



President Gordon B. Hinckley announces the appointment of Rex E. Lee as president of BYU, May 1989. Courtesy Mark A. Philbrick/BYU.

Our Sacred Trust: Two Addresses

Gordon B. Hinckley

I. Trust and Accountability

I am here representing the First Presidency of the Church and the Brigham Young University Board of Trustees. President Ezra Taft Benson serves as chair of this board, and his counselors serve as vice chairs. I bring you his love and his blessing. I likewise bring the respect and appreciation of the entire board.

I speak to both students and faculty in doing so.

I want to thank both faculty and students for the strength of your desire to teach and learn with inspiration and knowledge and for your commitment to live the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for your integrity and your innate goodness. I am confident that never in the history of this institution has there been a faculty better qualified professionally nor one more loyal and dedicated to the standards of its sponsoring institution. Likewise, I am satisfied that there has never been a student body better equipped to learn at the feet of this excellent faculty, nor one more prayerful and decent in attitude and action. There may be exceptions. There doubtless are. But they are few in number compared with the larger body.

I do not want to imply that this is paradise on earth. You may think it just the opposite as you grind away at your studies. But notwithstanding the rigors of that grind, the unrelenting day-after-day pressure you feel, this is a great time to be alive, and this is a wonderful place to be.

This institution is unique. It is remarkable. It is a continuing experiment on a great premise that a large and complex university can be first-class academically while nurturing an environment of faith in God and the practice of Christian principles. You are testing whether

academic excellence and belief in the Divine can walk hand in hand. And the wonderful thing is that you are succeeding in showing that this is possible--not only that it is possible, but that it is desirable and that the products of this effort show in your lives qualities not otherwise attainable.

We announced in the October 1992 general conference that another temple will be built in Utah Valley. The reason is that the Provo Temple is the busiest in the Church, operating beyond its designed capacity. The Jordan River Temple is the second busiest in the Church. One factor in all of this is the devotion to temple work of Brigham Young University faculty and students. Many of you, I am told, attend a session in the temple early in the morning before your classes. Many are there in the evening and on Saturday. This all says something of tremendous significance. It speaks of devotion and loyalty, of unselfishness and faith.

Furthermore, this remarkable faculty carry many responsibilities of great importance in the Church at the general level, at the stake level, and at the ward level. You are men and women of faith as well as of learning. I believe you are the equivalent of your peers anywhere in the world in terms of professional qualifications. Beyond this, you speak with conviction concerning the God of Heaven, the Savior and the Redeemer of the World, and the beauty and power of the restored and eternal gospel.

I believe you seek to live these principles. I know of no other university faculty--I think there is none other anywhere on earth--where the members can stand and say with conviction, "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men" (A of F 1:13).

I believe that you seek to exemplify that declaration in your lives. I commend you and thank you and extend to you our appreciation and respect.

I repeat, there may be exceptions. But I think those are few. And if such there be, I am confident that in their hearts they feel ill at ease and uncomfortable, for there can never be peace or comfort in any element of disloyalty. Wherever there is such an attitude there is a nagging within the heart that says, "I am not being honest in accepting the consecrated tithing funds of the humble and faithful of this Church. I am not being honest with myself or others as a member of this faculty while teaching or engaging in anything that weakens the faith and undermines the integrity of those who come to this institution at great sacrifice and with great expectations."

I recently read a book that fascinated me, a dual biography of the two great generals of the American Civil War--Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. They were personalities as different as perhaps two men could be. One was the epitome of intellect, rigid self-discipline, culture, and rectitude. The other was somewhat careless in his ways, his career marked by failure, but he possessed a shrewd and calculating mind. Each in his own way was brilliant.

Moreover, each was driven by a great and serious sense of trust imposed by those to whom he was accountable. One had greater resources, and, I believe, perhaps a better cause than the other, and this accounted for his victory. But the other was nonetheless a great and remarkable man. I could spend the hour talking about each of them. I mention them only because the author of this book, after tremendous research, concluded: "Trust is what makes any army work, and trust comes from the top down."¹

I want all of you to know that you have the trust and confidence of BYU's governing board. This is called the board of trustees. It also carries a very heavy and sacred trust. It has the burden of responsibility for setting policies of governance for this great institution and responsibility for the expenditure of the many millions of dollars of sacred funds used to maintain this university. We share your exuberant gladness when BYU wins a well-fought athletic contest. We share your pride when BYU and members of its faculty or student body are honored by its peer institutions

and people. We share your pain and your hurt when the media exploit, as they are wont to do, any untoward, any unseemly, any ugly or misguided statement or act emanating from faculty or students. You are part of this great family we call The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When one member experiences a significant accomplishment, the others rejoice with him. But when a member does something that violates the code of that family, the entire family is injured and feels the pain.

Every one of us who is here has accepted a sacred and compelling trust. With that trust, there must be accountability. That trust involves standards of behavior as well as standards of academic excellence. For each of us, it carries with it a larger interest than our own interest. It carries with it the interest of the university and the interest of the Church, which must be the interest of each and all of us.

Some few students resent the fact that the board has approved a code of honor and imposed a code of dress and behavior to which all are expected to subscribe. Bishops and now stake presidents are requested to interview each student and certify his or her acceptance of the standards set forth in these codes.

I think I can hear a student, perhaps a number of them, saying to a bishop, "Why do we have to sign these codes? Don't they trust us?"

I am reminded of what I heard from a man--a great, strong, and wise man--who served in the Presidency of this Church years ago. His daughter was going out on a date, and her father said to her, "Be careful. Be careful of how you act and what you say."

She replied, "Daddy, don't you trust me?"

He responded, "I don't entirely trust myself. One never gets too old nor too high in the Church that the adversary gives up on him."

And so, my friends, we ask you to subscribe to these codes and to have the endorsement of your respective bishops and stake presidents in doing so. It is not that we do not trust you. But we feel that you need reminding of the elements of your contract with those responsible for the institution and that you may be the stronger in observing that trust because of the commitment you have made. With every trust, there must be accountability, and this is a reminder of that accountability.

It is so with the faculty and with all of us. We ask that all members of the faculty who are members of the Church be what we speak of as "temple-recommend worthy." This does not evidence any lack of trust. It simply represents a standard, a benchmark of belief and action. The setting of this standard is not new or unusual. It is not new at BYU or in the Church Educational System, though it has been unevenly applied at times. It is a standard applied widely in the Church.

Our thousands of bishops, who stand as common judges in Israel, annually must renew their own temple recommends, as must stake presidents also. The renewal of that recommend becomes a renewal of commitment. We live in a world and in an environment where we are surrounded by the corrosive and erosive elements of the world. We are all human, even though our callings be high and noble. We all need the constant reminder of commitments we have made and standards to which we have subscribed.

Surely, our Father in Heaven loves his sons and daughters. He trusts us. That very trust becomes as an iron rod to which we may cling as we walk the path of mortality. Some stumble and err and violate the trust. They are accountable for what they do.

I am confident the Savior trusts us, and yet he asks that we renew our covenants with him frequently and before one another by partaking of the sacrament, the emblems of his suffering in our behalf.

We are, of course, properly concerned about you who teach at this great institution. You are the bone and sinew of the university. We are concerned that your academic credentials be the very best and that there be a quality of excellence in all you do. We are also concerned with your faith, your principles.

I hope you will not regard us as being unduly cautious or unnecessarily critical. We act in the spirit spoken of by Alma concerning teachers in his day. Said he, "Trust no one to be your teacher, . . . except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments" (Mosiah 23:14).

Yesterday, much of the world celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage of discovery. Scholars may dispute certain aspects concerning the priority and outcomes of that historic venture, but none can ever sell short the man who kept his trust in God as he sailed the trackless sea and who held himself accountable to the sovereigns of Spain, who were his sponsors.

As a boy, I read Joaquin Miller's poem "Columbus" and was stirred by it. I recall a few of those lines:

Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores;
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said, "Now must we pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone,
Brave Adm'r'l speak; what shall I say?"
"Why, say: 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"
.....
Then pale and worn, he paced his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck--
A light! A light! At last a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: "On! sail on!"

Columbus kept his trust and discovered a hemisphere.

I think of Lord Nelson on the morning of the Battle of Trafalgar, when he said, "England expects every man will do his duty." After that fierce and bloody contest, as he stood on the deck of his ship to extend humanity to his enemy, a ball was fired within fifteen yards of where he stood. He fell to the deck, his spine shattered. He expired three and a quarter hours later, his last articulated words being, "Thank God, I have done my duty."² A tall shaft and statue stand in his honor in Trafalgar Square in London.

Wilford Woodruff, in 1835, not long after he had joined the Church, was sent on a mission with a companion who was to accompany him. They traveled through mud and floods, experiencing a great variety of hardships in the pursuit of their duty. He wrote in his journal:

We walked forty miles in a day through mud and water knee-deep. On the 24th of March, after traveling some ten miles through mud, I was taken lame with a sharp pain in my knee. I sat down on a log.

My companion, who was anxious to get to his home in Kirtland, left me sitting in an alligator swamp. I did not see him again for two years. I knelt down in the mud and prayed, and the Lord healed me, and I went on my way rejoicing.³

Wilford Woodruff kept his trust and lived to become a prophet.

I repeat the quotation I gave earlier: "Trust is what makes any army work, and trust comes from the top down." Trust is what makes a government work, and maybe a lack of trust is one reason for the serious problems we are experiencing. Trust is what makes the wheels of commerce turn. It is what makes possible the strength and growth of the Church. It is what makes Brigham Young University work.

Trust and accountability are two great words by which we must guide our lives if we are to live beyond ourselves and rise to higher planes of service. This is, and must ever be, an institution in which the soul is nurtured while the intellect is trained. The motto of this university came from the pen of a prophet of God who spoke under the power of revelation: "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). The charter of its conduct was spoken by another prophet to its founding president: "You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God."⁴ Among the marvelous words of the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants are these:

The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh--But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world. (D&C 1:1920)

We trust you to do so. We love you. We respect you. We pray for you as faculty and students. We place upon you a great and sacred charge to excel in the imparting and learning of secular knowledge and at the same time nurture the spirit within.

I challenge you to stand always on a high plane of moral integrity, of spiritual strength, of professional excellence.

This is a world-class university, a great temple of learning, where a highly qualified faculty instruct a large and eager body of students. These teachers impart with skill and dedication the accumulated secular knowledge of the centuries while also building faith in the eternal verities that are the foundation of civilization.

Such is our unqualified expectation. Such, I sincerely believe, is the desire of all, save perhaps a few. Such, I sincerely hope, will be the resolve of everyone.

May God bless you, my beloved associates, both young and old, in this great undertaking of teaching and learning, of trust and accountability.

II. What the Church Expects of Each of Us

The Church is the great teacher and builder of values. Its precepts are designed to lead men and women along the way of immortality and eternal life, to make their lives more complete, more rich and happy while moving through this veil of tears, and in preparing them for the beauties and wonders of that which lies ahead. Keep faith with the Church.

It is true. It is divine. He who stands at its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the

World. It is the church of the Almighty which carries the name of his divine Son. Its earthly leaders are those who are called of God under a plan which he put in place.

What does the Church expect of each of us, you and me? "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men" (A of F 1:13). May I add a few words on this statement as I speak of what this Church expects of us.

Simple honesty is so remarkable a quality. It is of the very essence of integrity. It demands that we be straightforward, unequivocal, in walking the straight and narrow line of what is right and true. It is so easy to cheat. At times it is so enticing to do so. Better a poor grade than a dishonest act. There has been told and retold on this campus for generations the words of Karl G. Maeser concerning honor. They need to be repeated here and across the world. I suppose all of you have heard them before, but I give them again:

I have been asked what I mean by word of honor. I will tell you. Place me behind prison walls--walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground--there is a possibility that in some way or another I may be able to escape; but stand me on the floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my word of honor never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? No, never! I'd die first!⁵

My father was a student of Karl G. Maeser at this institution long ago. He heard those words himself from the lips of Brother Maeser. He repeated them to us, again and again. They have become engraved as if they were words of scripture. They set forth with simplicity and eloquence what the Church expects of me and of you.

It expects us to be true--true to ourselves, true to our loved ones, true to the best that is within us, true to the faith, true to the names given us. President George Albert Smith, on a number of occasions, told of meeting his grandfather, whose name he carried, in a dream. In that dream, he was asked by his grandfather, "I would like to know what have you done with my name."⁶President Smith said that he never got over the effects of that experience. It was only a dream, but it was real, and it was important. There burned within his heart throughout the remainder of his life a compelling mandate to be true to the name which he carried.

In the language of the article of our faith which I have given you, the Church expects you to be chaste and virtuous. You know what this means. I am satisfied I need not repeat it here. But I do urge you, with all of the capacity of which I am capable, to avoid the corrosive, destructive forces of evil found in pornography. Remember, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Sin never brought happiness. Transgression never brought happiness. Disobedience never brought happiness. The Church expects you who have taken upon yourselves the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to walk in the sunlight of virtue and enjoy the strength, the freedom, the lift that comes from so doing.

Drink here from the springs of knowledge which flow in the classrooms of this unique and wonderful institution. Partake of the spirit as well as the knowledge of faithful men and women who constitute the faculty of this school. Learn here the disciplines that will help you as you travel the course of your lives, the most important of which is self-discipline, the power to govern your thoughts, your words, your acts, notwithstanding the temptations that come before you. Learn of things of the heart, the mind, the spirit, and the words and wisdom of the Almighty.

The Church expects you to reach out with benevolence in doing good to all men. In writing to the Hebrews, Paul admonished, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (JST, Heb. 12:12). That admonition was repeated and magnified in modern revelation: "Wherefore, [said the Lord,] be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed

unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

I know that you are engrossed with your studies. This is important, but in a sense it is a selfish pursuit. Take a little time, now and again, to reach out beyond yourselves to help others. There are those right around you, students in need of a little kindness, a little attention, a little appreciation. You who are extremely able, you who learn with comparative ease, reach down to those who have greater difficulty in mastering academic material that is relatively easy for you. In so doing, you will bless your own life as you bless the lives of those you help.

A little tutoring can do wonders for someone who does not quite comprehend. It will do wonders for you as you give of yourself and your knowledge to bless another.

There are those in nursing homes, hospitals, and those who are shut-ins in their own homes. You can bring sunlight into lives filled with gloom, sadness, and pain. Contradictory as it may sound, the admonition of the Savior is absolutely true as anyone can testify who has put it to the test: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

My dear young friends, give expression to the noble desires that lie within your hearts to reach out to comfort, sustain, and build others. As you do so, the cankering poison of selfishness will leave you, and it will be replaced by a sweet and wonderful feeling that comes in no other way. Never forget that the Church expects you to be benevolent and to do good to all men.

I add to this the related thought that you will grow as you look for the good in others. This season of your schooling is a time not only to expand your minds, but to enlarge your personalities and strengthen your character as you look for the virtues, the strengths, the goodness, in the lives of those about you.

Finally, the Church expects you to work while you are here. It is making a tremendous investment in you, an investment which comes from the sacred tithing funds of the Church. Work is the miracle by which talent is brought to the surface and dreams become reality.

I think President Rex Lee's life is a compendium of these great virtues and expectations of which I have spoken. I commend them to each of you, even at the expense of embarrassing this modest man.

In conclusion, I speak out of my heart with sincerity with love for each of you. You who are here are so richly blessed with a great and precious opportunity. Do not waste it. Do not regard it lightly. It is sacred and of great consequence. Be thankful every day of your lives while you are here. Pray for guidance. Pray for help. Pray for strength to resist that which is evil. Seek the enlightenment of the spirit of Christ. Cultivate and invite the direction of the Holy Ghost.

Every one of you is precious. You are precious in the sight of God. You are precious in the sight of your parents. You are precious to us who count on you to take advantage of this great season of preparation for the world in which you will live.

President Lee, I salute you and honor you as you serve in these waning months of a great administration. Faculty, students, I compliment each of you on the precious opportunity that is yours to walk with fidelity, devotion, loyalty, hard work, and appreciation for all that is good and uplifting.

I leave my blessing with you and commend to you every good thing, that your lives may be fruitful in those strengths and virtues which distinguish the noble and the great and the good from those who live beneath their possibilities. May you be blessed of the Lord is my humble prayer.

Part I was given at a Brigham Young University devotional on October 13, 1992, when Gordon B. Hinckley was First Counselor in the First Presidency. Part II is the concluding section of a Brigham Young University devotional given October 17, 1995, originally entitled, "To a Man Who Has Done What This Church Expects of Each of Us." The first part of that address was a tribute to BYU President Rex E. Lee. President Hinckley became President of the Church in March 1995.

NOTES

¹Gene Smith, quoted in "Hitching a Ride to History," in Reader's Digest Condensed Books, 4 (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader's Digest Association, 1984), 299.

²Robert Southey, *Life of Nelson* (Boston: William Wells, 1813), 172, 17781, October 21, 1805.

³Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881), 16.

⁴Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 26.

⁵Burton, *Karl G. Maeser*, 71.

⁶George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948), 11112.