THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES AND OF THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGES

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649302581

The Religious Census of the State Universities and of the Presbyterian Colleges by Francis W. Kelsey

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

FRANCIS W. KELSEY

THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES AND OF THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGES

Trieste

THE

RELIGIOUS CENSUS

OF THE

State Universities

AND OF THE

Presbyterian Colleges

IN THE COLLEGIATE YEAR 1896–97

EDITED BY

FRANCIS W. KELSEY

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

1897

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

The taking of a religious census of a large number of students is a difficult matter. In collecting and tabulating the statistics presented in the following pages many college and university officers and students have given freely of their time and labor. Grateful acknowledgment is here made to all who have thus contributed to the success of the undertaking. May these statistics promote a better understanding of the important educational problems upon which they have so direct a bearing.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

The
Religious Census of the State Universities
and of
The Presbyterian Colleges.

In a letter to Dr. Cooper, dated 2 November, 1822, Thomas Jefferson said, with reference to the University of Virginia: "In our University you know there is no professorship of divinity. A handle has been made of this to disseminate an idea that this is an institution, not merely of no religion, but against all religion. Occasion was taken at the last meeting of the visitors to bring forward an idea that might silence this calumny, which weighed on the minds of some honest friends to the institution." In the seventy-five years that have elapsed since these words were written, the basis of criticism has shifted somewhat; but the question is still debated whether state universities are not inimical to religion. With few exceptions the arguments that have been advanced on either side have been of a general character; but in the case of this, as of other important questions, the only hope of arriving at a solution which will be satisfactory to all interested, must lie in an appeal to facts. Some statistics bearing upon the attitude of professors in the state universities toward religion were presented by President Angell, of the University of Michigan, in the Andover Review for April, 1890. The character and convictions of the student body, however, play a very important part in giving tone to the religious life of any college; and those who were studying the problem have found themselves handicapped owing to the lack of data in regard to the religious affiliations of students. With the purpose of remedying this deficiency, at the beginning of the collegiate year 1896-97, President Angell invited the other presidents of the state

universities to join with him in taking a religious census of the students. In order to secure also data for a comparative study, it was decided to obtain, if possible, a similar census of the students of all the colleges of one of the stronger religious denominations, the Presbyterian church being finally selected. Through the cordial co-operation of university and college presidents, and of the Presbyterian Board of Aid for Colleges and Academies, statistics were collected from sixteen of the state universities, and thirty-six of the thirty-seven Presbyterian colleges, in which, taken together, more than 18,000 students were enrolled last year.

Before the statistics that had been collected were all received, President Angell had accepted the appointment of Minister to Turkey. Finding himself unable to give the matter further attention, he placed the data in my hands for publication. In the Atlantic Monthly for December, 1897, I have offered some conclusions suggested by an examination of the statistics; but it may not be out of place here to direct attention to a few of the more significant facts established by the figures. There are a few inconsistencies in the tables, which it was not possible to remove; they have, however, no appreciable effect upon the final results.

The statistics show, first, that a majority of all the students in the state universities are members of churches, about one-half being members of the so-called evangelical churches; of those who are not members a considerable portion attend a particular church, and may be classed as adherents. In five state universities selected as representative in regard to size and geographical distribution (see Table XLIII), the total enrollment, at the time the census was taken, was 5,173. Only 211 students were not reached by the census; the ecclesiastical status of 4,962 was ascertained. In the five universities 2,851 students placed themselves on record as church members, 1,556 as church adherents, and 555 as not members or adherents. Reducing these figures to percentages, we find that 57.55 per cent of the students reached by the census (55.11 per cent of the total enrollment) were members of churches, and 88.81 per cent were either members or adherents; less than 12 per