existing conditions, these voluntary organizations should be invariably efficient and successful. They ordinarily have no building or room of their own; consequently they have no encouragement to provide either a library or those other attractions which gradually accumulate sacred and attractive associations. They receive no pecuniary assistance from outside, and consequently even the salary of the secretary has to be raised by assessment and by voluntary contributions of the members. But even in the face of these discouraging features, they do an important work in furnishing a nucleus of Christian effort and Christian life. It has often been remarked, and it is generally true, that, as a rule with few exceptions, students in the university develop and carry forward the impulses and inclinations which they bring with them. But lukewarm students are to be found in the universities as in all of our churches everywhere; and students of this class need to be encouraged, perhaps even tempted into moral and religious association and companionship, lest they yield to temptations of other kinds.

In a few of the state universities, Christian association buildings have been provided, and church guild houses have been erected. These have furnished a local habitation for

every kind of Christian companionship and effort. In the spring of 1858 the first of the Students' Christian Associations was established in the University of Michigan. The importance of the work done by the association gradually gained recognition, and in 1891 Newberry Hall, the gift of Mrs. John S. Newberry was opened as the beautiful home of the association. In the same year McMillan Hall, chiefly the gift of Senator McMillan, was opened as the resort of Presbyterian students, and at about the same time Harris Hall provided by Ex-Governor Baldwin, and named in memory of Bishop Harris, was equipped with reading rooms, a gymnasium and lecture hall, for adherents of the Episcopal church. Since that time the Wesleyan Guild has begun measures for a similar care of Methodist students; and the Disciples of Christ have provided two lectureships for students of their faith. These systematic and practical efforts have not gone unrewarded; for there is abundant evidence that they have kept alive many a spark of Christian purpose and aspiration that might otherwise have been obscured or extinguished. Not to mention other less tangible evidences of Christian activity among the students, it may not be out of place to note that the number of clergymen shown in the catalogue of the Michigan alumni is no less than 299, and of these as many as 57 have gone as missionaries into foreign fields.

The University of Wisconsin is twelve years younger than the University of Michigan. It has a larger number of students than Michigan had twelve years ago. It has a slightly larger proportion of Christian students than is to be found in the University of Michigan. Professor Kelsey's figures show that the proportionate number of Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics is greater at Madison than is the proportionate number at Ann Arbor. And yet for the Christian encouragement and nurture of these Christian sons and daughters of the churches what has been done either by the churches of Wisconsin, or by their representative members? I ask this question in no fault-finding or

captious spirit; but I should be glad to have the conditions understood by the churches of the State, especially by our own branch of the church universal.

This presentation ought not to be closed without a word of caution against certain erroneous impressions. The notion is more or less prevalent that in a large State university the predominant influences are inimical to the development and preservation of Christian character and Christian activity.

If there is any foundation for this impression, it must be in the fact that large associations of any kind furnish distracting opportunities. The very moment a young man leaves the restraint of home and church, and is thrown into the companionship of a broader life, whether in business or in education, whether in town, in city, or in a university, he undoubtedly encounters the allurements, as well as the advantages, of the larger life. Unless the boy is to be forever "cribbed, cabined and confined," the possibilities of evil must inevitably come sooner or later. Are the temptations to evil in a university greater than the temptations to evil in ordinary life? Are we to admit that a course of hard and exacting study sharpens the appetite for self-indulgence? It is impossible. Reason and experience alike show that such is not the case. The collision of ideas and the ferment of expanding germs of thought undoubtedly sometimes in the university, as in life at large, results in modifications of belief, and in changes of purpose. But these are the inevitable incidents of growth everywhere.

We must also bear in mind the fact that youthful human nature craves and demands occasional relief from the continuous strain of hard application to study. A generation or two ago this demand showed itself in the feeling, often on the part of the best students, as President Canfield recently said, "That one must die, if one could not occasionally assist in putting a calf into the belfry." But thanks to the modern gymnasium and to the better organization of athletic sports, this inevitable redundancy of animal spirits and youthful energy and activity has now found a better way. Two or three gen-

erations ago these pent up energies burst forth in brawls and carousings without number. To any one who has any familiarity with the collegiate conditions of the past and the present, it is a commonplace item of knowledge that such explosions of pent up energies have very greatly diminished within recent times. That they have entirely disappeared cannot, of course, be claimed; but the great fact should not escape our acknowledgment, that the vast body of our students work industriously and energetically at their studies, and that, in the course of their career at the university, they improve in character as well as in ability and knowledge. While one student in a hundred may perhaps attract widespread attention by his boisterous irregularities, the ninety and nine who need no repentance, are rapidly, but so quietly as to attract no attention, laying in those stores of knowledge and character which are to give them power and usefulness in after life. It is the old story which Burke so well formulated when he said that a single grasshopper under a fern could make more noise than a thousand kine industriously chewing their cuds under the oaks on the hill sides.

But however much the conditions of student life in our large universities have been improved, it cannot be claimed that this improvement has been the result of efforts on the part of the Christian churches, or of Christian wealth. While the churches have been gathering their skirts about them and passing by with averted faces, the sons of Belial have been improving their own peculiar opportunities and flaunting their peculiar temptations. What the universities all need is the general establishment of counter attractions and rival recreations. Young men, and young women as well, are gregarious. They crave companionship in their recreations, and they will have it. They ought to have it. Some of them attempt to satisfy these demands in the gymnasium; others, in the fraternity houses. But for the great mass of students living in isolated boarding houses, what is there? There ought to be places of resort and recreation where students of ele-

vated tastes and aspirations can come together and in a rational way satisfy all these rational demands without danger of contamination. This brings us to the question as to how these ends can best be attained.

1. By the erection of a Christian Association building which shall be the home and rallying point of Christian effort and Christian recreation. A beginning at Madison was made in this direction a few years ago. A valuable lot near the university has been secured and paid for. Not much more has been done. *Experience has shown that it is practically impossible for the Christian forces within the university to do more than defray the current expenses of the Association. The building for the Association in the University of Wisconsin, as elsewhere, must come from the outside.*

Nor do I think that such a building is likely to be secured by any system of small contributions. The churches as a rule have all they can do to defray their current expenses and furnish the needed support of the societies dependent upon them. It seems to me, therefore, doubtful whether it is wise to call upon the churches for any general contributions. But the project should have the earnest and active sympathy of Christian public opinion. More than that, it should enlist the practical benevolence of such men and women of abundant means as are desirous of giving support and encouragement to Christianity, in the largest and strongest of our educational institutions. It is to such men and women that the appeal must be made.

2. The establishment of Denominational Guild Halls. This class of buildings has been more generally and more successfully adopted in Canada than in the United States. In connection with the universities at Toronto and Montreal large buildings have been provided by several of the denominations, and these have been so endowed as to insure permanent success. In our own country, efforts in this direction have not, as yet, met with the response which, it seems to me, the project deserves. What could be more appropriate

than that the great religious denominations of the State should establish at Madison schools for instruction in the theology of their respective denominations? Much of the instruction given in every theological seminary is non-theological in form and spirit, and is precisely of the same nature as much that is now given in the university. We already have prosperous courses in Hebrew and New Testament Greek. Students could receive all such instruction in the university itself, leaving for the affiliated schools the subjects of a denominational character. For such an arrangement the advantages offered by the libraries and museums of the university, as well as by the non-sectarian courses of study, must be apparent to all.

But even if so much should not be attempted, the advantage of having properly supported Guild Halls, or Guild Houses would be unquestionable. Students under proper guidance could then organize themselves in such a way as to secure desired results.

How far and how rapidly the Guild Hall system is likely to be adopted at the State universities the future only can determine. If it shall not meet with general favor, reliance must be placed upon the Christian associations.

*It is impossible to believe that the Christianity of the State will very long leave the Christian young men and women of the university to no other encouragement than that offered by the local churches.*

The churches at Madison do their work admirably; but the most and the best they can do is small indeed compared with what would be practicable under other conditions. The regents of the university under the constitution and the ruling of the supreme court, can do nothing; the professors and students can scarcely do more than they are doing at the present time. The appeal must be made to those outside the university to whom the highest interests of Christianity in the State are a matter of vital concern. The importance of the subject is immeasurable. The power of the alumni of the university in all public affairs is already very great. It must

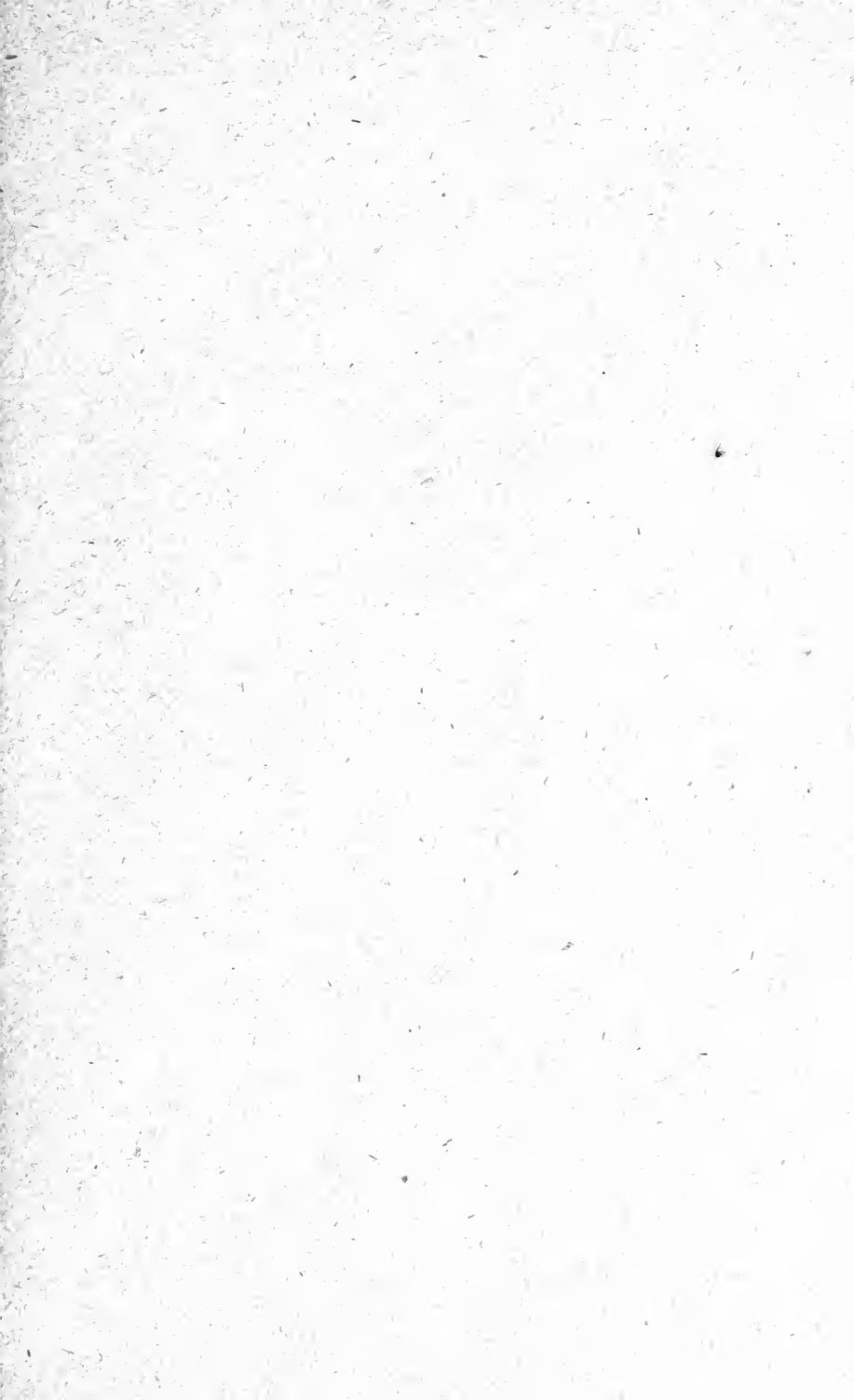


increase as the years go on. Whether that power shall be inspired by high ideals of thought and character depends very largely upon the ideals that are implanted and encouraged at the university. Whatever can be done to improve these ideals will be a help, not simply to individual souls, but, through individuals, to the State and to humanity.

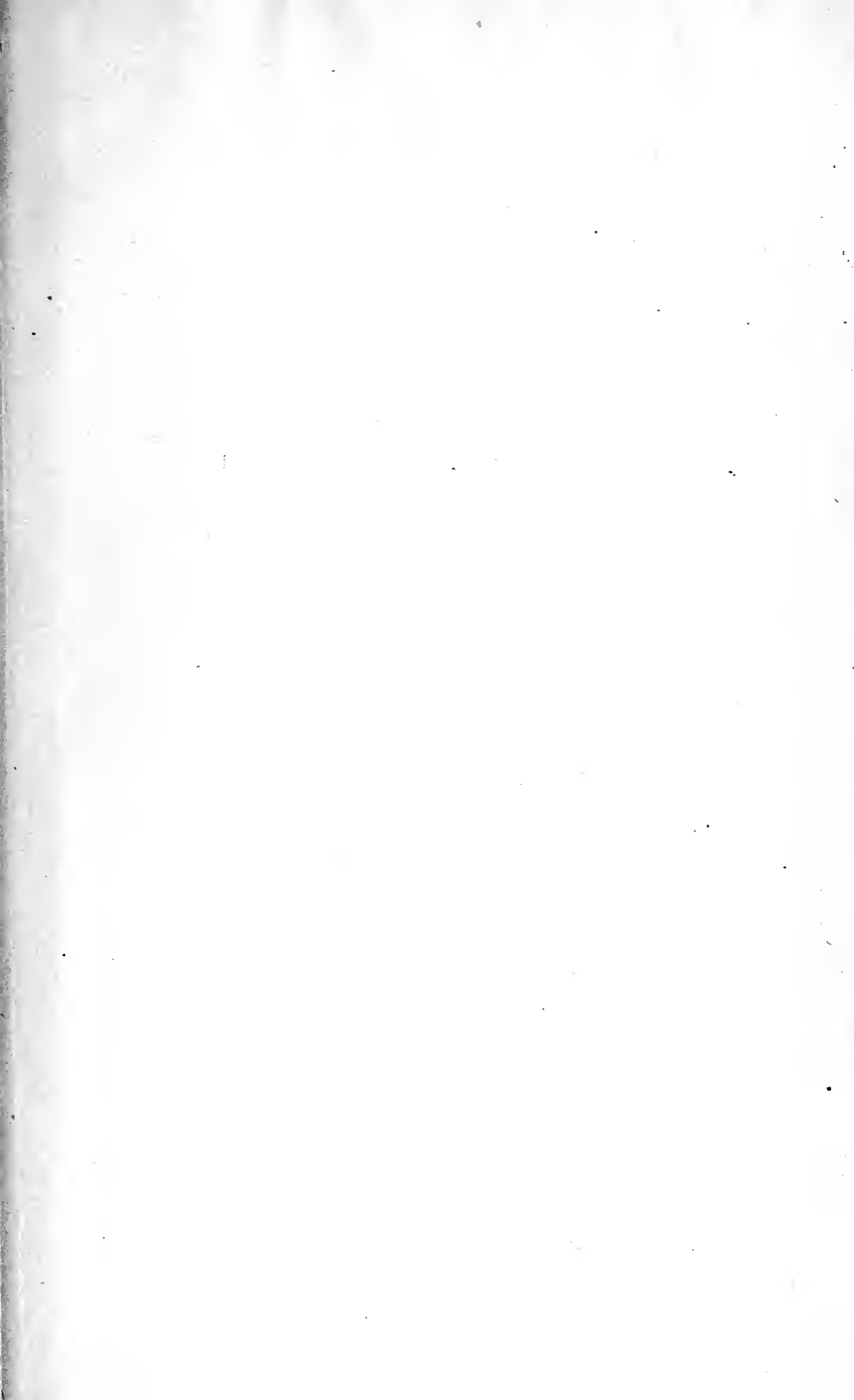












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