

September 29, 1928

As is my custom on the first Saturday of each fall term I make a talk to you young women on the subject of religion. I do this because I want you to get a clear conception of this college and its attitude towards matters spiritual.

To start with, ours is a state institution and in the state institutions we are not supposed to teach denominationalism,--I will put it that way. The constitution of the United States, the constitution of our state, the fundamental law of government under which we live is based in a large measure on the separation of church and state. One would somewhat question that when he reads the papers today and yet there is no question about it at all. The people who came to this country came here in part because they wanted religious freedom. They wanted the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. We have sometimes been downed by this statement. They came to this country expecting to build a new home in which they could worship God as they pleased and make everyone in that particular place worship as they did. And then we find religious persecution going on in this country. They drove people away from certain states because of their religious convictions. The state of Rhode Island was built by people driven out by other states. They say it is true now that a good citizen of Rhode Island kisses his wife and says, "Dear, I am going down street to get in an argument with someone." Of course, I do not believe this about Rhode Island. The idea did get into our people, however, and is now a

fundamental part of us that a person may live in this country and worship Jehovah in any way he sees fit and still be a good citizen of this republic. This school, therefore, being a state school does not use its influence in any way, shape or form to get you to attend any particular church. You have your religious freedom if you are a student in this institution.

There is, however, another side to it that I feel should be called to our attention. The state--and I am using that in the broadest sense--the government of our country is exceeding anxious through the public school system and other educational institutions, through its laws and the operation of its government to develop every human being in this country into the very best possible citizen. While church and state are separated officially, as a matter of fact, the state includes all of the churches. Just the nature of the thing makes it so. The government of this state of North Carolina, the government of this nation, is made up of all the churches and of all the people who are not members of any church. Therefore, the state includes the churches and it has certain regulations and certain laws protecting the worship of any religious organization in the state or nation. As a rule church property is not taxed.

Now if the state includes all the churches and if the state wants to help make the best possible citizen of each child born in this country then it is a vital interest to the state that each child be given an opportunity to develop so as to make the finest possible type of citizen. That cannot be done unless the individual develops his spirit life.

Our government is interested in our physical welfare. We have

Boards of Health. Our government is interested in our financial welfare and we have a multitude of laws with reference to business relationships. Our government is interested in the intellectual development of its citizens so much so that North Carolina alone is spending millions and millions of dollars annually to give its children public school educations and give those who have finished high school college training. Our state is just as much interested though it does not take its money and contribute to that cause to see to it that the spiritual development of the child is allowed to go on in a way that will make him the very best person spiritually. And for that reason we have a multitude of laws that protect the places of worship in our nation.

You cannot put up certain kinds of shops within a certain distance of places of worship. You would be severely punished if you interfered with services of worship. Now if we get this idea clearly in mind we see that it is very important to the state that we develop the spiritual life.

The foundation of this republic is laid in this one great book called the Bible. This government is founded upon the laws of Jehovah as revealed in his written word and while the state does not in any way interfere with the various and sundry ways of worshipping Jehovah it does protect the citizens and encourages them to worship.

We do not require you to join a Sunday School but we urge you to connect yourself with one of the religious bodies of this community. For that reason the college allows the students to go regularly to the morning worship and not only allows but really and truly urges you to go. If you happen to belong to one of the churches that carries on a Sunday

School we urge you to join it and to be a regular attendant. The churches in Greenville are always glad to see you and they are putting themselves out to provide the necessary space and the necessary teaching force to see that you have the opportunity to study the word of God in the Sunday Schools and in the churches of the community and I want to urge you with all the earnestness I can to join one of these Sunday Schools and to go to Sunday School every Sunday and to go on time. To study the lesson before you go, to study the word of God and become acquainted with his law that you may shape your life in keeping thereto.

Now I want to tell you what church to go to. You belong to some church at home, (I do not know what church it is and it makes no difference to me), but you belong to some church yourself or your family belongs to some church. Find that church in Greenville and go to that church. If you are a Baptist at home, be a Baptist here; if you are a Presbyterian at home, be a Presbyterian here; if you are an Episcopalian there, be one here; Christian there, be one here, and so on clear through the whole list of churches.

There is a tendency throughout this nation today, a regular organization throughout this land, working in some places in the high schools and in some places in the colleges trying to bring people out of church and trying to make them infidels. It has not reached us yet, we hear about it and read about it. They are teaching that the religion the people of North Carolina believe in is a myth. They are trying to make one believe that there is no God. And there are a few little sap heads who think it is something wonderful to take that position. No human being could actually go out at night and cast his eyes to the heavens as old David evidently did when he wrote that

beautiful Psalm looking up to the firmament above he said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." No human being can look up at the stars and not realize that there is a great guiding power somewhere. There is not a sane human being on the face of the earth who does not have some kind of a religion. To say that I have no religion is to declare that I have no sense; I am a fool. Religion is a part of every individual. We realize that there is a spirit somewhere and that God is a spirit and that they who do worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

There is nothing hidden from Jehovah. Even the hidden thoughts of my soul are not hidden from Him. Those thoughts which you have which you think no one knows are all known to Him. A lot of spiritual things I do not understand and the same is true of a lot of human things. I do not see how it is that I can take a box and turn a few knobs and hear a noted singer up in Pittsburg. As she sings I sit and listen. I do not know how it is that a woman some years ago sang in New York and was heard all over the world, in London, in Paris, in Berlin. I do not know how it is that the voice of a human being can be heard all around the earth but we know it is actually done almost every day and therefore I do not know why it is that the voice of Jehovah can be picked up by every human being all over the earth nor do I understand that my thoughts and words are broadcasted and picked up by Jehovah. After all it is the spirit life that counts.

Old John had that idea in his gospel, it is supposed to be quoted from Jesus when he said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth the flesh." what he meant was this physical body of mine, that body of yours is here for a little while then it is gone. It is the spirit within the man that quickeneth. It is the spirit life after all that gives us the stimulus that causes us to act and if the spirit within us is not Godlike then the acts we do are not going to be Godlike. The right kind of spirit life in every citizen in America would produce a good citizen. So it does come back to the state and so the state is concerned to give you and I the right kind of development in our spirit life.

I want to ask you this morning, you who are away from home for the first time, to make up your mind this morning that you are going to live the kind of a life that will help to make of you the best possible type of young woman and you cannot do that without working at it.

Do you know, it will help you over tomorrow more than anything you can do, you who are here for the first time and you are showing a wonderful spirit and I am proud of you, to go to church. You are going to get homesick tomorrow and I hope you do. I really and truly hope you will get homesick, I hope you love that home so much you will miss it tomorrow because if you love your home it is a good sign. That is one of the fundamentals in spirit life, "God is love" and love for one's home is one of the best rules on which this government is founded. Go to church, come to the Young Women's Christian Association tomorrow night, write a love letter to Mother tomorrow and if you cannot hold it in any longer get up to the lavatory and cry over it. Do

not cry on the new floors in the two dormitories that have just been remodeled. Cry over the lavatory; that will do you good but have back bone enough and think enough of the home folks to stick to it and religion will help you more in that than all the books and all the teaching we can do for you. It is when those things come when we are away from home alone and it seems that everything we have undertaken to do has gone wrong and then it is that we realize that God is in His heaven and His laws are eternal and that He loves human beings and is anxious to give comfort to those who need it. That is when the spirit comes that gives one back bone to stick to it. It is the spirit that counts. Develop it, please, when you are young and growing in college.

May this be the best year spiritually you have ever spent.

Robert H. Wright, President

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