

THE WORKS OF FRANCIS J. GRIMKÉ

Edited by
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Volume IV

Letters

The Associated Publishers, Inc.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Printed in the United States of America

Ethelbert D. Warfield to Francis J. Grimké

Chambersburg, Pa., December 11, 1922.

My dear Mr. Grimké:

I have just received your circular. It is amazing to me that a Christian minister and a member of the same church should attack a Christian college under the care of his church for any reason whatsoever without making any inquiry of those authorities who are authorized to speak on the subject under consideration with reference to the grounds of the charge made.

So far as I am aware Wilson College has never discriminated against any person on the ground of race or color. My own record with reference to race prejudice, that of my brother at Princeton, that of my grandfather, Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, and his brothers, both distinguished southern educators, and of my great grandfather, who with Thomas Jefferson laid the foundation for emancipation, not only in Virginia and Kentucky but in America, is absolutely clean.

Will you be so kind as to send me immediately an exact statement of any case of discrimination on account of race or color ever made by Wilson College.

Unless I am mistaken you were in Princeton Seminary with my brother, Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, and I think should know at least how vigorous his protest against race discrimination always was. You may well be ignorant of the less part which I have been privileged to play.

Please send me a positive, clear and detailed statement of the ground on which you have made a charge so injurious, and I believe so unjust.

Very truly yours,
Ethelbert D. Warfield.

Ethelbert D. Warfield to Francis J. Grimké

Chambersburg, Pa., December 28, 1922.

My dear Dr. Grimké:

I thank you for your letter. You have acted like a Christian gentleman, as I believed you would. My brother used to talk about you when I was only a little lad. He had a high regard for you.

May I plead with you not to fail to recognize that there are

more ways than one of doing good. I am surprised to find that you feel bitterly toward your Alma Mater, Lincoln University.¹ There is room in a country like this for different types of institutions and, while I know absolutely nothing about the situation which you complain of, my experience is that we need, broadly speaking, two types of institutions, those who do for others and those that help others to do for themselves.

My experience of more than thirty years as a college president is that the best trustees are those who approach the educational institution from the point of view of the benefactor and the worst trustees are the graduates of the institution. If I were founding a college today I would provide that no graduate of the institution should ever sit in the board that had the final decision on educational policy. As coordinate board, such as they have at Harvard, elected by the alumni, seems to me to be better than any scheme of alumni representation.

But I am expressing this view more because I feel that alumni representation is now overdone, and state and national organizations are influenced by those who live on a low level of intellectual and spiritual endeavor.

The eternal right to be different is a part of the ideal of liberty. More than this too, the absolute necessity of diversity in order to promote emulation, and through emulation progress, needs to be insisted on.

I have often said that old Dr. Saunders of Biddle University was one of the finest colleagues I ever served with in general assembly committees on theological seminaries. With all that Booker T. Washington did for the colored people, I always thought him a man of very low ideals, though most necessary in a world constituted as this is. What he saw he saw clearly. What he believed he turned into action with courage and fine judgment.

It is a big world and I would like to see the largest liberty for all. My motto is "Never hinder, always help."

With cordial regard,

Very truly yours,

E. D. Warfield.

¹ Lincoln University was Dr. Grimké's alma mater, but he bitterly assailed it because it refused to have any Negro trustees or professors.