



Franklin S. Harris in Logan in 1920, the year before he was inaugurated as president of BYU. Courtesy BYU Archives.

## Inaugural Address

Franklin S. Harris

We are happy indeed to be connected with an institution that is engaged in the great cause of education, for we realize that on education more than on any other factor depends the welfare of mankind. Redemption from the ills of the world is dependent on our ability to understand the laws of the universe and to live in conformity therewith. Intelligence is the great emancipator, and ignorance is the chief agency of destruction. Sin, inefficiency, and disease are merely manifestations of ignorance. The overcoming of these is the triumph of education and the vindication of the power of intelligence.

By its very name, a university stands for universal knowledge. It cannot concede that any particular body of fact is worthy of attention while some other type of learning should be excluded. And yet many so-called universities attempt to discriminate against many of the most fundamental truths in God's great universe. Many there are who would eliminate any study of God or of spiritual laws, and yet those who have made a study of these things find them just as tangible and worthy of study and analysis as are the physical forces of the world.

Fortunately, when Brigham Young University was founded, there were no limitations placed upon it, and none have since been imposed. It stands with open arms to receive truth from whatever source it may come, and it does not dictate to the Giver of all as to the way in which He shall reveal his truth. It is willing with Cowper to say, "God is His own interpreter and He will make it plain." We have here an institution which acknowledges no limitations but goes out boldly with the statement that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (A of F 1:13).

Nor would we limit those who shall receive the benefits of education. We have no patience with the theory that some are born to be saved and others to be damned. Likewise, there seems to be no foundation for the belief held by some that only the select few should receive the benefits of education while the great majority of humanity must be sentenced to eternal ignorance. Education should be universal in its benefits, and all the world should be made better by its teachings.

In this as in everything else, however, there will be various degrees of advancement. All do not have the same opportunities or the same capabilities. The talents of persons vary not only in degree, but also in quality. Some are gifted in music or language, while others who find these subjects difficult have ability in mathematics and engineering. Thus education must be sufficiently broad to fit in with various temperaments, and it should be so arranged that the natural talents of the individual may be used to the best advantage.

Since it will probably be a long while before a college education can be available to all people, we have a particular responsibility to fit those who come to us for leadership.

The colleges of the land must recognize that they are training most of the future leaders of the country. This fact should impress them with the grave responsibility of their task. The leaders will determine the nature of the civilization of the future, and the colleges will largely determine the nature of the leaders.

It is with the full recognition of this responsibility that Brigham Young University is laying its plans for future development. It is conscious of the fact that unless it trains men and women for leadership in the various activities in which they engage, it has no excuse for existence. It is our purpose therefore not only to train our students in the useful arts and sciences of the day, but also to fit them to lead in various civic, religious, and industrial problems that arise out of the complex conditions of modern life.

In preparing students to measure up to these exacting requirements, the university must establish rigorous academic standards. College is no place to idle away time. There is serious business in hand, and those who are not on a learning bent should be eliminated and their places taken by others who will make better use of their opportunities.

Brigham Young University aims to maintain standards equal to those of any college in the land. It is not so much interested in building a big institution as in building a good one. Its faculty, its equipment, and its requirements must be maintained at the highest possible standard.

The institution cannot attempt to compete with every institution in the land. Schools, like business houses, must specialize. While we take all truth for our province, there are certain types of work to which we must direct our chief energies; there are certain fundamental aims that must direct our building for the immediate future.

There has grown out of the history of the institution a particular mandate that must be respected--a certain fire that must be kept burning. This has been peculiar to the institution ever since President Young sent Doctor Maeser here to open its doors. It is difficult to define just what that something is, but it has to do with the lives of students apart from their regular school work. It establishes in their minds wholesome ideals and gives them a respect for proper living. It helps them to form good habits and to throw off bad ones. It teaches them to enjoy uplifting amusements rather than to seek corrupt diversions.

It teaches them the sacredness of the family as a unit in society, and it imparts to them a particular responsibility as a citizen.

It has nothing to do with long-faced sanctimoniousness but is rather that quality of high spirituality that teaches wisdom and moderation in all of the activities of life.

The first task of the future is to preserve at the institution this spirit that comes to us from the past--the true spirit of the Brigham Young University. This spirit places character above learning, and indelibly burns into the consciousness of the student the fact that the most enduring joy is dependent on spiritual growth which looks toward eternal progression.

We must be satisfied with nothing short of the highest standards in our courses. We must have on our faculty none but those who possess unquestioned integrity and scholarship; we must have a library adequate to our needs; and we must have the best equipment that can be procured. Only by maintaining these standards can we hope to be worthy of the leadership that has been assigned to us.

One cannot look toward the future of Brigham Young University without becoming enthusiastic. The very fact that it is engaged in the work of helping to banish from the world ignorance--that great archenemy--and that it is devoting its energies to the teaching of truth to a large group of young people who are to assume leadership in building up the world makes one grow humble in feeling and reverent in attitude.

It now remains for us who are charged with the responsibility of conducting the institution to live up to our possibilities. May God grant us wisdom and strength to play well our part.

This address was given by Franklin S. Harris in 1921, when he was inaugurated as president of Brigham Young University. President Harris served from 1921 to 1945. The address is presented in edited form for a general audience; President Harris's administrative comments about specific department goals are omitted.