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1968

# Mount Vernon Student Association

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an occasional collection of observations on topics  
of concern within the University community. #5  
Distributed by the Boston University Protestant  
Chaplains Office.

comment

A LETTER TO THE CHURCHES ABOUT THE CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
From the General Board of the National Council of Churches  
Meeting in Houston, Texas, September 12, 1968

The student protests on several university campuses last Spring are dramatic evidence of a deep-rooted crisis in higher education. The causes are complex. They have been preceded by several years of ferment, and colleges and universities across the country will be wrestling with the underlying problems for years to come. The "crisis" involves profound questions of moral and educational value in our society as well as in the universities.\* They have great social and political significance and are thus important to the churches and the general public.

It is not a new thing for the Christian Church to be concerned about higher education. Throughout its history, the Church has had a sense of responsibility for and a relationship to universities. This relation to higher learning has been expressed in different ways as the Church has become aware of changing needs and different understandings of its role in culture. The Church has founded and supported colleges and universities and has developed ministries among students and faculty in all types of institutions.

Today there is a new situation in higher education with dangers and opportunities that call for new forms of concern for students, faculty and administrators, and for the colleges and universities in which they live and work. It is important that churches study this changing situation and seek an understanding of what is happening so that a constructive response may be made.

## I

### THE CHANGING SITUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has long had an important place in American life, but in recent years it has moved to the center as a major agent of influence and change. The sheer magnitude of its establishment makes it a dominant force. Enrollments in our colleges and universities have increased from three and one-half million in 1960 to seven million in 1968 and are expected to rise to nine million in the next few years.

\* In this letter, the word university usually refers to all types of colleges and universities.