

## **The Road Less Traveled**

John Fowles delivered the following remarks at the convocation ceremony for the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies on August 16, 2013.

Graduates, families, distinguished faculty, and guests: It was an honor to be invited to celebrate this convocation with you. I commend and congratulate each of the graduates for their hard work in arriving at this point and their families for supporting them. I express my deep gratitude for the faculty and staff of the Kennedy Center and the university, who devote their lives to the world of ideas and imparting both substantive knowledge and, more important, essential critical-thinking skills to those who enter here, that they might then be equipped to go forth and serve.

Old habits die hard, and as an international securities lawyer, I found myself simultaneously performing due diligence about you in preparing my remarks. I learned a little about your backgrounds, your studies, and your internships abroad. Some of you participated in the Model UN program, one of the most important experiences that BYU provides. I realized that I would be willing to endorse you based not only on what you have learned and achieved but, more important, on who you have become through your studies here. To phrase it like a securities lawyer, I would underwrite you, just as the Kennedy Center and BYU are underwriting you, in certain important respects, by awarding you this degree today.

### **“Do Fidem”**

I learned something about such an endorsement when I graduated from Oxford. The dean of my college took me by the right hand and presented me to the vice chancellor and the proctors as a master’s candidate. We bowed to the vice chancellor, and the dean then certified me and the other master’s candidates, taking the same degree to them in the presence of all witnesses observing the ceremony. A proctor then put us under oath to the university, and we each bowed our heads, saying, “*Do fidem*” (“I swear”), in unison.

We left the building and changed from our student, or commoner, robes into our full

master's robes, with hoods designating our degree, and returned to present ourselves to the vice chancellor, who welcomed us back and indicated for us to take our places in the raised seats of the congregation behind him. Master's and doctoral candidates who were joining the faculty in addition to taking their degrees knelt down before the vice chancellor, who repeated an ancient formula that began, "To the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the profit of the Holy Mother Church and of learning." Then invoking his own authority and that of the university to bestow the right to do those things pertaining to the relevant rank, be it doctor or master, he closed by touching each candidate on the bowed head with a New Testament while saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."