

Chapel, March 18, 1927

President Wright

I want to talk to you this morning on some of the things that come into our lives on account of our Negro problem. I believe this thought that I have this morning will be helpful to you, - helpful to all of us.

Since the Civil War the Negro has been a free man in our country, and to protect ourselves we have made a number of laws that were intended, in a large measure, originally to help solve the Negro problem. There are no laws on the statute books, so far as I know, of that particular kind, but there has grown up a feeling in our midst and we have put it into effect pretty rigidly making it rather stringent on the Negro to obey the laws. In some respects we have been more stringent on the Negro than we have on the whites, and in other cases we have been more lenient, because we have said, "O, well, he just didn't know any better," but there has grown within us a spirit of making him stay in his place. Now what is the result of that? The result of that is showing itself now in this generation, and we are finding a constantly decreasing number of Negro criminals. That is very much to the credit of the Negro. As I told you sometime ago, when I read that extract from a letter of Governor McLean, the ratio at one time was three to one of the criminal class, -- three Negroes to every white person. But today the ratio is not three to one, there are more whites going to prison than there are colored. Now I believe that comes as one of the results of our Negro problem. We have said that the Negro must stay in his place, and the white men are going to see that he does. We almost have to do that to protect the white women, and we are going to protect the women, law or no law. The people of North Carolina are going to do that. But it has made the Negro realize that he must be a law abiding citizen. Ever increasing numbers of them are realizing that, but growing up with that same idea has grown up an idea among the white people that law was not intended for them, and that today runs all through the white population of North Carolina, that it was not intended for me. "O, yes, I believe in prohibition, but it was not intended

for me and my class. It was intended for these other folks." That attitude that we have taken, in reality, means that we are saying that we are above the law, and we are reaping the fruits of it today by an ever increasing number of white criminals, - young men who have come up with the idea that the law does not apply to them, and waking up some morning in the court house and finding that the law does apply to them, and that they are guilty and must serve the sentence. We, as Anglo Saxons, among the greatest people on the face of the earth, must realize that human happiness is dependent upon the willingness of the citizenship in a republic to obey the laws. The laws do apply to me, to you, and to every one. That spirit that we have is working against us today and working against us very seriously. You think of it, -- three to one a few years ago, and today more whites are being sent to the penitentiary than Negroes. That statement must be true because it was made by our Governor and he is in a position to know the facts. I don't believe he would say it unless it were true. In just a short time the situation is being reversed, and that is coming in my judgment, because, first, our attitude to make the Negro conform to the law, and, second, our attitude that the law doesn't apply to me. That combination does not make for good citizenship. The person who wants to be a good citizen must, first of all, make up his mind to conform to the law whether it be a federal law, a state law, a municipal law, school law, or whatever it is. That is the best way in the world to get freedom because the greatest amount of freedom comes to an individual when he conforms to the law. You as a student have the greatest amount of freedom when you conform to the regulations of the college, and as a citizens of North Carolina you will have the greatest amount of freedom when you conform to the laws of North Carolina. The same thing is true with reference to the federal government. Conform and conform cheerfully.