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the TEMPLE & the COLLEGE on the hill



By President Henry B. Eyring

If all the improvements, what touched my heart most as we arrived Friday was the sight of the sacred temple on the hill, so close to the University that it seemed a part of it. When we came here in 1972, people spoke fondly of the “College on the Hill.” The two original pioneer buildings and even the ones built later seemed to stand only a few feet higher than the surrounding land. But to those who loved it and saw it as the Lord’s school it appeared elevated. They felt they were going up, up to the college on the hill.

MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD

The scriptures speak of attending a temple as going up to the mountain of the Lord’s house. When searching for temple sites, the Lord’s prophets look for places where those who approach could have the feeling of going up. In my days serving in the Presiding Bishopric I was charged at times with bringing back, from trips across the world, information about possible temple sites. The questions when I returned from the Lord’s prophets always included how the site would appear to the people coming up to it; they wanted those people to feel a sense of elevation. For the same reason, a temple’s interior is designed to give patrons the experience of rising.

The early Saints, as they created pioneer settlements in the American west, watched for elevated places for the future temples they dreamed would rise. They often referred to those places as, “Temple Hill.” That was true here. When we arrived I was told that the small hospital, where our fourth son was born in our first year, was on “Temple Hill.” The early settlers had their dream fulfilled but not on the hill they expected. The hospital has now been replaced by one much larger and better. And a living prophet has placed a beautiful temple of the Lord high above yet integrally linked to His new university, which was born out of the little college on the hill.

My purpose today is to tell you something of the miracle it is to have both the Lord’s house and this university on one hill in Rexburg. Having described that miracle, I will suggest how best to recognize and so receive the blessings which can flow from it.

The miracle has at least three parts: first, that the temple and the university are side-by-side on one Rexburg hill; second, that the two were created together at this time; and third, that the few but significant differences between the university and the temple should combine so well to accomplish the Lord’s

purpose.

First, there is the miracle of location. This is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. The prophecy for the Latter Days is being fulfilled. The Gospel is being taken to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Yet, even with the generous spread of temples across the earth, only the tiniest fraction of the members can reach a temple of God without great sacrifice in time and means. And there are more millions in the Spirit world who feel that pain and frustration that their faithful descendants feel that Temple ordinances are not being made available to them. In the time I was in the Presiding Bishopric I provided to the Lord’s prophets the information they requested to make the agonizing choice of in which place people could have the blessing of a temple within their reach and which would have to wait.

SIDE BY SIDE

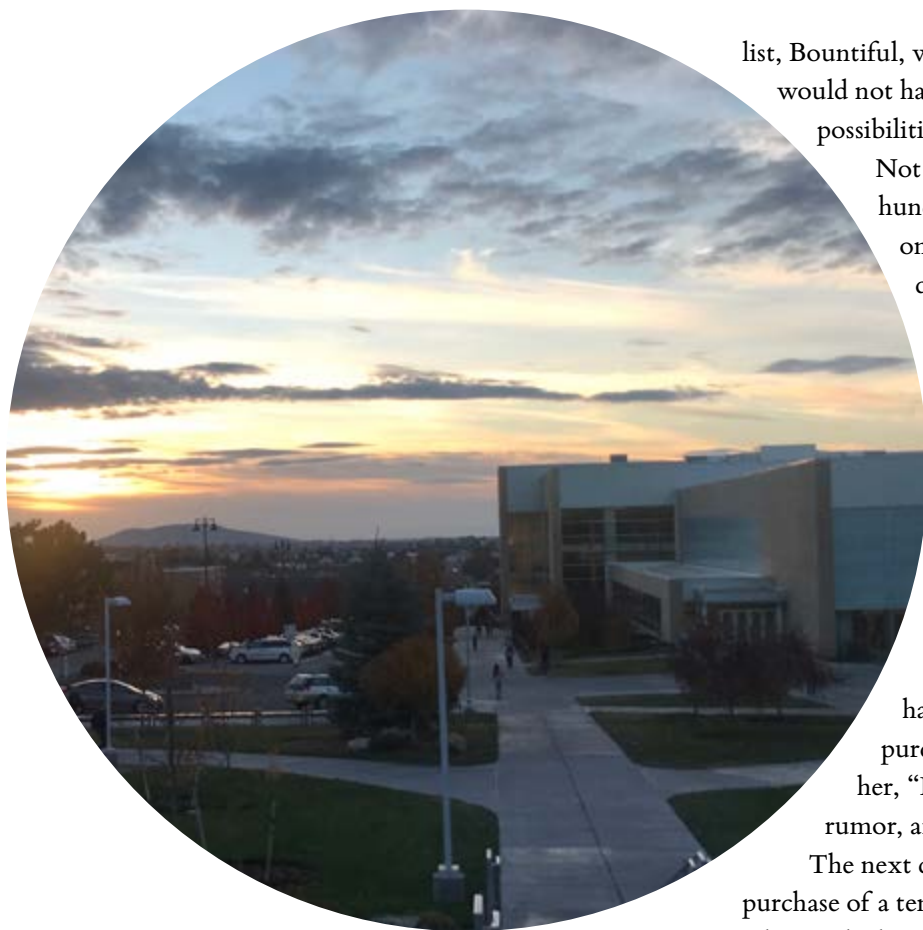
The prophets make similarly difficult decisions about Church universities. The chance to learn in such a faith-filled community as this is out of the reach-but not out of the hope-of thousands. Their missionary experiences and the blessings of the Perpetual Education Fund fuel their desires for learning in the powerful way possible here. In the time I was the Commissioner of Education for the Church I helped the prophets respond to people begging for campuses like this. In many cases, they offered land and donations. Some offered already established schools if only we would take them over.

Time after time I had to write kindly responses on behalf of the prophet to help faithful people accept his judgment that the Church could not responsibly invest and spend more in higher education.

“the **MIRACLE** it is to have both the **LORD’S HOUSE** and this **UNIVERSITY** on **ONE HILL IN REXBURG.**”

Before serving in the Presiding Bishopric and as Commissioner of Education I presided over what was then called Ricks College. In those days there were those who dreamed that the college would become a university. As the president of Ricks College, I explained countless times the reasons why it would remain, perhaps forever, a two-year school. I told them traditional universities, the kind with graduate programs and competitive athletic programs, are terribly expensive. They seemed to never understand. Temples are also expensive, not only to build but also to operate. With a large temple just down the road in Idaho Falls, it was hard to imagine a temple in Rexburg. In fact, my later experience in the Presiding Bishopric seemed to confirm that conclusion: none of the lists of places needing and deserving

PHOTOGRAPHS OF REXBURG TEMPLE AND BYU CAMPUS BY BECCA STUCKI



a temple that I prepared for the Presidents of the Church had Rexburg on them.

I use the word miracle in describing the location of this university next to a temple on one hill because I know that only God could have done it. Human judgment would have kept Ricks College at two-year status and allocated the Church's resources for higher education someplace else. Human judgment would have placed the temple somewhere else. But human judgment could have foreseen neither smaller temples operated primarily by volunteers nor a university capable of serving many students at high quality and low cost. That this university and this temple are on a hill in Rexburg is a miracle because God, not man, revealed new designs for each and placed them here together.

God performed these miracles by revelation to his prophets, not through the people who advise them. I say that from personal experiences in providing advice on both universities and temples, and then watching God speak to his prophets, sometimes taking my help and sometimes more often not.

Just like Rexburg, Bountiful was never on the list of recommended or even possible temple sites during the time I was doing the work for the Prophet of God. In the late 1980s, in fact, a brilliant man working for the Presiding Bishopric and for me prepared a list, using careful statistical analysis, of one hundred places deserving temples. I delivered it to the President. Based on the criteria we used to make that

list, Bountiful, which is where my family and I then lived, would not have appeared in the second or third-hundred possibilities.

Not many weeks after I sent the list of one hundred sites to the President, our son John, the one born in the old Madison Memorial Hospital, came home from the Bountiful Seminary. He announced with some enthusiasm, "A Dad in seminary today told me that the Church has purchased a site for a temple on Bountiful Boulevard." I said to him with great emphasis, and some annoyance, "John, I am in charge of evaluating and buying sites for temples. If you look as if you even think that unfounded story might be true, people will believe it."

Within a day or two, my wife said that she had heard in Relief Society that the Church had purchased a future temple site in Bountiful. I told her, "Kathy, I am in charge. That is an unfounded rumor, and you mustn't even appear to believe it."

The next day in the media, the Church announced the purchase of a temple site in Bountiful. I called Clair Bankhead, who worked with me buying temple properties and sites. I asked, "Clair, why didn't you tell me?" He said, "President Benson told me to buy it and not to tell anyone. So I did what the Prophet asked."

When John came home that day after hearing the news, he said with a smile, "Now I know what it means for you to be in charge." So did I. And now so do you. The Prophet, who holds all the keys of the Kingdom, including the keys of the sealing power, is directly accountable to the Lord for temples. Others may help, but the Lord decides and tells His Prophet. It was a miracle that Bountiful, twenty minutes from Salt Lake and twenty-five from Ogden, received a temple. Likewise, it is a gracious gift of God that Rexburg has a temple so close to Idaho Falls, when people across Asia and Africa and South America still sacrifice so much time and means to reach a temple of God. The miracle is that the Lord inspired, and the prophet obeyed. And now this hill has a temple on it next to a university.

CREATED TOGETHER

As with the Rexburg temple, I know from personal experience that this university's being on this hill is a miracle granted directly by God through a living prophet. One day in early 2000 President Hinckley asked me to follow him to his office after a Board of Education meeting. I was the Commissioner of Education at the time. I wondered why he had invited me there. After I sat down in his office, his first...