

THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITY

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND HONESTY

[We are reprinting in full in this issue of the News Letter the address delivered by President Chase of the University of North Carolina to the student body at the formal opening of the 182nd year of the institution.]

A year ago, at our opening meeting, I spoke of the intellectual responsibility which any University worthy the name must assume. This is the responsibility to put its students into touch with the best of modern knowledge and culture, to set high intellectual standards, to maintain the sort of environment that makes for mental growth and honest work. Such a responsibility can be discharged only in an atmosphere of freedom to teach, to learn, and to investigate. Universities can function only when there is freedom of thought and discussion. What makes such freedom essential is not, of course, any particular satisfaction which may be derived from its exercise. The man who sees in an environment of intellectual freedom only an opportunity to be sensational, to bid for notoriety, to feed his own grudges and display his own mental kinks and quirks—such a man is blind to the real meaning of freedom, and to the reasons which make its preservation so essential. These reasons were admirably stated the other day by Mr. Charles E. Hughes, in his presidential address to the American Bar Association. He said:

"If we sum up the comforts, the conveniences, the privileges and the opportunities of our life in the twentieth century, if we look back upon the privations, the menaces, the exposures from which the progress of civilization has gradually relieved not only the most fortunate, but the vast masses of the people in enlightened countries, we must realize that these benefits are due, not so much to governments, or politics, or the strivings and issues of campaigns, but to the ceaseless and unobstructive endeavors, and the unquenchable zeal, of the pioneers and their devoted followers in the quest of knowledge, who in the study of the earth and the universe have enlarged the inheritance of the race and vindicated the capacity and worth of the human spirit. Believing, as I do, that the freedom of learning is the vital breath of democracy and progress, I trust that a recognition of its supreme importance will direct the hand of power . . . and that our teachers and professors may be encouraged, not to regard themselves as the plant tools of power, but to dedicate their lives to the highest of all purposes, to know and to teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This is the path of salvation of men and democracy."

Freedom to Teach

Such a statement as this goes to the root of the whole matter. If social progress is to be secure, if civilization is to advance, men must be free to think and to teach. History bears emphatic witness to the truth that when men have attempted to curtail thought, to hold it in bondage to authority, they have achieved only sterility and stagnation. Surely, if men are to be educated men, they must learn to look the world squarely in the face, to respect facts, to weigh evidence, to follow truth wherever it may lead. Only out of such an environment can there come great leaders to set forward the clock of history.

I hold, therefore, that it is a responsibility which any University owes its students and its public, that it be intellectually free and intellectually honest. An atmosphere of evasiveness, of suppression, of mental bondage, is altogether out of place in university life. But—and this is the point I want particularly to stress this morning—I do not for a moment believe that this or any university has fulfilled its whole responsibility when it has set up an environment in which men are free to think. This is a point which, I fear, is sometimes overlooked in the heat of discussion. What a university tries to say to its students, in many ways and in varied language is, I think, something like this: "Look at your world. Look at human life. Here is what science says about it, and literature, and history and philosophy. You are free to explore what men have said and written and lived and thought and proved and guessed. Try to understand

something about these things. We will help you to the best of our ability to try to understand them. You cannot be an educated man unless you do sincerely and honestly try to see what is true, and we are not doing our duty as teachers if we hold back your minds from ranging freely. But it is not enough just to understand this and that fact, to possess this bit of knowledge and that fragment of truth. Out of it all there must come a constructive philosophy of life, an outlook, an attitude, a spiritual, a religious, insight that makes of you a whole man ready to throw yourself with broad sympathy and a deep passion for righteousness into the world's work."

Knowledge and Faith

That is the sort of thing that every university worthy the name is constantly saying to its students, sometimes explicitly in words, more often perhaps by indirection and through the whole tenor of its life. Men must be free in order that they may come to understand, but if indeed the teaching and the learning of truth is "the salvation of men and democracy," it is because and when there is added to the clarity of the understanding the urge of the spirit to high and worthy endeavor.

There has never been a greater need than today for a firm alliance between the things of knowledge and the things of the spirit. There is much about this present time that makes men hesitant and bewildered, that breeds restlessness and apprehension and a sense of frustration. Problems crowd in upon us, and our attempts to deal with them seem only too often to raise new difficulties greater than those with which we began. The machinery of our tremendously complex and intricate civilization jars and creaks and every now and then important parts of it threaten to break down altogether. "Culture is dead" said a distinguished European critic the other day. Crime, says the statistician, is increasing. The adequacy of present-day standards of moral conduct is persistently questioned. Problems of capital and labor, race relationships, and a host of others of the gravest social and economic importance, puzzle and vex us. Every type of institution, government, the church, the school, the home, is subjected to a running fire of criticism. The criticisms of higher education in America that have appeared in the last ten years—works, essays, reports, monographs—would in themselves fill a small library. There has come into being what Glenn Frank has called a "literature of despair"; a multitudinous and varied output of warnings and gloomy prophecies that the downfall of modern civilization itself is possible or even highly probable. I need not go on citing illustrations. Anyone who pays any sort of attention to the currents of modern thought is aware how deep is the note of pessimism and uncertainty, how widespread is the recognition that the modern world faces problems that challenge the height of its intelligence and the depths of its spiritual power.

Effects of Invention

I think we must admit that we have not altogether learned how to live in the new world to which invention and discovery have so suddenly introduced us. The conditions under which men lived when this university was founded and the problems they faced resembled in many respects more nearly those of men in the days when Abraham went out from Ur of the Chaldees than they resemble our own. Life for the average man has changed more in the last century and a half than in all the previous centuries since the dawn of civilization. The whole industrial organization of society, everything that we know as modern transportation, all swift means of communication, the entire development of printing on a scale that has brought books, magazines, newspapers, within the reach of the average man and so profoundly modified his outlook on life; these and a thousand others, great and small, have cast the lives of men into new patterns of a variety and strangeness that the world has never known. These enormous releases of physical power have brought in their train such transformations in every phase and element of our common life that we have not yet mastered its prob-

NORTH CAROLINA CLUB

The North Carolina Club at the University held its first meeting of the new college year on September 21. President Chase addressing the Club praised its work highly and commended its ideals and purpose. Professors Connor, Koch, and Bradshaw also made short talks.

The Club is this year studying Town and Country Interdependences. The program will be carried over fourteen meeting nights and is planned as follows:

- Oct. 5.—Can the Conflicting Interests of the Town and Country Be Reconciled?
- Oct. 19.—Complementary Contributions of the Town and Country.
- Nov. 2.—The Federation of Agencies and Institutions for Local Community Welfare.
- Nov. 16.—The Rural Mind: Is It a Myth?
- Nov. 30.—Race Cooperation for Town and Country Advancement.
- Dec. 14.—Town and Countryside under One Local Government.
- Jan. 11.—Mercantile Service Relations between Town and Country.
- Jan. 25.—The Local Market Problem.
- Feb. 8.—The Problem of Community Tenancy.
- Feb. 22.—Should the Consolidated School Be Located in the Country or in the Town or Village?
- Mar. 8.—A Community Program for the School.
- Mar. 22.—A Community Program for the Church.
- Apr. 19.—A Community Program for the Bank.
- May 3.—Rural Use of Town Service.

Club Yearbooks

The 1924-1925 Yearbook of the North Carolina Club is off the press and ready for free distribution to North Carolinians who write for it. It is the third yearbook bearing the query What Next in North Carolina? Copies of these back yearbooks for 1922-23 and 1923-24 are also available free of charge. In addition there are a few copies remaining of the State Reconstruction Studies, the North Carolina Club Yearbook for 1919-1920. Requests should be addressed to Extension Division, University of North Carolina.

lem of living with, of dominating, not being dominated by, the creations of our own knowledge and skill. We are like men from a quiet village who have come up to a great metropolis, and are too stunned to adjust ourselves altogether to the immensity and intricacy of its life.

And, because we have come to see so clearly the disorganization of much that is traditional in the old human ways of life, and the difficulty of finding new adjustments that are adequate and comprehensive, we are restless and seem ourselves to fumble blindly about for a better ordered way of life.

In such an atmosphere fear and suspicion tend naturally to rear their heads. One of the marked characteristics of life today, indeed, is the exaggerated sense of division and hostility with which men of different viewpoints regard each other. There is a tension about discussion, a lack of attempt at mutual understanding and sympathy, that arrays men sharply in opposing camps. Conservatives drift toward reaction, liberals toward radicalism. A new and painful chapter is added to those that chronicle the conflict between science and theology. Social and economic problems are debated in an atmosphere clouded by epithet and heated by distrust.

Fear of Despair

Now if from such a situation there is to be any issue save the issue of failure and despair, it will be as understanding and spirit, knowledge and faith, science and religion, eager pursuit of the truth and the passion for putting truth to work in noble ways—as those things

join hand in hand for the task. It is clearly hopeless to attempt to master modern life without understanding it; as hopeless as to try to drive a high-powered automobile without knowledge of how it starts and stops and guides. We need every bit of truth that can be coaxed from its hiding places. We need unhampered freedom to find that truth and to proclaim it. Never before, perhaps, did attempts to interfere with the freedom to think promise more disastrous possibilities.

But it matters not how well men may come to understand the conditions and problems of our life if they do not add to their understanding a deep and sure sense of spiritual values. The great issues in our common life, as in our individual lives, are in the last instance spiritual issues. Material prosperity and convenience alone are not the salvation of men and nations. This is achieved only as men and nations shall go about their business with open minds, with broader sympathies, with a deeper faith, with a greater measure of the love of God in their hearts.

What I have been trying to say is that it is the chief business of our day to try to come to terms with the civilization that human ingenuity has created. But what has our university community to do with all this? It is my earnest conviction that it has very much to do with it. For as soon as we ask ourselves what must be done if men are to attain to a better ordered way of life, we come on three great tasks that universities, by their very nature, are challenged to perform. Let me mention these very briefly.

The Three Tasks

First, there is the task of getting and of communicating knowledge, of teaching what is known and of pioneering into the unknown. I have already had something to say of the necessity of this task, and of the freedom to think which is essential to its performance.

Second, there is the task of putting knowledge together in orderly and useful ways, so that men may achieve in some measure a broad and unified outlook on life. I mean that modern knowledge is so partitioned off into specialties and compartments that it is ever becoming more difficult to view it in broad outline and determine what it really has to teach us about life and conduct. We need to pay more attention to the organization of what we know. We need to think more; teachers and students alike, of education in the large. What does it mean to be an educated man in the twentieth century? I cannot believe that it means to be a man who knows a great deal about two or three things and nothing about the bearings of these on the remainder of our store of knowledge or on life. It is difficult to see how we may come to an ordered way of life without a background of ordered knowledge. We must weave knowledge into patterns to make our tapestry of civilization. No matter how brightly colored may be the individual threads, it is their use in terms of each other, the studied relation of one to another and of all to the whole, that alone makes possible the emergence of the final pattern. We need, not only to see life steadily, but to see it whole.

Unify and Simplify

I have come to the belief that we must simplify and unify our educational plan. There is today no small amount of knowledge in the possession of specialists that has definite bearings on the problems that civilization is facing, but which either does not become part of the mental possessions of most college and university graduates at all, or comes to them in such a way that they see it in isolation, not as something bearing on their own philosophy of life. We need to remember that every age must answer anew for itself the question "What knowledge is of most worth?" I believe that if our educational institutions would set themselves seriously and systematically to work out a new unification of knowledge, as men have done from time to time in the history of thought, a flood of light would be thrown on many dark places in modern civilization. Such a task may be the work of a generation, but both its difficulty and its importance would constitute a challenge to us all.

Spiritual Values

The third great task is that of maintaining in the hearts of men the enduring spiritual values upon which alone any stable civilization can be built. A world that increases knowledge, that organizes knowledge, and yet lacks the

spirit of Christ, is a world of selfish advantage, of hostile camps and of gross materialism. The cynic never made a civilization. The man devoid of faith never made one. The man devoid of religion, without the spirit of Christianity in his heart, is no safe guide for us. The Pole Star by which our civilization must steer is not of the earth, it is in the heavens.

I cannot hold to the doctrine that there is an essential contradiction between modern knowledge and faith. I can conceive of nothing more tragic for the future of men and nations than that the science that we need and the religion that we must hold by should come in any permanent way to conceive of themselves as opposed, the one to the other. Christianity has always shown itself vital enough to assimilate whatever of new knowledge the scientist has found. It will always show itself vital enough to do this. There can be no real contradiction between the revelation that God makes of Himself through Christ and that which He makes through nature.

Knowledge Deepens Faith

Rather should knowledge deepen and enlarge our faith, and a spirit of greater reverence grow within us as we come to know more and more of God's ways with the world. In a great statement that has a particular significance for us today, Paul has summed up the whole matter. "I will pray," he says, "with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." To Paul, every bit of the science and philosophy of his time wove itself into the pattern of Christianity. The understanding and the spirit were joined in a common plan that unified thought and faith into one great dynamic impulse that the world might be saved.

Once again today we need to achieve such a unification of faith and knowledge; a unification that takes account of all our knowledge and renews and deepens our faith. Unless this can be done, we may well despair of the future. Here is an occasion for open-mindedness, for wide and tolerant sympathy, in a great cause. It can never succeed in any other atmosphere than that of informed and sympathetic and patient discussion, that keeps always in mind the great end to be achieved.

A university must always be conscious of the spiritual values of life. To forget those values, to turn out into the world men of understanding but without faith, would be to help on the wreckage of modern civilization, not its advancement. I have known men who went out of colleges and universities without faith. But I know enough of the temper and tenor of higher education in America to know that these men lost themselves, not because of their environment, but in spite of it. There is no institution that I know that is not genuinely and deeply interested that its students should maintain and strengthen their faith, and is not steadily at work toward that end. The mission of a university is not to destroy, but to construct. It calls on its students to open their minds, to enlarge their understandings, and likewise to vivify their knowledge with faith. It could not, from its very nature, from its fundamental beliefs about the character of its task and about the needs of modern life—it could not conceivably take any other position.

These three things, then, universities find themselves called upon to do as their part in this great enterprise in the aiding of the salvation of men and democracy. They must advance and dispense knowledge; they must strive to help forward a better organization and unification of what is known, that men may orient themselves better to life and to the world; and they must do their utmost to further, in men and in society, that cooperation between knowledge and faith, that abiding sense of spiritual values joined with ampler understanding which is alone the guarantee of life's advance and the triumph of humanity. The performance of these three tasks is something that is bred in the ideals of this University community as year by year it goes about its great mission for those it serves.

And now, as we go our various ways about the work and play of our university year, let us bear ourselves in the spirit of men who are trying to make ourselves whole men, men of understanding and men of faith, men of knowledge animated by religion to do God's work in the world.