

Building BYU: Our Shared Values, Our Challenges, and Our Opportunities

REX E. LEE

Let me begin with a couple of personal observations. The first concerns my health. I get enough inquiries from time to time that I know many of you are interested. I appreciate that interest. As confirmed by my principal oncologist in my most recent visit last month, my health is as good right now as it has been in several years. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father and to my wife and my doctors for this favorable circumstance—and grateful to so many of you for the prayers that have been offered in my behalf.

Now the other personal report concerns my effort over the past year to improve my humility. I've had a couple of recent experiences that have greatly contributed to that effort, and I need to report them to you.

Two or three months ago I bought a bolt-end of material suitable for making suits. When I took it to a local tailor, he informed me that there was simply not enough in that bolt-end to make a suit that would fit me. Later that day, when I was in Salt Lake, I happened to drive by another tailor's shop and decided to get a second opinion. To my astonishment, I was told: "Oh, sure. I can make you a suit from that fabric and, if you like, a second pair of pants and a vest." I expressed my surprise and told him of my other conversation earlier in the day. He replied, "Well, you've just got to remember

one thing. You're not nearly as big a man in Salt Lake as you are in Provo."

Some of you may conclude that I've taken a slight bit of license with that first story, but I assure you that this second one occurred exactly as I tell it. At last spring's Blue/White football game, I noticed that one of the freshman running backs was from Eagar, Arizona, a neighboring town to the one in which I grew up. After the game was over, I went down to the field, sought him out, and said, "I understand you're from Eagar. That's interesting, because I'm from St. John's." His response was, "Oh yeah, and who are you?"

Over the course of a year I give a lot of talks. It would be difficult to rank most of them in importance, but one is clearly in a class by itself. I consider it the most important talk I give each year—both from the standpoint of the setting and the substance, and also the amount of agonizing that I invest in it. It is this one: the address that I give to the faculty and staff each year in August. This is my annual opportunity to share with you, my fellow toilers in the BYU vineyard, my reflections on

Rex E. Lee was president of Brigham Young University when this address was delivered at the BYU Annual University Conference on 24 August 1992.

where we are, where we are going, and what challenges and obstacles we need to overcome in order to get there.

In my opinion, Brigham Young University is basically sound. Sound philosophically, educationally, financially, and in the dedicated spirit that the great majority of its people have toward the institution, toward its sponsoring Church, and toward our own particular individual responsibilities. Surely, in these areas as in all others, there is room for improvement. But any visit to another university campus—and any review of the financial and relational problems that beset so many American universities—leads me to count my blessings that I am here and not somewhere else.

The past year has been one of the most interesting and rewarding that I have ever spent, and I am grateful to have been part of what has happened at BYU during the 1991–92 school year. Most prominent among the highlights, in my view, were the drafting and finalization of several core documents, such as our statement on academic freedom and our standards for promotion and tenure. Other highlights have included the dedication of our new Joseph Smith Building; the completion of the language residence halls; the work of our long-range planning committee, which, as our provost has explained, will continue, with a focus this year on long-range planning at the college and departmental levels; four Olympic medals won by BYU people, including two silver by Frank Fredericks; the launching of the Honor Code Council, composed totally of students, who are providing education and leadership to the students and support for the faculty in implementing the Code; 10 Western Athletic Conference championships; and many others. To be sure, if I had the year to do over again, there are some things I would change, but I repeat: On the whole, it has been one of the most satisfying years of my life. Across the entire campus, the past year has been marked by positive signs of progress, improvement,

and accomplishment. This is a place where we teach and learn and think and create, a place where we build souls and minds, and over the past 12 months we have, on balance, done it quite well.

The coming year promises to be even more interesting. The dedication of our new fine arts museum will bring to our university and our community some of the finest cultural opportunities in the Intermountain West. I am something of a latecomer to the joys of art museums. I discovered my fascination for them just 17 years ago. But I am a true convert and, with you, I look forward to the enrichment that this new museum will provide for us and others. Both its construction and also its operating costs come from donated funds, and I express my gratitude and admiration to our many generous donors, to Dean James Mason for his tireless and successful efforts, and to our LDS Foundation and BYU Development staffs who, incidentally, through their effort and yours, are just completing the most successful fundraising year that BYU has ever had.

I believe that over the past 20 years or more the quality of our faculty—and therefore the quality of our teaching, scholarly, and creative work—has steadily increased. The same is also true of our support staff, and I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the faculty and the administration, to express our profound gratitude to those dedicated workers at BYU who keep our buildings clean, mow our lawns, cook our meals, provide our housing services, run our bookstore, type our letters, answer our phones, and in every other way provide the support services essential to our academic mission. Without those services, this or any other university could not function. Without the quality of those services that we enjoy, our university could not function at its present levels. And so to all of you, I say thank you. We will now be pleased to view a photographic thank you to the many “behind the scenes” people

whose contributions never go unnoticed and need to be publicly recognized.

[Multimedia Presentation]

Our most important objective for this year is the same as it has been for every year of our existence. There are lots of ways to put it, from Brigham Young's instruction to Karl G. Maeser to teach not even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the spirit of God, to the Doctrine and Covenants' mandate that we acquire learning by study and also by faith.

BYU is unique among American universities because it incorporates the restored gospel as an integral part of its academic program. It is also true that both our uniqueness and also our effectiveness are enhanced to the extent that we use the Restoration to inform what we do academically. We firmly reject the notion that we must choose between being either a high-class university or a seminary. We don't just become a great university and incidentally, as a side-light, maintain our spiritual heritage. Our great strength is in the mutual support that each of these derives from the other.

May I share with you the following journal entry from one of Jae Ballif's students last spring semester reflecting on the impact that Bob Speiser has had on her life:

"My professor, Dr. Speiser, has a great love for the logic and exactness of geometry. His enthusiasm has really opened my mind in a way that has changed the way I think. After a particularly intense discussion on angles, half-planes, and space, he paused to share some of his thoughts on the beauty of this subject and how it describes our world. He is not a member of the Church, but he quoted from our Doctrine and Covenants, Section 88:45-47, which reads: 'The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand? Behold all these are kingdoms,

and any man who hath seen any of the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.' Somehow, studying perhaps 'the least of these' in the beautiful theorems of geometry, I felt that I could see the majesty of God's creations."

Thank you Jae Ballif, thank you Bob Speiser, and thanks to the student, whoever you are, who wrote that beautiful paragraph capturing a magnificent example of what we are all about at BYU.

Over the three years that I have held my present position, I have noticed a steady improvement in our willingness to be quite open about our uniqueness. We see it more and more as a strength, as an important pillar in our larger academic endeavors. I think one of the reasons for this is that we are becoming good enough academically, measured by the standards that the world uses, that others not only see our good works, they also respect us for the fact that, at this place, the entire package of those good works is a bit larger and has more dimensions than at other schools. It is neither needful nor expected that we do all things the same as other universities. Our uniqueness, tied to the Restoration, is our great strength, and this uniqueness is our contribution to American higher education. Because of us, America's colleges and universities, taken as a whole, are more interesting and more diverse.

Last winter semester I started a practice that I will probably continue this year of periodically having lunch with some of our students, selected on a first-come, first-served basis. They were non-agenda lunches at which I simply asked the students to tell me what was on their minds. The one comment that clearly dominated was a desire that we make a greater effort to incorporate values—solid, hard-core, gospel-related religious values—into our academic program. I am generally optimistic about our trend in this respect. But we still have a long way to go. We don't hide behind

our scholarship any more than we hide behind our religion. The relationship between the two is not antagonistic, it is synergistic. We don't justify incompetence because of religion, and neither do we justify secularity because of academic excellence.

The recent suggestion that the only thing the Church can do with BYU is to sell it—because the purpose of universities is to challenge established postulates, whereas religious organizations exist for entirely different and inconsistent purposes—is borderline nonsense. Its basic defect is that it proves too much because it would necessarily apply not only to religious institutions, but also to religious persons. Followed through to its conclusion, the argument that religious universities are doomed to failure because the work of the academy—in contrast to that of religious entities—is rational and skeptical would mean that no person who is serious about his or her religious beliefs could ever make it as a university professor. In other words, it's too bad that people such as James E. Talmage, Harvey Fletcher, and Henry Eyring were so hung up on their religion, because but for that fact they could have been successful teachers and scholars. The same point applies to hundreds of people in this audience.

My own profession is one which rests solidly on the foundation stones of skepticism and challenge to existing postulates. I have experienced neither impediment nor discomfort in this fact because I have come to understand that there are some areas in which skepticism is important and others in which it is inappropriate. Nothing in my religion requires me to abhor all skepticism, and nothing in my professional life requires me to be a skeptic in all things. My approach to what I do in the temple is different in some ways from my approach to what I do in the Supreme Court. Both are very important to me, and over the decades that I have been involved in both, I have found no incompatibility between the

two. Indeed, properly understood, they are mutually supportive, and their compatibility ultimately ties back to the scriptural injunction that I hope is the lodestar for all of us: "Seek learning, even by study and also by faith."

I want to say something about our continuing need to be concerned about the level of compassion, empathy, and care that we show not only for our students, but for all persons with whom we come in contact in any kind of university-related way. This is an issue that affects all of us. In some respects it affects the staff more and in some ways the faculty are more crucially involved, but none is unaffected. At bottom, what I am asking for is nothing more than a continuing application by every person who works here of foundational golden-rule principles.

I think that by and large we do an amazingly good job of remembering that the various people with whom we deal—students, applicants for admission, family members of students and applicants, tithe payers, employers of our graduates, and all visitors to our campus—are real, living, individual human beings and not just abstract numbers. They have feelings, and those feelings can be hurt. It is very easy for any of us to slip into the mindset of the monopolist: Because we have a larger number of highly qualified applicants than we can accept, we can afford the monopolist's extravagance and cut back on the quality of our service.

The place where this issue is probably the touchiest is in our Admissions Office, as our admissions people know so well. But it also reaches into every corner of what we do. If you work in the Registrar's Office, or Food Services, or Housing, or University Police, or you teach or advise students, or you work with our performing groups, or you answer the phones, or you are the president of the university, or you just happened to be on campus when a question is asked: Every one of us, every hour of every day, is necessarily

a BYU ambassador. At times this may seem unfair, but the entire university may be judged for good or ill based on what you do and say to people with whom you come in contact. Constantly, I see examples of this: appreciation for extra-mile courtesies and thoughtful acts and disappointment and even bitterness where such qualities are lacking, or where they are perceived to be lacking.

Civility ought also to be our watchword in our dealings with each other. Things happen periodically that remind us of our continuing need to be sensitive and respectful in matters pertaining to gender and other types of discriminatory conduct and expression. This issue generally is one that is receiving a great deal of attention in many corners of our society. And properly so. It is an issue that needs attention. Earlier this month I participated in the annual judicial conference of our nation's largest federal circuit, and I noted with interest that one of the four issues explored in some depth during that conference bore the label "Gender Bias in the Courts." The NCAA phrases the issue a bit differently, and with perhaps a slightly different focus. One of the three most important issues currently consuming that organization's time and attention is entitled "Gender Equity." At BYU, as elsewhere, the issue is an important one, in need of proactive attention. I invite all of us, therefore, to make an affirmative effort to eliminate useless and harmful stereotypical language, attitudes, and mind-sets from everything we do. Root and branch—but especially root—stereotypes have got to go, ranging all the way from our employment interviews to what we say and do in the classrooms and, more generally, to all of our social and other informal contacts. And I am speaking of categorical attitudes about both women and men. The effort to rid ourselves of generations of pernicious stereotypes affecting women is hardly served by bringing into being a new generation of stereotypes about men.

One of the most important tasks presently underway at BYU is the examination of our throughput challenges—the length of time that it takes to graduate. The references that we have made over the years to our four-year school have developed into a virtual euphemism, as our average has converted into almost six years. The reasons are multifaceted, complex, and sometimes interrelated. The expanded time required to graduate is not a phenomenon unique to BYU. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that most American institutions of higher education are facing an average throughput period of just under six years.

But the fact that others are also dealing with this problem does not make it any less serious a problem here. Neither does it mean that there is nothing we can do about it. The issue is particularly crucial for us, because if we can get that six-year average back down to four, we could for that reason alone increase by one-third the number of students to whom we could offer a BYU education. Some of the relevant issues will require board of trustees approval; some are matters with which we can deal; and some (such as our requirements for religious education and the comparatively high marriage rate among our students) are matters we do not want to change. As our study of these matters proceeds, and our understanding of the issues broadens, we will be making further proposals. Virtually all will involve you. One matter that warrants immediate attention concerns the increase in major requirements, and we have asked that each department, particularly those whose major requirements are above the 60-hour standard, give serious consideration to reducing the hours required to complete the major.

One of our strongest emphases over the past year—and also over the coming years—has been and will be academic freedom and, more specifically, academic freedom as it applies to our university. I believe that the work done

by our specially appointed Committee on Academic Freedom over the past year may be one of the most significant occurrences at BYU in recent times. The committee was composed of some very thoughtful and talented people, and collectively they occupy a broad and diverse range of interests and viewpoints. I thank and commend them for their excellent work, and all of you for your input.

Academic freedom is an indispensable mainstay of any university. It has a special significance at BYU. Because our scope of inquiry is broader, reaching into religious as well as secular realms, our need for a free environment in which we study, teach, and learn has a correspondingly broader reach.

As the committee's report correctly recognizes, there are actually two components to academic freedom. One is the freedom of the individual to pursue areas of interest and concern free of outside pressure or inhibitions, and the other is the freedom of the institution to determine for itself what kind of institution it will be.

Both of these components of academic freedom are essential to any university worthy of that label, and they are particularly important at BYU. Let me say just a word about each of them. The theoretical underpinning of individual academic freedom is that truth can be best pursued in an atmosphere free from unwarranted inhibitions on the development and expression of thoughts and ideas. Perhaps the most eloquent statement of this proposition is found in Milton's *Areopagitica*, in which he defends the principles of free speech and free press and more specifically argues against prior restraints by contending as follows: "So Truth be in the field. . . . Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter." This phrase, "So Truth be in the field. . . . Let her and falsehood grapple," was always one of my two favorites that I used in teaching the free-speech portions of constitutional law. I found it sweetly ironic

that John Tanner, chair of the committee that drafted our academic freedom document, is an expert on Milton. There are two other quotes that I have found helpful. One comes from Justice Holmes: "The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." And the other is John Stuart Mill's observation that "he who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that."

Actually, these affirmations by Milton, Holmes, Mill, and others are simply other means of expressing the foundational principle that has always underlain our missionary efforts: All we ask is that you hear us out; give our truths a chance to be heard and considered.

The basic premises underlying institutional academic freedom are in some respects the same and in some respects different. The classic statement comes from Justice Frankfurter: "The four essential freedoms of a university" include the freedom "to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study." *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* 354 U.S. 234, 263 (1957)

In other words, freedom of expression protects more than just the solitary individual or team of colleagues expressing his or her or their views. It also protects groups, organizations, institutions. As stated by Justice Frankfurter, when applied to academic institutions it includes the right of the school, acting through its duly constituted policy-making bodies, to decide, as a matter of the institution's academic freedom, what kind of school it will be, who will teach, what will be taught, how it will be taught, and who will attend. And these institutional rights rest not just on contract or on property ownership, but even more fundamentally on principles of freedom—academic freedom—probably rooted in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

In most of their applications, individual and institutional academic freedoms are mutually supportive and constitute a smooth and harmonious working tandem. There are some instances where accommodations have to be made between the two. The basic reason accommodations are necessary is that in neither its individual nor its institutional component is academic freedom an absolute, unencumbered guarantee. Indeed, I know of no freedom of expression, nor an other freedom of any kind—no matter how important as a free-standing right—that is unlimited. Every freedom, indeed every right of any kind, is subject to being tempered because of other interests—personal, governmental, or other institutional—that must be taken into account.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution is phrased in absolute, unqualified language: “Congress [which means government at any level] shall make no law. . . .” The language is unequivocal. Government “shall make no law.” It does not say that government shall make no unreasonable laws or unduly burdensome ones. Rather, the language appears to permit no laws, no restrictions, whatsoever. But over the two centuries that our First Amendment has existed, it has never been interpreted as containing absolute guarantees. The seemingly boundless language is in fact subject to some rather significant limitations, including those dealing with subversive speech, defamation, obscenity, fighting words, and others.

Those of us who work at BYU enjoy a greater measure of academic freedom—in the largest and most complete sense of that term—than we could ever expect at any other school. The reasons go far beyond the obvious fact that here, unlike public universities, there are no prohibitions against such activities as religious discussion and prayer as part of our academic program. More significant than the absence of these negatives is the existence of some positives. For the large majority of us, the

restored gospel and its constituent principles are of central importance, and similarly important are the interrelationships between principles of restored truth and the postulates of our academic discipline. Given these realities, academic freedom in its broadest sense—and for us, its most important sense—includes as one of its cornerstones the freedom to integrate these two overriding interests, and to do so as part of our legitimate, and expected, academic endeavors. As stated by the faculty members who drafted our own academic freedom statement: “As a religiously distinctive university, BYU opens up a space in the academic world in which its faculty and students can pursue knowledge in light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . To seek knowledge in the light of revealed truth is, for believers, to be free indeed,” Brigham Young University, with its two campuses, constitutes the only four-year university in the world where this kind of side-by-side study of restored truth and secular knowledge is not only recognized as legitimate, but positively encouraged. When it comes to matters that really count, therefore, our range of uninhibited academic freedom is both broader and richer than at any other institution in the world.

But this does not mean that academic freedom here is without limits. For reasons already stated, any expressive freedom carries some limitations. The same is true of academic freedom. Fortunately, at BYU they are fairly narrow in scope and have a quite identifiable focus. Not surprisingly, what those limits attempt to prevent is the degradation of the Church’s interests by its own employees. The general principle, as stated by our academic freedom document, is that we are not to do or say things that will “seriously and adversely affect the university mission or the Church.” The examples identified by the committee were (1) contradicting or opposing—rather than analyzing or discussing—fundamental Church doctrine or policy, (2) deliberately attacking

or deriding the Church or its general leaders; or (3) violating the Honor Code. These three examples are not intended to be exclusive, because there may be other activities that could “seriously and adversely affect the interests of the Church.”

Does the committee’s document anticipate all of the circumstances that might be covered by the general principle “serious and adverse effect on the university mission or the Church”? Clearly it does not. Equally clearly, it would be impossible to do so. And in the fact that the committee members opted for general principles rather than specificity is, in my view, one of the great strengths of their overall product. It seldom works for a legislative or quasi-legislative body to attempt to anticipate in advance all specific applications of a general principle. Rather, the better approach is to state the general principle, and let the specifics evolve through a case-to-case decisional process in light of the particular facts as they are presented by individual cases. The opposite approach is not only a bad idea, in most cases it just will not work.

In one sense, this new document is not new at all. It simply restates the commonsense principle that most of us have accepted for a long time: We will not use our positions and the resources that go with those positions, all of which are provided by the Church, for purposes that will be harmful to the Church or to the Lord we worship. The “new” aspect of this document, therefore, is that it gives us a more precisely stated framework within which to operate. One of its principal attributes, as well as one of its greatest strengths (though necessarily an unstated one), will be an overlay of common sense, goodwill, and those human qualities so beautifully summarized by the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants that will pervade its implementation. In the great majority of instances, you and I will be the principal players in that implementation.

Whereas the academic freedom document quite properly is limited to activities that seriously and adversely affect the interests of the university and the Church, I would hope that all of us, not as a matter of contractual or other obligation, but just as a matter of good sense, pursuant to our shared interest in the university, would always take into account the effect of what we do on the larger institution. The document drafted by our faculty committee is not tantamount to a statute in the sense that once we have brought ourselves into compliance we need have no further concern about the underlying academic freedom values on which that document rests. The document itself summarizes generations of experience and tradition and provides a helpful foundation on which we can build. But our real aspirations for both individual and academic freedom, as well as our aspirations for building BYU into the kind of university that it can and must be, will rest not with any document nor any standard susceptible to institutional enforcement. Rather, it rests solidly on the collective strength that will come from the individual visions and efforts of every one of us.

Several have asked about the statement of August 16, 1991, by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve concerning participation in certain symposia. That statement was issued to all Church members, as advice from Church leaders whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. It was not limited to BYU, nor to persons employed at institutions of higher learning, but it surely includes all BYU personnel. Because I have been asked, I am happy to share with you my own personal views.

I believe that the statement reflects a concern over whether the content of the presentation, either by itself or in context, would be harmful to Church interests. One of the statement’s main thrusts, it seems to me, is that there are certain things we should do privately rather than publicly—certain issues and points of

view that should more appropriately be raised directly with the persons affected, rather than with a broader audience. My own experience—both at BYU and also in other settings, mainly governmental—bears out the wisdom of distinguishing between what is appropriate for public discussion and what can more usefully be resolved in private. I have appreciated the fact that some of you over the past year have asked my advice as you have sought to find the dividing line between the two. I invite you to continue to do so.

In some contexts, agreeing to speak can itself carry an implied endorsement of the symposium, apart from the content of the individual presentation. In the words of the statement itself: “We are especially saddened at the participation of our own members, especially those who hold Church or other positions that give them stature among Latter-day Saints and who have allowed their stature to be used to promote such presentations.”

I find highly significant the fact that the decision to issue this statement was made, after solemn and prayerful consideration, by those whom the Lord has charged with the responsibility of making such decisions. I find further persuasive the fact that the Brethren so rarely make a statement such as this one. If there has ever been another comparable statement during my lifetime, I cannot recall it. I hope we will all take it seriously.

Brigham Young University has no more valuable asset than our shared values. We see this institution as more than just a place where we make our living, and indeed, more than just a place where we teach and learn and study and create. One important aspect of our shared value system that makes my job much easier and more enjoyable is the sense of common ownership that the overwhelming majority of us feel. To a remarkable extent—particularly when compared with other large institutions with which I have been affiliated—there is an absence of “us and them.” We are all “us.”

I notice the manifestations of this in several significant ways, including a deference to decisions that are made by those who are in authority, a presumption (rebuttable to be sure, but a presumption nevertheless) that the judgments which are made are correct, and an even stronger presumption that whether correct or not, they are made in good faith. And I assure you they are made in good faith. This is *our* university, yours and mine. We all have an ownership interest in it, and I am grateful that in so many of our relationships, that common equity interest we share is evident in the way we deal with each other and with our common objectives.

I have really appreciated the periodic inquiries I have had from different ones of you to the effect: “What can I do to help?” Frankly, just asking that question is itself helpful. It shows that you care. And now let me give you my answer. More than anything else, I wish that all 4,250 of us for whom BYU is our employment home would, in addition to fulfilling his or her own immediate responsibilities, rise above those duties and do two things. The first is, remember that BYU is an integral part of the restored kingdom of Jesus Christ, so that our immediate activities are necessarily keyed to the larger objective of kingdom building. Second, ask yourselves, each one of you, what you can do—in addition to performing the particular responsibility contained in your job description—to promote our shared broader interest in the university as a whole. Your indispensable role in implementing the Honor Code is an essential part, but only a part. For about a quarter of a century now, agencies of the federal government have been required by law to analyze the environmental input of any major governmental action that they take. Indeed, the words “environmental impact statement” have become virtually a household phrase. A less formal procedure, but one that serves the same purpose, is an “environmental impact assessment.” What I am suggesting is that on some occasions it would be

very helpful if you would mentally and informally incorporate into some of the decisions you make a “university impact assessment.” Another way of putting it: I am inviting you, as one of my co-owners of this university, to share with me more the long view of what the university’s interests are and how we can best achieve them.

The large aspects of our common endeavor, our BYU, our school in Zion, are quite clear to me. First, our university exists and functions as an integral part of the larger restored kingdom of Jesus Christ, just as each college and department and program is itself an integral part of the university. Second, and closely related to the first, we are primarily an undergraduate teaching university, though our graduate programs, scholarly and creative work, and research are commensurate with and essential to our total university program. Third, we must marshal all of our resources, both qualitatively and quantitatively so as to provide the unique benefits of a BYU education to as many persons as possible who are able and willing to take advantage of it. In this regard several

exciting initiatives are already under way. Fourth, and finally, we are just on the threshold of the era of greatest progress of our history. The key to capitalizing on our opportunities will be found in our shared vision of what we can do, and our shared commitment to do it. It is roughly analogous to the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Clearly, it is important for us to be concerned with a few basic “thou shalt nots.” But even more important are our opportunities to help each other—and in the process, ourselves and our university—through positive, affirmative, proactive efforts. It is good not to set fire to the house. It is even better to make the house a better place to live.

Abba Eban once said of a certain group that they never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Over the coming year, and beyond, our opportunities are abundant and bright. Working together with you, pursuant to our common interest, I look forward to those opportunities. That our Heavenly Father will bless us toward that end is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.