

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Faculty/Staff Personal Papers

WKU Archives Records

4-20-1965

UA37/44 The Ten Commandments & College

Gordon Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/fac_staff_papers



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Religious Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty/Staff Personal Papers by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

April 20, 1965

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND COLLEGE

Having been reared in a very strict way by parents who, though not openly very religious, were basically devout, it came as a great shock to me when I learned that students in college seemed to feel that the Ten Commandments just did not apply to them. A bad boy at Fidelity was just a bad boy, and no amount of making excuses made matters any better. When one of my former country-school teachers went away to medical school and got in bad, probably in a paternity case, his being from a good family did not make his bad conduct seem any better than such would have been among people of somewhat lower social standing. In fact, it seemed all the more heinous. The tragic side of this incident was that it prevented some parents from aiding their own sons and daughters in getting a better education than could be found at Fidelity.

When I came to Western, away back in January, 1908, though there was a bit more laxity than I had known as a boy, the general feeling was that a boy or girl who stepped down from decency was down, and that was that. The early students were by no means immaculate, but **indencencies** were regarded as just that. Some students made it a sort of habit to frequent questionable places, but I can recall no single one of these who ever finished anything academically. They generally represented the sort of boy who felt that he must dissipate if he went to town, and all boys, everywhere, certainly had plenty of grown men as patterns of this sort of conduct. In remote Fidelity a county court day rarely passed without some older man's decline from his normal conduct. Sometimes Father's services would be needed to sew up some wounds or to set some broken bones that resulted from leaving the Ten Commandments at home while the men went to town.

After my days here as a student and a teacher, I went to Indiana University and ran into the traditional college atmosphere, which excuses or seems to excuse all sorts of departures from ordinary standards of decency. I discovered, for the first time, that some teachers, too, felt that some pretty serious detours from the straight and narrow way were to be expected and to be forgiven: "Boys will be boys." That grated harshly on my nerves then and still does. I have nearly always felt that college-student immunity from ordinary laws is probably half the fault of their teachers and leaders. There were some outbreaks while I was a student that smack of any of our later hoodlum stunts, such as the raids on downtown eating places, drugstores, and such like after Indiana beat Purdue in the annual football classic and the stealing of a complete set of porch furniture from a wealthy citizen by fraternity freshmen, goaded by upperclassmen. I am glad to say that both of these outbreaks got severe and immediate punishment. But there was still a feeling that it just didn't count if a student broke up furniture or stole something or jumped his debts.

With more prosperous times and more money available for our own students to spend, we have felt some of this same irresponsibility and plain hoodlumism. It is fashionable, among many people, to condone these property-damaging stunts, of course, always, when they are done on the property of somebody else. Every day I see from four to ten cars drive onto Mrs. Lampkin's lot and park their cars, even though a non-parking sign plainly says that the police have ordered this prohibition. Students have tried on many occasions to take over my driveway, day or night, in spite of my having some cars towed away. When I put up "Private Property" signs in plain view, the parking continued. And now my signs have been stolen and are probably the prized possessions of someone whose parents laugh at their son's being a regular fellow in college. As a private citizen

and as a member of the faculty I want to register my disgust at the way our students seem to regard private property as their own. Trying to be kind to them seems to do no good; they are determined to park where they please, to walk by our windows as if our driveway were a public road, to resent any talking about their doing these things. Whether they have asked to do so or not, I do not know, but they park on a neighboring back yard and then take off for school, using my yard until lately, ~~when~~ I stepped up my speaking to them. What is a flower or shrub to a fellow who is a student? All our neighbors are having the same difficulty. It gets under a fellow's skin to come home from a mere drive out to our son's and find a car parked in our driveway as if the driver owned it and everything else. Several times I have had to find a place to park--our street has no on-street parking--and then make my way home. Usually the offending car had got out of the way by then, but it is no small job to get my own car back into the worst traffic jam in the city and then get it back into its own place in my driveway. I have dwelt on this deliberately, for this sort of irresponsible student conduct is damaging the image of Western locally among people who are basically our good friends. I realize that this is not on school property, but the offenders are our students. Last year, when boys strayed into a house near me at all hours of the day or night, using the back door, I broke my habit of decades by reporting it to the dean of men, for fourteen of our girls stayed there. Apparently something drastic was done, for not a single boy has drifted in by the back door this year when I was around. I was not snooping in any sense of the word, but only a blind man would have failed to see the troops of boys going in and out at their pleasure. Whether there are doubtful girls there is none of my business, but they are our students, and that fact cannot be forgotten.