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# Forum Address

Charles Malik

Mr. President Oaks, Mr. President Wilkinson, my friend Dr. Walker, members of the administration and faculty of Brigham Young University, students of the University, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I assure you, my friends, it is a distinct pleasure for me to address you here this morning. I spoke to this community more than once before, and always I felt wholly free, wholly myself. And today I feel the same. The secret lies, no doubt, in the fact that I am in the presence of people who fear God. To fear God is the beginning not only of all wisdom, but, believe me, of all joy and all freedom. May you always be filled with these three things: wisdom, freedom, and joy—the wisdom of God, the freedom of God, the joy of God, because you fear God and hold Jesus Christ in special honor.

## DÉTENTE

I want first to make a few remarks on the question of détente.

The word "détente" means that you had a state of international tension and it is now being relatively relaxed. Channels of communication are now open and some agreements reached. People are less afraid of each other than before; they are on constant talking terms with each other; and in such a climate one could not say that war was around the corner.

The necessity for détente is the danger of nuclear war. Whoever knows the *abc* of nuclear war will at once concede that it is unthinkable. No man, no statesman, in his right mind, whatever his faith and whatever his ideology, can accept the prospect of mankind thoroughly annihilating itself, for whatever reason. The atom and the nucleus have radically altered all previous calculations with respect to war and peace.

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A forum address delivered at Brigham Young University, 18 November 1975.

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If the choice, then, were genuine, certainly any rational human being would accept the strict preference: better red than dead!

But this choice is neither genuine nor strict.

Firstly, if by being dead somebody is still left over on your side, and the red is changed into white or at least into pink, then to be dead may be worthwhile.

Again, the slogan, better red than dead, is formulated from the Western point of view. Therefore, the question arises: why should it not be formulated from the other point of view? Why should it not read: better democratic and free than autocratic and dead? Why should the pinch of the unimaginable danger of nuclear war be felt more on this side than on the side of the adversaries of freedom and democracy?

How to make it felt at least equally on the other side is the principal challenge of high statesmanship today.

Again, open societies remain open, and, within limits, they should remain open. But what about closed societies? Should not *détente* be interested in seeing them open up? Or is *détente* just an end in itself? These are very crucial questions. The open and the free cannot indefinitely remain open and free if it does not seriously promote openness and freedom in others. Nor can it indefinitely continue to exist if it is perpetually infiltrable and subvertible from within.

Again, the ideas of those who are opposed to freedom and democracy are spreading all over the world far more rapidly than your ideas, and that precisely under the umbrella of *détente*. Nobody—and I know what I am talking about—nobody among the youthful leadership in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East is reading Locke or Rousseau or Jefferson or the Declaration of Independence. They are all reading Mao or Ché Guevara or the vast literature of Marxism-Leninism. Thus the battle of ideas and fundamental attitudes is being lost. I ask in all respect: Do you accept that your role in the world be reduced now only to that of providing material goods and military might, and of having nothing or very little to say, with conviction on your part and effectively towards others, in the realm of intellectual and spiritual values, in the realm of fundamental ideas and basic attitudes?

Finally, my friends, I am not sure that even in the matter of the balance of military and political forces *détente* has been advantageous. Are you stronger or weaker now, relatively speaking, in terms of naval and conventional forces, and even in terms of the strategic deterrence of the atom and the nucleus? I do not know the authoritative answer to

this question, but all I read makes me feel uneasy about it. The fact that China herself has expressed profound uneasiness on this matter, though, of course, for different reasons from mine, is most significant. And politically, how about Portugal? How about Italy? How about Greece and Turkey? How about the outlook in Yugoslavia? How about many another situation in the Eastern Mediterranean? How about what happened in Southeast Asia? How about the Latin American world? How about many a situation in Africa? How about what is happening in the United Nations? I know there are bright spots in all these areas, but I am speaking of the net outcome, the overall trends, the total picture.

My friends, I am all for détente as a negative measure to render nuclear war, if possible, impossible. I am all for increased and deepened contacts, for sustained cultural and economic exchanges, for patient negotiations on all matters. But, if under cover of détente you lose in other respects, or you are lulled into a state of false complacency, then détente is not exactly the greatest achievement you are capable of. It does not do you justice. You can never move from the negative measure of détente to positive measures of real, historic, world statesmanship except if you act from conviction on fundamental questions; I mean, questions on the nature and being of man, and freedom, and truth, and righteousness, and God. If we lose our grip on our deepest, we forthwith lose our grip on ourselves. And then nothing matters. Your deepest problem, therefore, is precisely to rediscover your deepest.

#### LEADERSHIP

My second set of observations relate to the problem of leadership.

I respect all men, and it is from disrespect for none that I say there are no great leaders in the world today. In fact, greatness itself is laughed to scorn. You should not be great today—you should sink yourself into the herd, you should not be distinguished from the crowd, you should simply be one of the many.

The commanding voice is lacking. The voice which speaks little, but which when it speaks, speaks with compelling moral authority—this kind of voice is not congenial to this age. The age flattens and levels down every distinction into drab uniformity. Respect for the high, the noble, the great, the rare, the specimen that appears once every hundred or every thousand years, is gone. Respect at all is gone! If you ask whom and what people do respect, the answer is literally nobody and nothing. This is simply an unrespecting age—it is the age

of utter mediocrity. To become a leader today, even a mediocre leader, is a most uphill struggle. You are constantly and in every way and from every side pulled down. One wonders who of those living today will be remembered a thousand years from now—the way we remember with such profound respect Plato, and Aristotle, and Christ, and Paul, and Augustine, and Aquinas.

If you believe in prayer, my friends, and I know you do, then pray that God send great leaders, especially great leaders of the spirit.

A great leader suffers in a hundred different ways, and keeps his suffering to himself.

A great leader survives both his suffering and the fact that nobody knows anything about it.

A great leader loves being alone with God.

A great leader communes with the deepest the ages have known.

A great leader knows there is a higher and there is a lower, and he always seeks the higher, and indeed the highest.

A great leader fights against the spiritual forces of darkness and disintegration, both in his own soul and in the world.

A great leader overcomes himself, rises above himself, daily, minutely.

A great leader is very polite, but he never tones down the truth just to please others.

A great leader never seeks fanfare and publicity—they come to him, and often he rejects them.

A great leader never craves the approval of the world—in fact he often intentionally provokes its disapproval.

A great leader hitches his wagon to the remote, the unattainable, the stars.

A great leader does not worship quantity, multiplicity, perpetual motion—he stubbornly sticks to the one or at most two ultimate truths that there are.

A great leader is very simple, but the moral force of his conviction shines through every tone of his voice and every gesture of his hand.

A great leader lets the oneness of his interest burst forth with endless creativity.

A great leader is absolutely fearless—fearless because he fears only God.

A great leader loves, not sentimentally, not by making an effort, but with the effortless overflow of God's love for him.

A great leader identifies himself with, and is not ashamed of, the deepest in his own tradition.

A great leader is never disturbed by the fact that other traditions too have their own deepest.

A great leader is decisive, yet with the utmost tentativeness and tenderness.

A great leader, under God, does not care if he is crucified—there is something he knows and sees in the distance infinitely more important than to avoid crucifixion.

A great leader knows what the Bible calls “the fulness of the time,” I mean the time in which he lives, and God gives him the grace and the power to fulfill that fulness.

You insult a great leader if you call him great; he does not want your judgment; he wants only to please God.

A great leader calls forth the most secret and the most sacred impulses of those whom he leads.

A great leader leads those who are not even aware that they follow him, but only rejoice in the fact that he leads them.

A great leader is at the forefront of danger, be it physical or moral danger, when danger strikes.

A great leader heals.

And so I say, my friends, if you believe in prayer, and I know you do, then pray that God send great leaders, for that is the world’s greatest need.

#### THE UNIVERSITY CRISIS

The third section of my address concerns what I term the university crisis. You are celebrating this year your Centennial. I congratulate you for your great achievements in the past and I wish you far greater achievements in the future. It is with your Centennial celebrations in mind that I make my remarks.

Of course, Mr. President Oaks, there are administrative problems, financial problems, curriculum problems.

Of course, how to relate the sciences to one another, how to make them (or even to make branches under any one of them) communicate with one another, how to introduce peace and order between and among them, is a great problem.

Of course liberal education is fighting for its life, the social sciences are in a state of flux, philosophy is under a thick cloud, and God knows what the theological seminaries are teaching or whether they care that what they are teaching is true.

All this that I am saying is true not only in this country, but throughout the world.

University existence today, ladies and gentlemen, is afflicted with these and many similar problems.

But in my opinion the heart of the university crisis (and of course part of the crisis is that it is not recognized that it exists) is the expulsion of God from the campus.

If Christ were to come to the world today, there is one place where he will not feel at home—one place where he will be a total stranger—and that place, speaking generally, is the university campus. He simply, my friends, is not wanted there. I assure you I know what I am talking about.

And, of course, this is justified, the expulsion of Christ and God is justified, in the name of pluralism. As if pluralism is pluralism if one of the many—Christ, and what a one!—is excluded. As if a university can be a university if one aspect of human existence—the religious aspect, and what an aspect!—is left out!

Now all universities arose—all of them in Europe at least—arose in the womb of the church, and the great majority of American universities were founded on God or on Christ, and in order, among other things, to serve the ministry of the church. And this their origin, their foundation, their first cause, they—I mean the greatest of them—have now completely moved away from. This is very strange—to forget your origin, to turn your back on your first cause.

And this is, of course, called progress. If you honestly inquire into the deepest definition of what is called progress today you will find that progress consists in how far you are away from God. The more progressive you are, the farther away you are from God; and of course the more reactionary you are, the nearer you are to God. Whatever else you might or might not be is only an adornment, an embellishment, an accident to this central thing. The important, the decisive thing, is that to be “progressive” you must either deny God, or forget about him, or live and think and act as though he did not exist, or as though, if he existed, he made no difference—or indeed the wrong kind of difference. In any event God and Christ are not a fit topic for polite conversation in a “progressive” society. And of course, the university has to be “progressive” in this sense.

And this banishment of God from the university has brought about in its trail a complete divorce—as President Wilkinson quoted me as saying—a complete divorce between scholarship and morals, between intellectual excellence and moral excellence, between mind and spirit, between the perfection of the idea and the perfection of the person; nay indeed between the existence of the idea and the existence

of the person. For today, my friends, persons no longer exist, but ideas exist, and how! You can be almost anything in your private life today, but if you answer to the norms of scholarship (in my opinion, mind you, excellent and necessary norms), namely, to certain standards of intellectual skill, you will graduate with honors, you will receive ready appointment on the faculty, and your quick promotion is assured.

In this way man is considered a product of the academic factory, much as a pair of shoes is the product of the shoe factory, and not a whole human being, with all that this means and implies, in terms of freedom and grace and brokenness of spirit before the truth, and in terms of the ability to listen.

Again—and this is most important—take the humanities and the social sciences. Consider the subject matter of the lectures and the contents of the textbooks. Inquire minutely into the kind of philosophy behind what is being taught and read. Whether you are examining economics, or politics, or sociology; whether it is art or literature or philosophy or history or even so-called theology; you will find that the underlying philosophy of the lecturer or textbook is some species of materialism, naturalism, scientism, atheism, moral relativism, Freudianism, hedonism, immanentism, the interpretation of man as the pure product of the social and economic conditions under which he lives, and of his racial and cultural background, the will to power, or at best—at best—self-sufficient humanism. You will hardly find in these lectures and textbooks any reference to, or any trace of, order, rank, excellence, higher and lower; any reference to, or any trace of, the valuable in itself, being in itself, the first in itself; any reference to or any trace of grace, love, community, adoration, quiet, waiting, the enraptured silence; any reference to, or any trace of, God, Christ, spirit, the saints, the faithful, the great souls of history, the Bible, the great sacred music.

Is this state of affairs healthy? Is it right? Do you accept it? What are you doing about it? Under its sway, can you look with confidence to the future—the future of your children, the future of this country, the future of Western civilization? And by “you” here I do not mean this university but the United States as a whole, the body of American universities as a whole.

I wish, therefore, that some foundation, or indeed this university, would donate a couple of million dollars for this project: namely, *the investigation, on a strictly scientific basis, of the underlying philosophy, as to the nature of man, and history, and society, and truth, and happiness, and destiny, and the ultimate values and things, behind*



*the humanities and the social sciences, that is, behind the disciplines which determine the fundamental ideas and attitudes of youth, in the twenty or thirty greatest American universities, both in the thinking and character of the lecturers and in the literature that the students are asked to read.* I cannot conceive of any two million dollars being used for a more worthwhile purpose. I assure you the results of this inquiry will be startling, and might awaken America as nothing else would as to what has been happening in its greatest halls of learning in these all-important realms of the mind and the spirit.

I put it then in the simplest possible terms—even at the risk of my simplicity being an oversimplification—that the most fundamental crisis in university existence, in America and in the Western world today—because I know the situation and I know it well—is the disastrous divorce between intellect and character, between mind and spirit, between man and God.

And this divorce at the heart of the university is the ground, the source, the origin, the ultimate cause of all the ills in Western civilization, including America's domestic problems, including the incredible drama of Watergate, including the terrible ordeal this country went through in Vietnam.

The situation, therefore, brooks no further delay in seeking remedies for it. And yet when I think of it, I think of it with infinite humility. I have no illusions whatever about the practically insuperable difficulties involved. God and Christ, my friends, are not going to return to the university tomorrow, or next year, no matter what anybody does. In fact they may never return to it, in which case Western civilization will be doomed. But I believe they will return to it, but not tomorrow or next year. I am afraid it is going to be a very slow and costly process. Mankind would be very lucky, and God would be loving it more than it deserves, if God and Christ should find themselves at home in the university in a generation or even in two—or even when you celebrate your Bicentennial a hundred years from now. And yet, this is the ultimate issue today and always: how to annul the divorce between God and man, how to reconcile God to man and man to God.

And here I must make one point perfectly clear, because I have been misunderstood in certain places. I am speaking of the university and not of the church, and in the university I will tolerate no sloppiness in scholarship whatever; I demand the highest scholarship and creativity in all fields of science and learning; in the university I do not want godliness at the expense of scholarship; but neither do I hope for

scholarship without godliness. The question is whether the two are incompatible, whether in the nature of things you can only create intellectually away from God. It would be terrible if this were the case, and therefore I believe the expulsion of God from the university is artificial and accidental. Not until he returns to it in full glory, not until the most authentic scholarship resides side by side with the deepest and most sincere love and adoration of Christ, either in the same person or in different persons on the same campus on a vast scale, can we really look for real hope for Western civilization and the world.

I spoke of the problem of leadership. Will the right leaders arise who will see the need—the desperate need, the need of needs—and dedicate themselves to working day and night for meeting it—working not sentimentally, not with the expectation of quick and easy success, but working wisely and intelligently, and with the full knowledge of the forces of rebellion and darkness and opposition that will meet them at every turn? I do not know the answer to this question. Only God knows. But let nobody fool you—this is the question today.

#### AMERICA

Finally, a few words only about America. I need not tell you how much depends on America today. You know how much America means economically, politically, internationally. But much more than that is bound up with the fate of your great country and your great people.

Man and his dignity are bound up with the fate of America.

Freedom and fairness are bound up with the fate of America.

The continuity of history—and you are celebrating in this university your Centennial this year, and the country as a whole will be celebrating the Bicentennial of its founding next year—I say, the continuity of history is bound up with the fate of America.

The preservation and strengthening of the fundamental values of Western civilization are bound up with the fate of America.

Respect for the sanctity of the individual human person is bound up with the fate of America.

Faith in God and in man is bound up with the fate of America.

And so when we speak of America, we are speaking of something on which much depends, something from which much is expected—expected both by God and man. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48).

Not that these things are not found elsewhere. For just as you have no monopoly of the evil that wells out from the heart of man, so

there is no good in America of which you will not find at least a trace—and sometimes much more than a trace—abroad.

The distinctive feature of America is the fact that its immense potential for good is conjoined to its immense actuality of power. Sheer good without power is powerless, and sheer power with no good to carry and convey is at best useless and at worst demonic.

This is the calling of America: to place its immense actuality of power at the disposal of its immense potentiality for good. The ability to do this can only come from God. Therefore, the calling of America is cheerfully to let itself be enabled by God.

And in all these realms I see today evident signs of hope.

People in this country and throughout the world are raising fundamental questions. The soothing, tranquillizing, hackneyed clichés no longer satisfy. People are more serious. They are really searching. Gone are the flippant days of the sixties. The reserves of goodness in this country are immense—they are waiting only for somebody to tap them, to call them forth. The industrial machine of the United States remains the most productive in the world, and capable of the most potential growth. The nuclear deterrent of this country remains very respectable. There are millions of wonderful families, living and bringing up their children in the fear of God. People abroad continue to place much of their hope in America. They continue seeing in America the principal bulwark of freedom. The universities remain great centers of learning, despite their many problems, and I have the deepest respect for the standards of scholarship in the best of them. The churches, each in its own way, continue their task of healing, saving, bringing Christ to thirsty souls. I know that Jesus Christ is wonderfully living in this country.

There are, then, these and many other signs of hope. But they remain hope, though hope grounded in faith.

And so if we really believe, my friends, we should pray, and work together, and accept suffering and sacrifice, and we should have the courage of our convictions when it comes to the deepest we know.

For the greatest single evil today is this blanket of fear and intimidation spread all over the world, so that people do not dare to stand up for their convictions.

But nothing great has ever been accomplished in history, nor indeed can it ever be accomplished, except through fearless courage in the face of the greatest terrorization. This is the now forgotten way of how really to live—I mean, the way of the Cross. The world needs today the unterrorized man—indeed, the unterrorizable man.

And so, as you celebrate the Centennial of this University, and as the country moves towards its Bicentennial, I pray you all to consider on your knees how much God has blessed you and how much therefore you owe him.

*For you owe him everything.* And once we realize how much we owe God, then, since we can never give him anything commensurate in return, we can at least pay him back tears of gratitude and love.