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# Speeches

*Reason and Revelation*

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# *Reason and Revelation*

NOEL B. REYNOLDS

I stand before you today as one who has accepted the responsibility to try to guide and inspire the students of Brigham Young University to make the most of their educational opportunities and to prepare themselves to be the strongest possible members of the kingdom of God, to be people who can provide special leadership in the great work of the kingdom in these last days. But I have not been given that kind of responsibility for anyone else. I therefore direct my remarks to the students of BYU and hope that, if others choose to listen in, they may find something of value to them as well.

I will admit that I have been, and to this moment remain, somewhat fearful that the things which I feel I should say today might be misunderstood. I therefore pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me and with you this hour that we might understand each other and that the will of the Lord might be accomplished.

## **Influence of the Spirit**

Most of us here today are too young to remember the time when not every BYU professor and not even every instructor of religion had a testimony of the gospel. It seems to me that there has been considerable improvement

in this regard, not only at BYU, but probably throughout the entire Church over the last few decades. As far as I know, every religion class at BYU is now taught by someone who not only understands but accepts the scriptural challenge to teach by the Spirit.

But these developments for the good have not left Satan resourceless. There are many varieties of false spirits at his command. It is because I perceive an increasing vulnerability to such false forms of spirituality that I have felt that I should raise a warning voice to the students of BYU.

From the most ancient times, there have been religious traditions which insisted that revelatory experiences involving the gods were characterized by ecstasy or frenzy of the mind. In some of these traditions, wine or drugs were used to induce the frenzied state in which one could become the mouthpiece of the gods. Certain Christian and Jewish variants of these traditions have taught that the ancient prophets wrote in excited or frenzied states in

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*Noel B. Reynolds was associate academic vice-president of Brigham Young University when this devotional address was given on 30 June 1981.*

which they were not in full control of their own minds.

Stated in these stark terms, this tradition is easily recognized as something alien to the teachings and practices of the restored gospel. We know the spirit of revelation as a spirit of peace. Notice the contrast between that tradition and the scriptural references describing the voice of God as it comes to men. In the book of Helaman we are told that it is “a still voice of perfect mildness,” like “a whisper,” and it pierces “even to the very soul” (Helaman 5:30). As reported in 3 Nephi 11:3, it

*was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.*

In none of the scriptures do we see revelation come as a result of people’s working themselves into an emotional state of mind. Yet, there are distinctive feelings that are produced when the voice of God speaks to men, as in this passage where it caused their hearts to burn. Because of the variety of spiritual extravagances that prevailed among the Christian sects of his time, Joseph Smith often warned the Saints against these things and showed them the way that they might avoid coming under these same influences. He commented once that

*nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God. [Teachings, p. 205]*

On another occasion Joseph Smith taught the Saints how they might *learn* the true spirit of revelation:

*A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus. [Teachings, p. 151]*

Perhaps it is because the Spirit does cause feelings such as a burning of the heart that it seems to be easily mistaken for other emotions. I would like to begin by pointing out some of the kinds of false spirits or emotions that seem to produce some spiritual confusion among our young people when they mistake their feelings for manifestations of the true Spirit.

### **Sentimentalism vs. Spirit**

The first problem I would like to mention may be a simple hazard of youth, though I suspect it is more a problem of our times. We are observing a widespread difficulty in distinguishing between sentimentalism and true spiritual experience. Too much of the literature used, seen, and quoted in the Church today is just sentimental trash which is designed to pull our heartstrings or moisten our eyes, but it is not born of true spiritual experience. The tendency of our youth to use sentimental stories in Church talks creates a culture of spiritual misunderstanding in which thinking and learning are discouraged. When I was bishop years ago in an Orem ward, I strongly counseled the youth not to use the compilations of sentimental stories which are available. I feel that our failure to immerse these young people in the scriptures and other high quality literature makes them vulnerable to the cheap tactics of every moralistic movement which they encounter. Because our youth often respond positively to sentimentalism,

there is a danger that we might cater to that in Church instruction generally.

But is it possible to imagine that Nephi was brought up on such sentimentalism? Rather he informs us in the first verse of his record that he was instructed in all the learning of his father. And that learning was of no small effect, for, as he encountered the real problems of real life, he responded in a supremely intelligent and powerful way, quickly learning the Spirit of God and obtaining its guidance in the most difficult tasks. It may be that some sentimentality is a good and necessary thing, and certainly there is a place for it in our relationship with our loved ones. But it should never be leaned upon as a substitute for spirituality. Reliance on sentimentality will stunt our own spiritual growth by misleading us and filling our understanding with false experiences.

Our spiritual immaturity can also be revealed through our tastes in books. I was dismayed on two separate occasions this past year as editors of major LDS publishing houses patiently explained to me that they are primarily interested in books which can either feature a well-known Latter-day Saint name as the author or are written on a very simple level and in such a way as to give people a warm, comfortable feeling without any challenging ideas. Anything more demanding of the reader, I was informed, will not sell well enough to justify publication. As a Latter-day Saint I was chagrined, but as I took more occasion to observe what is selling well in our bookstores, I could see they were only being candid with me.

Another manifestation of spiritual confusion occurs frequently among us when we are invited to invest in expensive items which we don't really need but which can somehow be related by the salesman to goals we develop in church. College girls frequently find themselves buying extremely expensive cookware sets so they will have first-class equipment when they get married. Somehow the purchase

is supposed to improve the young woman's prospects of marriage. At the same time, her parents may be investing precious savings in some sure-fire get-rich scheme without seeking sound financial advice—relying instead on trusted friends or relatives who have no better judgment. The vast majority of these investors lose everything, and usually only the scheme perpetrators get rich. In fact, many of them turn out after the fact to be simple frauds. But instead of heeding spiritual warnings, we are lulled by other feelings into actually believing that we have spiritual reassurances and that we are going to get rich so we can help the Church or spend all our time with our children or some other worthy endeavor. I firmly believe the Lord will give us the guidance we need in our financial affairs if we will think it all through carefully and responsibly and seek him in prayer. But when he speaks, it will be by the same still, small voice he uses on other occasions and not through a burning feeling of excitement at the prospects of having more wealth than our neighbors, nicer clothes or cars, or not having to work for a living.

### **Discernment Important**

In and of themselves, the kinds of problems I have suggested to this point may not be too serious, but we live in an age plagued with false gospels and pseudospiritual modes of life. Our young people will inevitably be confronted with one or more of them which will put the maturity of their own spiritual development to the test. There are Asian cults in many of our cities which appeal to troubled youth. There are many groups of Christian enthusiasts who emphasize the importance of frequent emotional experiences with the Spirit as they believe. There are cults of apostate Mormons who claim new revelations and approach our youth with a personal intensity that can very easily be mistaken for greater spirituality. Although Marxism is losing its early high position of influence among

American youth, it is still very much a real force as are objectivism and numerous other moralistic philosophies that offer guidance in all moral questions and pretend to the highest ethical truths on the basis of reason or, in some cases, science.

It is therefore extremely important that as Latter-day Saints grow, mature, and seek an education, they learn to develop their ability to discern the difference between the voice of the Spirit and the many alternatives available in this world. They must be clean in every way that they might be receptive to the true Spirit. They must come to know the Spirit that they might not be misled by the imposter varieties. And they must learn to think clearly and to recognize the ways of good and evil in their many forms, that they may avoid evil early and help others to do the same.

Most of you probably assume that your education here at BYU, or even elsewhere, should help you to develop the kind of judgment and thinking ability that would enable you to recognize the dangers that I have been describing. Yet you may also have some ambivalence about the tools of analysis taught in philosophy and science and may wonder how they can help you rather than becoming an obstacle to your testimony and to personal revelation. I would like to spend the balance of the time in addressing that ambivalence. I will try to suggest an approach to our education that will help you derive strength from it without letting it develop into a spiritual stumbling block as it undoubtedly has done for many, many people.

### **An Approach to Education**

I would like to begin with the observation that as infants every one of us came into this world faced with the same general problem. We knew nothing of this world, and we didn't know how to find out the truth about it. So we started from ignorance, but we were given some basic tools. We had senses with which we

could establish contact with the world around us. We had minds with which we could reflect on the things we observed in the development of our understanding. There are people and a culture which will help each of us deal with the problems of life and will also pass on to us a variety of beliefs about the world in which we have found ourselves—some true, some false. And we have a basic spiritual gift. By learning to use these well, we can come to grips with this world more or less successfully.

As we mature and grow in our knowledge of the world, we can also begin to develop our knowledge of God and his ways. And just as with our knowledge of the world, our knowledge of him comes through the things told to us by others and through our personal experiences. But how do we know what is true and what to believe? Is it not reasonable to expect that our knowledge of God and his ways, though it reaches into the spiritual sphere, is built up by use of the same thinking skills and honest self-criticism that we have learned from infancy in mastering the world around us?

Countless scriptures promise us that we will be rewarded for the faith that we develop in God. We would not expect to be rewarded for faith in false things, so what basis or merit is there in our having faith in the true God? Why should we be rewarded for that? The only answer would seem to be that there is some meritorious action on our part which prepares us for the gift of faith. There must be available to every one of us some reliable means of finding a measure of truth and knowing when we have found it.

We are all in the business of developing a broad system of beliefs. Through trial and error we discover which ones are good, and we reject the bad. We can use this same method for testing our religious beliefs and the teachings given to us by others. But the problem which always confronts us is the difficulty of being rigorously honest in this process. Beliefs have implications. We cannot help wanting some

things to be true and other to be false. If we love our sins, we will likely not want the gospel to be true because it commands us to forsake them utterly. So our integrity is constantly on the line, and only God knows when, in fact, we sacrifice for the truth or when we harbor error willingly. To gain increasing knowledge of him, we must learn not to promote ourselves by manipulating others, or intimidating, lying, or cheating, by exploiting others or deceiving ourselves, because none of these will work with him; and our knowledge of him comes through the revelations of the Spirit, which we receive at his pleasure only.

### **Light of Christ**

The Spirit, or Light of Christ, is given to everyone to provide guidance and encouragement in those important domains of moral action where reason and experience are demonstrably inadequate guides. It is a simple fact of modern philosophy that reason has not even come close to providing anyone with a single true and persuasive set of moral principles. Even if we had such a complete set of moral guidelines, our reasoning abilities would not be adequate to use them in particular situations to always know what we should do. We are therefore all in need of an omniscient friend who knows what courses of action will have the best implications for the future. As this friend gives us spiritual guidance and tells us what is right, we will come to rely on it if we are honest in heart and as we recognize the reliability of that guidance. Thus by being rigorously honest in pursuing what is right and true, even when it requires sacrifice on our part, we can come to have faith—to act as Christ directs without knowing how or why but knowing that his is the only reliable direction we have ever discovered.

All of this assumes that his voice is distinctive, that it is recognizable by us and not readily confused with other sources of ideas. It also assumes that we have a commitment to what

is right, that we will be able to respond to that spiritual guidance as we learn about it. The suggestion, of course, is that it is this very commitment to the right and our sensitivity to direction from the Lord, as well as our honesty of heart, that are being tested in this probationary state.

### **Usefulness of Reason**

This analysis suggests that the Lord does expect us to use all the tools he has given us in a diligent and rigorously honest way in the pursuit of truth. Although I have already indicated that reason is inadequate to insure the discovery of truth, it is extremely useful in identifying error. There are many ways in which reason can be used to reveal erroneous or problematic claims to truth. We can identify contradictions or gaps in our own system of beliefs as we examine them rationally. Reason will also help us to identify inconsistencies which need repair that might occur between our own beliefs or ideas and the beliefs of the prophets as recorded in scripture. And it will help us compare alternative courses of action. That is, it will help us if we have developed our ability to think and to use our rational capacity.

But reason is not adequate to show us definitively which answers are true. We will always be in need of an omniscient friend to point out the way, to let light through the clouds and darkness, to open our understanding to truths and explanations we could never have thought of from our positions of ignorance.

I would like to refer to a couple of scriptures which illustrate some ways in which the Lord expects our reason to be involved in the process of receiving revelation. To explain Oliver Cowdery's failure to translate the Book of Mormon, the Lord said:

*Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.*

*But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. [D&C 9:7–8]*

On a later occasion it appears that Edward Partridge and others may have inquired of the Prophet as to how they should travel to the land appointed for their new residence. Seeking direction on this point, the Prophet was instructed:

*Wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me.*

*For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;*

*For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.*

*But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned. [D&C 58:25–29]*

The point of this scripture seems to be that these people could have counseled directly with the Lord and between themselves in seeking an answer to this question without troubling the Prophet for direction. The power was in them wherein they were agents unto themselves. It was only by exercising that agency that they could gain a reward. And yet the exercise of that agency clearly included counseling with the Lord.

The Lord delights to bless his children, and when we need answers quickly to questions where we cannot help ourselves, he does not take from us that opportunity of coming to our own decisions. We are promised the guidance of the Holy Ghost in all things. It is my belief that as we exercise our agency in humility and righteousness, the Lord will warn us spiritually should we begin to go astray. I also believe that at every stage of the process of analyzing a problem and formulating a decision, those gentle promptings are available to help us find our way and come to the proper course of action.

This process is illustrated rather well in the development of the Welfare Program of the Church. This program was not revealed full blown to the prophet or even to the Brethren in the presiding councils of the Church. Rather the need for such a program became evident to these leaders. Through inspiration they selected the individuals who would be instrumental in developing the program. After a rather long prayerful period of counseling together and experimenting with various forms of a possible program, a final proposal was prepared and brought before the presiding councils of the Church. William E. Berrett has given us one account of the results. He says he was in the first meeting in which the Welfare Program was announced to the members of the Church in 1936.

*President Grant related that individuals had asked him whether he had been talking to Heavenly Beings, whether the Lord had given him a vision. His answer was, "No, I have not talked to angels; I have not had a vision." And he recounted that the word of the Lord on such matters was already given. A plan was worked out in accordance to earlier revelations . . . President Grant said that . . . he went before the Lord in prayer to ask him if the plan was acceptable, and he got the feeling from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet that the Lord was pleased. ["Teaching by the Spirit," BYU, 27 June 1966]*

Our decision to follow revealed guidance will always require faith. In this life we can never act in full knowledge until we come to “see as we are seen,” and “know as we are known”—undoubtedly a miraculous gift which is not widely enjoyed.

### The Role of Sin

The iron rod goes along a straight and narrow path. There are many ways in which we can stumble and lose our footing. The most frequent cause of our wandering from that path is sin which clouds our vision and dries up our access to spiritual guidance, leaving us alone to wander with our own dim light and weakened resolve.

Pride is an obstacle for almost all of us. Somehow the requirements of faith seem to threaten our identity. This is probably true only because we choose to identify with things of this world, things which the Lord will ask us to give up. Anticipating that demand, we often find reasons in advance to steer clear of him and his guidance, thereby losing precious opportunities and stunting our own spiritual growth.

Some of us make the mistake of imposing on the Lord our conceptions of him and what he is like, what is good and right, and what is true. He may just let us have our pet beliefs and suffer the consequences. I am reminded of that great sermon in which Moses discussed this matter with the ancient Israelites before leaving them. He said:

*Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of fire:*

*Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a grave image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.*

*And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no*

*similitude; only ye heard a voice.* [Deuteronomy 4:15–16, 12]

Moses was at pains to stress to the Israelites that they did not know what God looked like—quite the opposite of our present missionary approach—because he feared that they would tend to make images of God for the purposes of idol worship. Rather he stressed with them that all they knew about God was that he has a voice. That, of course, is the most important thing to know because the God of Israel can speak to man and tell him what to do. Later in the same sermon Moses warned the Israelites that in the last days their descendants could only be saved from their dispersion if they would forsake their evil ways and hearken to the voice of God once more.

We could also err by blindly trusting in others who seem to be more spiritual than we are. But in so doing we must remember that if they lead us astray it will be no excuse for us at the judgment day. At that time we must each stand on our own feet, on our own performance. We will be judged on what we did with the opportunities and talents given to us. Brigham Young is reported to have warned the Saints many times not to simply rely on his word but to get confirmation of that word for themselves, that they might know his directions were from God.

We need to be sure that our testimonies and gospel understanding keep pace with our learning of the world. Having lived many years in university communities, I have had that sad experience of working with members who have grown too sophisticated to remain faithful to a gospel which they really only understand on a grade-school level. There is always a great danger that faithful members of the Church will find their testimonies threatened by the doctrines of men as they extend their education.

But should our reaction be to simply shield ourselves from exposure to the teachings and theories of the world? Such a posture

communicates a lack of confidence in the gospel itself, or possibly too much faith in reason or science, or both. For either, on one hand, we do not really believe that all truth can ultimately be circumscribed in one great whole with Jesus Christ at the center, or, on the other, we do not appreciate the fundamental limitations on the power of man's reason and science to discover truth about the world, and especially about God.

### **Confidence in the Lord**

I believe that one day we will be able to understand all things, that we will rejoice to see how all things are in the Lord's hands, and that all things in the final analysis will work together for our good. But that vision is beyond human science, and I look forward to it as a matter of faith—faith based on invaluable personal experience with the Lord and his revelations. So I believe we must approach the learning of the world with open minds and with confidence that the Lord can and will protect us from error if our hearts are pure—and not lifted up in pride.

I am thinking of the kinds of confidence expressed by President Tanner in a story he told in General Conference several years ago. I will relate it in his own words:

*Some years ago in Canada I was driving along and had two young men with me in my car, and a young man thumbed a ride with us. I asked the boys who were with me if we should take him with us, and they said yes. I picked him up, and after we had driven along a little way he said, "Do you mind if I smoke in your car?"*

*I said, "No, not at all if you can give me any good reason why you should smoke." And I said, "I will go farther than that." (I was stake president at this time.) "If you can give me a good reason why you should smoke, I will smoke with you." Well, my two young friends looked at me and wondered.*

*We drove on for some distance, about twenty minutes, I think, and I turned around and said, "Aren't you going to smoke?"*

*And he said, "No."*

*I said, "Why not?"*

*And he said, "I can't think of a good reason why I should." [CR, April 1965, p. 93]*

This is not to suggest that I believe there is any procedure by which we can compel the Lord to reveal to us the fullness of the truths for which scientists seek. I have heard some LDS scholars announce such projects, but I have not seen them reach the promised end. The Lord has his own timetable—and his own ways. He has given us all the direction we need to get access to the most important opportunities of life. And he will quickly and constantly provide the daily personal guidance we all need to keep our feet on that straight and narrow path which leads to life eternal. Beyond that, I do not believe he objects to our further inquiry if we can keep all things in perspective. But we have no assurance of receiving early or full answers to our questions. These other matters wait on his good pleasure.

### **Guidelines to Keep Faith**

We need not fear losing our testimonies or our faith through scholarly pursuits if we will observe a few basic guidelines:

1. Keep the commandments. I have heard many stories about intellectual apostasy, but I am not convinced I have ever seen a genuine case. More often intellectual dissent serves as a handy rationale to justify one's sins. Intellectuals who are morally clean, who pay their tithing, and who are not lifted up in pride find no intellectual motives to apostatize.

2. Study the scriptures. The prophets were men of great understanding and inspiration. As we grow and struggle with the problems and questions of life, we will continually find higher levels of wisdom and guidance in their

writings. And the Lord will often use our scripture study as the opportunity to illuminate and expand our understanding through the Spirit.

3. Pay careful attention to the assumptions and limitations of the various forms of human intellectual endeavor. Do not be intimidated by irresponsible claims that some scientists or scholars might make. Develop a responsible awareness of the foundations of any discipline you choose to pursue so that you can assess for yourself the strength of the theories and evidences that are under discussion.

Let me interject that one of the most disappointing things I find as I interview honor students graduating from the university—and I assume that other students have the same problem—is their frequent inability to explain to me the assumptions and limitations of the particular science or discipline that they have been studying for four years. How can you appreciate the strengths and use those strengths appropriately if you do not understand the limitations?

### **Intellect and Faith**

There is a strong sense in which genuine intellectual apostasy is not even a possibility for someone who has had much personal spiritual experience and has obeyed the first principles and ordinances of the gospel by repenting of his sins and receiving the Lord's forgiveness through the baptism of fire. For on one hand, those are clear and undeniable first-hand experiences with the Lord. And a well-educated and honest intellectual knows that none of the moral or scientific theories of man are nearly so certain to be true. They can never transcend tentative hypotheses. So how should he respond to a theory or doctrine, however attractive, that does not seem to square with his understanding of the scriptures? He will very naturally decide to leave the matter undecided until such time as his understanding of the world or the prophets or both progresses to the point that the two will fit together. But he would be a fool to reject that which is most

certain and valuable for theories which he knows are likely to be revised or refuted by future scholars.

Another way of putting the problem of reason and revelation is to ask if revelation must give the same results as philosophical or scientific method to be valid. Because of the narrowness of these two as conceived by contemporary practitioners, the answer must be no. In the interest of time, allow me to point out only one of many reasons. Contemporary philosophy and science have accepted certain ground rules—such as the principle of naturalism—which restrict in advance the range of possible explanations that *can be given* for our observations. Specifically, no explanations are acceptable which refer to the reality of gods or other supernatural beings.

It may well be that such a principle has been necessary for secular science to make any headway when its practitioners represent so many different beliefs about the existence of gods. But it is also clearly true that to the extent that the supernatural world does exist and does interact causally with the world of our ordinary experience, science has arbitrarily erected a barrier against its own free explorations of that essential feature of reality—and has condemned itself permanently to a partial understanding of the truth.

I know some members of the Church have chosen to get very excited about the conflicts they see between the theories of science and the teachings of the prophets. But it seems to me that most of this is unnecessary and only provides the devil with another tool for introducing pointless division into the Lord's kingdom. Take, for example, theories about the origins of the universe and of life on this earth, a subject on which the scriptures do seem to say something. The scriptural accounts seem to impose at least two limits on any theories we might choose to develop. The classical Christian doctrine that the earth and the life forms were created *ex nihilo* (from nothing) is

rejected. On that score Latter-day Saints agree with modern scientists. But the other clear teaching of the scriptural account is that the creation was the work of the gods, that they did it in a carefully ordered way to accomplish their eternal objectives. But science by its own game rules cannot include any gods or purposes in its explanations and theories. So the scientific theories *cannot* use anything besides chance and nature to explain our origins. Should we be surprised, or even concerned, that scientific theory does not recognize the role of the gods? Science operates under that handicap. But once we see that difference, there is a world of interesting facts that scientists have turned up which invite our analysis from a much broader point of view, a view which allows much more than chance and nature in our theories and explanations.

### **Conclusion**

What will happen if we can repent, overcome sin and pride, and humbly seek truth and right at his hand? He will always expect us to use our own resources to the fullest—our reason, our experience, the scriptures, inspired guidance of our leaders, and the gift of the Spirit which gives new guidance and confirmation as necessary. We will come to know of his never varying goodness. We will learn that he always promotes good and warns us from evil. We will become convinced of his great love and mercy for us. How else could he tolerate us and labor with us so long and patiently and forgive us our sins? We will learn that he will exalt us above our own weaknesses to the extent that we allow it. We will gain an increasingly adequate understanding of the real world. We will learn to see the hand of God in all things. This will enable us to get both ourselves and others into perspective. On one hand, we will see the divine potential of each individual as a son or a daughter of God. On the other hand, we will recognize that as vile

sinner we are forever doomed to misery if we repent not and cultivate not the heavenly gift.

Mormonism is a distinctively intellectual faith. From the very beginning great importance has been placed on giving a full picture of the world and its relation to God to the humblest member. Our members pride themselves on the ability to explain in detail the reasons for the interesting and different doctrines of this restored gospel. We can explain why we are commanded to be baptized for the dead and why the Word of Wisdom was given. Doubtless, we carry this too far, sometimes providing semiauthoritative explanations for things we really do not understand at all. But we have a much higher tolerance for that speculative error than for the attitude which tells us we should rejoice in inconsistencies when they are discovered and the lack of logic or apparent wisdom in the commandments of God. Such claims are foreign to the scriptural and the prophetic views. When we object to someone's teachings on the grounds that they do not make sense, it is a false spirit that replies, "That is the beauty of it." This is not to say that the Lord provides us with the explanations for all things. Some of the most basic teachings of the gospel are left unexplained, and we do accept them simply on the basis of faith. But overall, the Lord has provided us with a coherent picture of him and our relationship to him. He has blessed us with the ability to see continuity in our experience with him and all our daily experiences. It is because of this continuity and coherence that we are able to separate out day by day truth from error that we might grow to know and understand him and his commandments better.

### **Education and Opportunity**

Just fourteen years ago I stood at this very podium to give a valedictory address to my graduating class. It has been interesting for me to note that I am delivering very much the same message again today that I prepared at

that time. The primary difference is that I felt in 1967 that, as a graduating class, we needed stronger encouragement to take seriously the possibilities of spiritual direction in our daily and academic endeavors. Today, I have tried to emphasize the dangers of substitutes for true spiritual experience. I think the difference in emphasis is due more to the changing times than to changes in me, although I may be wrong. As I look back on my own educational experiences, the two most important things I learned at BYU were, first, a knowledge of the Lord and his gospel and of his expectations of me; and second, an ability to read good books, to understand the views of others, and to think independently in evaluating those views. We constantly remind ourselves that our bodies are the temples of God, that we should keep them fit and clean. Our morning streets are crowded with people jogging to maintain fit bodies. I am concerned that we are not jogging our minds sufficiently. Paul has remarked in the book of Timothy that the exercise of the mind and the spirit is far more important than

the exercise of the body (see 1 Timothy 4:8). How can God reveal sublime truth to muddled minds? We must prepare an ordered mind so that he can say to us as he has on many occasions to his children anciently, "Come, let us reason together." As President Lee is reported to have said, "It is good to be faithful, but it is better to be faithful and competent." The youth of today face the greatest challenge that has ever been presented by the Lord to his servants—that of preparing the world for the last days. Their ability to handle the problems that they face will in large measure be a function of the seriousness with which they have taken their educational opportunities. In closing, I plead with you not to be misled by those who would have you believe that spirituality is simply an emotional state. Seek to prepare yourselves that you can approach the Lord with a clear and open mind and that you might be able to understand and follow his word when you receive it. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.