

Enhancing Secular Knowledge Through Spiritual Knowledge and Faith

JAMES E. FAUST

It is a delight to be with all of you. I have enjoyed very much the fellowship and companionship that is here. This is quite a sack lunch that we have had. I am glad that President Lee has the high regard for my Ruth that he expressed; I am never more honored or grateful or appreciative than when she is seated by my side, and I am grateful that she is here with us tonight.

We are honored to have Elder and Sister Eyring with us, and we appreciate their presence very much. I want to say that I consulted Elder Eyring with respect to what might be appropriate to be said tonight. I take full credit, but I want to acknowledge and thank him for his help. We are grateful to be with President Lee and all of these at the head table. Looking at the head table and having heard the remarks with reference to lawyers, I want to say—just remember who the president of the Church is, and I hope we will be a little more circumspect about what we say about lawyers.

The informal nature and setting of this occasion makes me think that perhaps my message is a little on the heavy side. Sister Faust read it and says it's too short; I hope when I get through you feel the same way. I have entitled my message "Enhancing Secular Knowledge Through Spiritual Knowledge and Faith," and I have accepted the theme that was suggested

from Alma 14:26, "Give Us Strength According to Our Faith."

I am greatly honored by the presence of each one this evening. As one of the newest members of the board of trustees of this university, I think it augurs well for me to approach this assignment with much humility and even some trepidation. My anxiety is enhanced because I believe that I am addressing, in many ways, the most remarkable university administration, faculty, and staff in the world. Your work and that of your predecessors has made Brigham Young University a uniquely honored and respected university worldwide. We teach the gospel of Jesus Christ explicitly at Brigham Young University. We also pursue secular learning according to commandment.

"And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; . . . seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

I should like to focus my brief comments on how I perceive Brigham Young University and how those associated with it can have an even

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greater influence in the cataclysmic social, economic, and spiritual events in the world and the role of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in that world. I speak to myself as well as to you. This focus is also the basis of our eternal salvation. I begin with a true story. Our youngest son, Robert, studied law at this university and took a class in trusts from a distinguished legal scholar, Dallin H. Oaks. My son told me that on the first day of the class the teacher said to the students, "As we begin this course, I want you to know where I am coming from. I believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Savior and the Redeemer of the world. I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness to the earth in our day. I believe that all of the presidents of the Church since Joseph Smith have been successors in interest, keys, and authority to that held by Joseph Smith. Now please open your books and we'll study trust law."

I believe that the first day's instruction was more valuable to Robert, and more useful in his life, than the rules of trust law set forth in *Ex Parte-Pye* and other decisions, important as they are in the law of trusts.

As we look to the future, I wonder if it will not be more important for you to know what you are than what you know. Dr. C. Roland Christensen of the Harvard Business School, wrote:

Faith in the fundamental worth of our vocation, in the values that govern our relations with individual students and classes, . . . To me faith is the indispensable dimension of teaching life. Why, then, is it so rarely mentioned? Perhaps because academicians may feel more comfortable with hard facts, logical analysis, and readily observable skills than with intangibles like belief. But without the intangibles . . . technique becomes mechanical, skills manipulative, and attitudes suspect. [Education for Judgment, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1991, pp. 116-19]

He continues:

I believe teaching is a moral act . . . I believe that what students become is as important as what they learn . . . I teach not only what I know, but what I am. [Ibid.]

There is so much important teaching by the administration and staff that does not take place in or in connection with a classroom. Some 10,500 students are employed part-time at BYU. Through the years BYU has made a conscious effort to employ students wherever possible, and thus help them finance their educations. In the students' daily association with administrators and staff who are their "bosses," these students are not only taught to clean and to garden but also to post grades. They not only man the desks and the libraries, fry the hamburgers, service computers, and sell school supplies, but also host visitors, repair vehicles, paint buildings, manage theaters, and usher at events. There is also the magnificent service that is performed by so many of the administration, staff, and faculty as spiritual leaders. This is done on Sundays, in fire-sides, personal interviews, where guidance is given and testimonies are borne. Without this devoted service, the students at BYU would be less prepared for life than they are.

The Lord said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). I believe the influence from this institution will be like that of the Portuguese navigators who, in the 14th and 15th centuries in the Age of Discovery, went to the ends of the earth. And those who go will take the unique essence of this remarkable institution worldwide. This has already begun to happen. My wife and I, with Bruce Olsen and Randy Boothe, were privileged to take the first group of Young Ambassadors from Brigham Young University to China in 1979. This provided

the opportunity to rededicate that ancient land. Our students were so outstanding that they were almost mobbed in several places. The performances were televised and rebroadcast over and over again all through China. So very much has happened since that event in the contacts with members and leaders of the Church with China.

Many of you have been and will be part of this dissemination of secular knowledge and spiritual truth, either in person or through the students that you teach. This will also be true not only of the scholarly disciplines, but also of members of the Brigham Young University administration, staff, athletic teams, and touring groups who go into the world representing the university. I think this will happen because while other institutions of learning have classes of secular scholarship and knowledge equal in many ways to that of this university, I am certain there are none in your class in spiritual knowledge and commitments. This university is a continuing experiment in the concept of there being a first-class academic community of scholars led by a board of trustees consisting mostly of prophets, seers, and revelators. This presupposes that the administrators, faculty, and staff accept those prophets, seers, and revelators as a principle source of ultimate truth. It is also presumed that there is loyalty to their leadership and the policy they set. No other university has ever been quite so positioned.

Other great institutions in the world have moved from a spiritual underpinning to a completely secular footing, perhaps thus feeling more secure in their acceptance in the academic world of intellectual elitism. There is so much secular knowledge for mankind to learn, but all of it together is only the smaller part of the learning challenge. I do not believe that the administrators, scholars, teachers, or students of this university can rise to their full potential of knowledge without the larger part of the challenge, which is an increase in the full enjoyment of the inspiration of

heaven. With these blessings, both teacher and student and secular knowledge will be greatly enlightened. To do this, we must become more certain of spiritual enlightenment than secular knowledge.

The test of faith for those of this university is, in my opinion, more important than any peer review for faculty or any examination in the classroom for students. When the ultimate spiritual power of heaven is fully invoked by the administration and faculty at this university, God can pour out his blessings upon all in a transcending way. He is the fountain of sure knowledge of all truth. As this spiritual competency increases, great and marvelous things will be accomplished by ordinary people.

I feel secure in my statement of this because the Lord has said that "By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5) and "know all things" (see D&C 11:14). There can be a greater breakthrough of knowledge by the teacher and scholar at this university beyond imagination by tapping into the divine foundations of truth.

Alma reminds us: "And a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power according to my faith and desires which are in God" (Alma 18:35). We are all familiar with the statement of 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 1:5-6]

I believe the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ are more important than any professional disciplines at this university. The interests of the Church have to be paramount over the interests of the university so that the university may qualify for that added spiritual power which it must receive to rise to its full potential. By this I mean there should be a

loyalty to the sponsoring institution and a willingness to subordinate reason to revelation.

Perhaps in conclusion it might be appropriate for me to say a word about President Howard W. Hunter, the new chairman of the Brigham Young University Board of Trustees. Some of you faculty, and many of the students, were present on February 7, 1993, in the Marriott Center for the 19-stake fireside and CES broadcast. You will recall that when President Hunter was at the pulpit, an intruder carrying a briefcase in one hand and something black in the other stepped on the stand and shouted, "Stop right there." He then ordered everybody to leave the stand but President Hunter. Many did leave, but President Hunter quietly and resolutely stayed at the pulpit. The assailant then demanded that President Hunter read aloud a prepared statement. President Hunter firmly declined to do so. The assailant picked the wrong man. I know of no man in this world that is more resolute, unflappable, and courageous than President Hunter. You will recall that when the assailant was momentarily distracted, he was pushed from the stand. President Hunter was lowered by the security guards and others to the floor to safety. After the incident, I am told that President Hunter's pulse was seventy beats per minute!

You will recall that President Hunter collected himself and then began his prepared message saying, "Life has a fair number of challenges in it." And then his irrespressible sense of humor surfaced and he added, "As demonstrated." He then went on with his message as though nothing had happened.

President Hunter's nobility of character was never better expressed in the long years when Sister Clare Hunter began to deteriorate. It became necessary for him to lovingly help dress and feed and tend to her every want. This he did over a period of more than ten years, besides carrying on his heavy apostolic load. The strain almost took his life. He suffered a very serious heart attack at which time

he was told that he could no longer carry this heavy burden and live. He replied, "I cannot put her away." Some time later, she became noncognitive and had to be fed artificially. Only then, with great reluctance and heartbreak, did he let her go from his loving care and home. I have never seen a more caring and devoted husband than President Hunter.

We are all so grateful that he now has Sister Inis as his wife to give him comfort and support, solace and loving care. Sister Hunter is a person who meets people well because she is warm and gracious, with a radiant smile that draws people to her. She is indeed a fine companion for President Hunter, having adapted quickly and quite easily to her role as the wife of a General Authority.

President Hunter is a man of flesh and bone but also of steel. It is a miracle that President Hunter walks. He has fought back from such crippling and debilitating health challenges. He has had as many operations as many of us have had collectively. The Lord could have taken him so many times when he was at death's door, but it is my testimony that he has been preserved to be our president in this time. He is the personification of courtesy, consideration, graciousness, thoughtfulness and kindness. It could well be said of him as it has been of Moses, that he is "very meek, above all the men . . . upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

As a Moses-like man, President Hunter has been a scholar-saint in the work of the mind. His broad gauge of expertise has been focused around the law but has gone far beyond. His interest in business, archaeology, geography, horticulture, and all things mechanical are but a few. I think all of us connected with the university can rejoice in having a great chairman of the board who understands faith and reason so well.

We are grateful that the wives and husbands of the administration, faculty, and staff are here. Your quiet service is far more important

than is realized in sustaining your companions, not only in the activities directly related to the university, but also sustaining your companions as spiritual leaders, counselors, and friends to the choice young men and women who are privileged to come to this university.

The board of trustees are aware of some of the personal sacrifices that so many of you have made to be part of this great institution. We know that none are without some worries and challenges. We know you have bills to pay, missionaries to support, teeth to have straightened. A friend of ours wrote after a tragic death in our family, "The quiet little deaths of every day existence are mourned as much as those of ascending magnitude. For quiet makes no comparisons or judgments and has no understanding of degree." We hope that you feel that there are compensatory blessings beyond the personal sacrifices required to be part of this university.

This continuing experiment of teaching the learning of mankind, in light of the teachings of God, must succeed. The stakes are so great, and too much of the widows' tithing is spent here that could be spent on new missions, temples, chapels, etc, for it to fail.

I have had a close relationship with only one of the functions of the university—at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

You are well aware of the long struggle that it took to establish that presence in the Holy City. You may not be aware of the miracles that took place to bring it into being. Yet the greatest miracles of the Jerusalem Center experience occur in the lives of the young men and women who are able to attend there. The monument there is not the magnificent building in the prime location of Jerusalem, nor in the world-class architecture, but in the lives of those who are able to go there.

We see so many lives that are changed through that special program and realize that it is only a small part of the good that flows from this great university. My heart aches because Church-wide so relatively few can enjoy the blessings of this great institution. When someone you love and are close to is rejected for admission to the BYU, you will have a greater awareness of what a privilege it is to attend this institution.

Brethren and sisters, we love and trust you. We have complete confidence in your ability, in your character, and in your faith. You are exemplary in your example and integrity. Please be reassured of our absolute faith in you.

[Elder Faust then bore his testimony and left his blessing upon those assembled.]

