

The Creation of a Public Conscience.

Every man is obliged to follow his own conscience. If his conscience is in doubt or error he must rectify it in so far as he can, but in last analysis his conscience is his guide. He is responsible to himself, to society and to God for acting according to his conscience as enlightened by his reason, by society and by God. This is the private conscience.

II.

Society must have a conscience just as much as the individual. Nations, states, political parties, fraternal organizations, clubs, families must have public consciences by which their relations with God and men are directed. The faculty must have a conscience, so must the Senior class and the Junior class and the Freshman and Sophomore classes.

III.

The public conscience is developed out of the conscience of individuals. The various appeals and sanctions that guard individual conduct exist for public conduct. The love of God, the sense of national, family or class honor, the regard for the opinion of others, appeal to public conscience; the fear of disgrace and punishment also operates, but in different degrees. There is no eternal hell for social organizations as such, so there must be a hell on earth for societies that commit mortal sins against law and order.

IV.

Public calamities and public disgrace are powerful deterrents from evil. But they can't hold a candle to oblivion. Oblivion, annihilation, non-existence, after proud existence -- we hate to think of it, and we refuse to contemplate it for ourselves. And yet Rome and Greece went into oblivion. Dynasties have fallen from the highest glory, family names have been wiped out.

V.

President Hibben, of Princeton, has put the skids under the Junior Prom. He says, "there will be no prom." Several new elections have been held by the Junior class. But President Hibben still says, "there will be no Prom." He is developing a public conscience in the Junior class.

VI.

The faculty of the University of Notre Dame has a liquor law. For violations of this law six students have been expelled, two dismissed and six suspended during the current scholastic year. The University would like to see a public conscience on the liquor question, especially since the question is so intimately bound up with the moral law.

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