



President Harold B. Lee at the dedication of the J. Willard Marriott Center, February 1973. Courtesy Mark A. Philbrick/BYU.

Installation of and Charge to the President

Harold B. Lee

May I begin by citing the Lord's own charge to this Church and the world: "And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me" (D&C 45:9). When the meaning of this revelation is understood, it should be a reminder that every institution which is a part of the kingdom of God must keep in mind the purpose of the restored gospel--to be that light to the world and a standard for this people and all men to seek.

Brigham Young University, led by its president, must never forget its role in bringing to reality the ancient prophecy--to build the mountain of the Lord's house in the tops of the mountains, so great and so glorious that all nations may come to this place and be constrained to say, "Show us your way that we may walk therein" (see Isa. 2:3).

Constantly remember that profound and oft-repeated admonition of the Apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:56).

It will be remembered that obedient to that instruction, the fourteen-year-old boy Joseph

Smith, in a quest for truth, was led to seek in fervent prayer to Almighty God the answer to a burning question which caused him great concern. The answer to that question, delivered in the Sacred Grove, commenced the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times. This instruction is applicable to all of us as we seek to find the answers to unsolved problems and seek for guidance beyond the wisdom of men. You, too, must many times go to your Sacred Grove in your quest of truth.

As you meet challenging problems, see, as it were, written on the darkened walls of your sequestered chamber, the words of heavenly wisdom, which will give you the assurance that you can place your trust in God and leave the rest with him.

When you stand at the crossroads of two alternative decisions, remember what the Lord said: Study the whole matter in your mind to a conclusion. Before action, ask the Lord if it be right. Attune yourself to the spiritual response--either to have your bosom burn within you to know that your conclusion is right or to have a stupor of thought which will make you forget it if it is wrong. Then, as the Lord has promised, "the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith" (D&C 42:14). "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Eth. 12:6).

Have before you always the ideals of scholarship in fields of secular knowledge. Never forget those lofty goals to which we have been pointed by our inspired leaders and by the Lord's own revelations. I refer to two very significant inspired declarations: "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6). "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge."¹

But in the interpretation of these quotations, do not make the mistake of assuming that this means that one with an advanced degree in secular learning is more assured of salvation than one with only an elementary schooling.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, speaking on this subject, declared, "Knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven."² He also said: "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world. . . . Hence, it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God."³

I quote a paragraph from an address by the late President J. Reuben Clark to impress the characteristics which distinguish this school from other universities:

The school has a dual function, a dual aim and purpose--secular learning, the lesser value; and spiritual development, the greater. These two values must be always together; neither would be perfect without the other, but the spiritual values, being basic and eternal, must always prevail, for the spiritual values are built upon absolute truth.⁴

The limitless expanse of these truths in their fullness you who teach here must ever have in mind as you counsel the inquiring minds of your students. Have always in mind the ninth Article of Faith: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

It was never intended that the leaders in this Church be an ignorant ministry in the learning of the world, as has clearly been set forth in an admonition to the early elders of the Church. May I quote a few verses to show the immense field which is laid before us, to keep pace with scientists and scholars and the development of modern knowledge:

Teach ye . . . of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of

kingdoms--That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. (D&C 88:7880)

We must never forget that which was impressed by the ancients: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

This, then, is your law of instruction and a guide to keep before faculty and students--to prepare yourselves for the work of the ministry as they go out to take their places in worldly affairs.

We pass on to you, also, the divine admonition to have those under your tutelage "study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people" (D&C 90:15). Brigham Young University, indeed the whole educational system of this Church, has been established to the end that all pure knowledge must be gained by our people, handed down to our posterity, and given to all men.

We charge you to give constant stimulation to these budding scientists and scholars in all fields and to the urge to push back further and further into the realms of the unknown.

Several years ago, Dr. David Sarnoff, the father of radio and television, was asked to suggest the possibilities of attainments twenty years hence. It was his expectation that within twenty years from that time we would begin to solve the riddle of communication by some electronic device by which we could speak in English and our hearers would understand, each in his own language. With our responsibility to teach the people of the world, think what it would mean to our missionary and teaching efforts if some scholars from this institution were to contribute to this possibility.

We would hope that you would give to the students of this institution the vision of the possibility that the Eyring Science Center could make a significant contribution to the discovery of a cure for cancer--that treacherous disease which took the life of that great scholar, Dr. Carl Eyring, after whom that building was named. Or that from the David O. McKay Building we would continue to graduate great teachers, inspired by the life and superb example of one of the greatest teachers of our day, after whom that building was named.

With the prospect of the J. Reuben Clark Law School, we would hope that this institution might be instrumental in developing statesmen, as exemplified by the life of J. Reuben Clark Jr.--men and women not only with unsurpassed excellence of training in the law, but also with unwavering faith that the Constitution of the United States was divinely inspired and written by men whom God raised up for this very purpose.

Hold up before these students the prophetic statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith--that if and when this inspired Constitution should hang as by a thread, that here well-qualified defenders of the faith of our fathers, elders of this Church, would be prepared to step forth and save the Constitution from destruction.⁵

God Give Us Men

God give us men. A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands!
Men whom the lust of office does not kill,
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy,
Men who possess opinions and a will,
Men who love honor, men who cannot lie.

--J. G. Holland

This institution has a great tradition. Its graduates, as has been well attested, hold positions of distinction in the educational world as well as in many fields of business and politics.

Seek for balanced educational ideals. For example, seek for an education that would bring from the athletic field an athlete who has not only athletic excellence, but also a high degree of intellectual competence. Such a one also would have standards of right living, which would make him or her not only a hero on the playing field, but also one prepared to face the problems of life, which would win the highest respect of his or her associates--one who has learned to be a worthy family member. In short, seek a balanced education that would bring forth an upright, honorable citizen to whom this institution could point with pride as an individual who finds favor not only with others, but also with God.

But again, may we indulge the hope that you may devise a method of discovering the greatness of that soul who, as measured by some arbitrary set of academic measurements, may not be accepted. As an example of what I mean, may I remind you that the great painter James Whistler, as a cadet at West Point, failed in chemistry and was dismissed from that institution. But he was head of his class in drawing and painting. It was a sad blow to him, but he did not repine. Years later he remarked, whimsically, "Had silicon been gas, I would have been a Major General."

With this vision of eternal acceptance in the presence of God constantly before you and fixed in the minds of a dedicated faculty, inspired by the president, and impressed upon the students, thereby is laid the foundation for the awakening of wellsprings of spiritual powers which will bring forth miraculous accomplishments.

To one, like yourself, schooled in the doctrines of salvation and the history of the Restoration and with a testimony of the divine origin of this Church, we would remind you that the acquiring of knowledge by faith is no easy road to learning. It will demand strenuous effort and a continual striving by faith.

We need only to remind you of the means by which Daniel learned the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's vision or how Joseph Smith had to prepare himself for his prophetic calling.

David Whitmer, one of Joseph's intimate associates in the early days, gives us a glimpse as to why Joseph could obtain learning by faith. "Joseph Smith was a good man when I knew him," said Whitmer. "He had to be or he could not go on with his work."

In short, learning by faith is no task for a lazy man. Someone has said, in effect, that such a process requires the bending of the whole soul, the calling up of the depths of the human mind and linking them with God--the right connection must be formed. Then only, comes "knowledge by faith."

As I conclude, I remind you of that oft-repeated charge of President Brigham Young to the first principal of this school, Karl G. Maeser. This charge summarizes, in one sentence, the spiritual admonition which has done more to guide teachers and students alike in their attitudes and their labors in this institution than has ever come from those of scholarly wisdom of the world. That profound educational formula was "not to teach even the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God."

So may we say to you, never hesitate to declare your faith as did the apostle Paul that "the gospel of Christ . . . is [indeed] the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Again, we charge you to set a proper example in your own personal conduct. See that your family and home life are in proper order. Do not neglect your wife and family. They are your most prized possessions. Hold your family home evenings.

Keep always before the youth of this institution a deep sense of gratitude for their pioneer

heritage, a love for this country, and a deep-seated reverence for the Constitution of the United States to the end that they will never forget their civic and political obligations. Now that the voting age has been lowered to eighteen, this becomes all the more imperative.

Your great joy will come as, in the years that lie ahead, you see the graduates from this school become honored citizens in their communities and active participants in building up the kingdom of God.

On this, one of the great moments of your career--your inauguration as the president of Brigham Young University--we, as the First Presidency, the Church Board of Education, and the Board of Trustees, assure you that you have our full confidence.

I give you this final charge--that you will reach into that spiritual dimension for answers which, if you seek earnestly, will secure for you the sublime witness in your heart that your acts, your life, and your labors have the seal of approval of the Lord and Creator of us all.

This address was given on May 4, 1971, at the inauguration of Dallin H. Oaks as president of Brigham Young University. Harold B. Lee was First Counselor in the First Presidency.

NOTES

¹Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 4:588.

²Smith, *History of The Church*, 5:389.

³Smith, *History of The Church*, 4:588.

⁴J. Reuben Clark Jr., *Inauguration Services of Howard S. McDonald as President of Brigham Young University*, November 14, 1945. Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 12.

⁵Preston Nibley, "What of Joseph Smith's Prophecy That the Constitution Would Hang by a Thread?" *Church News*, published by Deseret News, December 15, 1948.