

lowing the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert L. Simpson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

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The Choir sang "Oh Lord, I Would Hear Thy Word."

Elder Robert L. Simpson offered the invocation.

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### President Benson

We note with regret the passing of President N. Eldon Tanner, who at the time of his death was serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Tanner's death, President Spencer W. Kimball designated President Marion G. Romney as his First Counselor and President Gordon B. Hinckley as his Second Counselor. And this action was later approved by the Council of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve. In view of this, it is proposed that we sustain President Marion G. Romney as First Counselor in the First Presidency and President Gordon B.

Hinckley as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

All in favor please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

With the exception of these Brethren we have just sustained, and noting the passing of our dear friend and brother, Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve, there have been no changes in the General Authorities since the last conference. It is proposed, therefore, that we sustain all of the General Authorities and general officers of the Church as at present constituted.

Those in favor please manifest it. Those opposed by the same sign.

### President Benson

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "He, Watching over Israel."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang "He, Watching over Israel."

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

I hope you enjoyed that magnificent anthem presented by the Choir—"He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps." It is from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and the words are adapted from the Psalms. (See Psalm 121:4.)

As we unite in this great world conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I should like to use those wonderful, reassuring words as something of a theme. I pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit.

### President Spencer W. Kimball

President Kimball is unable to be with us in person. However, he pre-

sides and is in his hotel apartment across the street where he joins with us as the proceedings are carried to him by closed-circuit television. He is not in the hospital, as rumor would have it, nor has he been for many months. He is not in a coma, as some have said. He dresses each day. But he is weak, and his body is tired. He recently commemorated his eighty-eighth birthday and is feeling the effects of his advanced age and the cumulative effects of the surgical procedures he has undergone in the past. What a magnificent example he has been for all of us. He has given impetus to this work in a remarkable way. The whole Church has quickened its pace and lengthened

its stride in response to his clarion call. He has been a prophet to us, a prophet whose vision and revelation have reached out to the people of the entire earth, regardless of nation, or color, or station in life, freely offering the matchless blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will accept. He sends his love and blessing to all of you. I was with him yesterday, and he did so. We love him and we pray for him. Our hearts incline toward him with affection, and our pleadings in his behalf ascend to our Father in Heaven.

### Presidents Romney and Tanner

President Romney is likewise experiencing difficulties. He too is feeling the effects of age and the natural wearing process of scores of years of vigorous and unrelenting activity in furthering the work of the Lord. He has asked that he be excused from speaking. We shall hear a message from him which he prepared earlier and which will be read by his son, Bishop George J. Romney.

We greatly miss President N. Eldon Tanner, who served as a Counselor to four Presidents of the Church. He passed away last November 27. During months previous to this, notwithstanding illness, he continued to give from his great store of experience, wisdom, and inspiration.

We likewise shall miss in this conference the stirring testimony of Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve. For forty-five years he stood at the pulpit in this Tabernacle bearing witness to the truth of this "marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14). Millions were touched by the eloquence and sincerity of his testimony.

### Divine genius of Church organization

We feel deeply the absence of these great leaders. Their absence has

placed upon others of us an awesome responsibility. I thank the Lord for his sustaining blessings. I thank my brethren of the Council of the Twelve for their great kindness and their strength and wisdom. For twenty years I was a member of that unique and wonderful quorum of able and devoted men, each called of God and endowed with the holy apostleship. I love them as my brethren. Each holds the keys of this dispensation in latent reserve. Inherent in that divine residual is the assured ongoing leadership of the Church.

I am grateful for my brethren of the First Quorum of the Seventy and of the Presiding Bishopric. Brethren and sisters, there is unity in the leadership of the Church. I think that unity has never been stronger.

The divine genius of the organization of this work and of calls to leadership is evident. The General Authorities are all individuals, each with his own personality. Each brings to his responsibilities a wide variety of experience and background. When matters come up for discussion in the leading councils of the Church, each is free to express his views. As one observes that interesting process at work, it is fascinating to witness the power of the Holy Spirit influence these men. Initial differences, never sharp but nonetheless perceptible, soften and meld into an expression of unity. "My house is a house of order," said the Lord. (See D&C 132:8.) In witnessing this process at work, I experience a constant renewal of faith.

I express sincere appreciation also to my brethren and sisters across the world, members of the Church, wherever you may be. I pray that you will be sustained and blessed, that there will be peace in your homes and in your hearts, and that "the pure love of Christ" will be felt in your lives. (See Moroni 7:47.)

### "Be still and know that I am God"

Recently while wrestling in my mind with a problem I thought to be of

serious consequence I went to my knees in prayer. There came into my mind a feeling of peace and the words of the Lord, "Be still and know that I am God." I turned to the scripture and read this reassuring statement spoken to the Prophet Joseph Smith 150 years ago: "Let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

God is weaving his tapestry according to his own grand design. All flesh is in his hands. It is not our prerogative to counsel him. It is our responsibility and our opportunity to be at peace in our minds and in our hearts, and to know that he is God, that this is his work, and that he will not permit it to fail.

We have no need to fear. We have no need to worry. We have no need to speculate. Our imperative need is to be found doing our duty individually in the callings which have come to us. And because, for the most part, the Latter-day Saints are walking in faith and working with conviction, the Church is consistently growing ever stronger.

### Church moving forward

I take occasion now to say to all that the Church is moving forward with great strength and power. I give you my assurance that the work in the office of the First Presidency is current and up to date. Nothing is being neglected, and action is not being postponed. We are operating under direct assignment and authorization from the President of the Church, with whom we frequently meet. It is so also with the work of the Twelve, the Seventy, the Bishopric, and the auxiliary organizations.

We thank the Lord, whose cause this is, for the marvelous growth now

being experienced. The strengthening faith of the people is evident in increased sacrament meeting attendance, in temple attendance, and in the payment of tithes and offerings, which becomes an expression of their love for the Lord and of his generous blessings even in these times of economic distress.

Speaking in this Tabernacle an even hundred years ago, at the April 1883 general conference, President Joseph F. Smith said, "Now, so long as the Latter-day Saints are content to obey the commandments of God, to appreciate the privileges and blessings which they enjoy in the Church, and will use their time, their talents, their substance, in honor to the name of God, to build up Zion, and to establish truth and righteousness in the earth, so long our heavenly Father is bound by His oath and covenant to protect them from every opposing foe, and to help them to overcome every obstacle that can possibly be arrayed against them or thrown in their pathway" (*Journal of Discourses*, 24:176). Those words are as pertinent today as they were when spoken a century ago.

The Almighty is blessing his church and his people. He is watching over them. He neither slumbers nor sleeps as he guides, directs, and moves in his own "mysterious way His wonders to perform" (*Hymns*, no. 48).

### Loyalty to our leader

Some express concern that the President of the Church is likely always to be a rather elderly man, to which my response is, "What a blessing!" The work in this dispensation was first put in place through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was at the time young and vigorous, one whose mind was not set in the traditions of his day. His was a youthful mind which the Lord could mold as fresh, moist clay as he initiated his work.

Joseph's successor was relatively young when he was faced with the ter-

rible responsibility of leading an entire people across the wilderness to pioneer a new land.

But the basics of our doctrine are now well in place, and we are firmly established as a people, at least until the Lord should mandate another move. We do not need innovation. We need devotion in adherence to divinely spoken principles. We need loyalty to our leader, whom God has appointed. He is our prophet, our seer and revelator. We shall never be left without a prophet if we will live worthy of one. He does not need to be youthful. He has and will continue to have younger men to travel over the earth in the work of the ministry. He is the presiding high priest, the repository of all of the keys of the holy priesthood, and the voice of revelation from God to his people.

There is an old proverb which says, "Youth for action. Age for wisdom."

To my mind there is something tremendously reassuring in knowing that for the foreseeable future we shall have a President who has been disciplined and schooled, tried and tested, whose fidelity to the work and whose integrity in the cause have been tempered in the forge of service, whose faith has matured, and whose nearness to God has been cultivated over a period of many years.

I do not worry. I am honored in the opportunity to serve with him who now stands as the prophet to this people. And when there comes the time for change, whenever that might be according to the will of the Lord, I shall sustain without reservation him whom the Lord appoints under the process he has established for succession in his kingdom, for I know that this is God's work and that he is watching over it now as he has through the years that have gone before. He makes no mistakes.

I have had some opportunity to observe this remarkable process at work.

## **Growth during last twenty-five years**

Today is an anniversary for me. It was at the April general conference twenty-five years ago that I was first sustained a General Authority, an Assistant to the Twelve. Great and impressive to me have been my opportunities during this past quarter of a century. My assigned ministry has taken me over the earth to many lands, to various places where I have seen with my own eyes both peace and war, both prosperity and terrible poverty, both liberty and oppression. I have witnessed the miracles that come with faith. I have seen the evidence of true goodness and greatness in men and women living under a great variety of circumstances. I have observed in a very intimate and wonderful way the workings of the power of the Almighty among his children. I have noted the factors which lead to success or otherwise in the growth of the Church and the development of its members.

When I became a General Authority twenty-five years ago, there were 251 stakes in the Church. Today there are 1,402. Then there were 2,362 wards and independent branches. We now have 13,616. The statistics read in that 1958 conference indicated a membership on December 31, 1957, of 1,488,000. The comparable figure for December 31, 1982, was 5,165,000. Marvelous has been the growth. To use the vernacular, "We must be doing something right." No, we have not done it. It is the Lord who has engineered and directed those forces which have brought about so great a harvest.

## **Follow a steady and uncompromising course**

There is a continuity and consistency in this work that is remarkable to

witness and experience. Its strength and power lie in the ability of every member and every earnest investigator to know for himself or herself by the power of the Holy Spirit that it is true. Critics may wear out their lives in trying to deny or demean or cast doubt, but all who ask of God in faith have the assurance that by the voice of the Spirit will come the certainty that this work is divine.

We need not fear the future if we hold fast to revealed principles. On one occasion the Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Go in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course" (*History of the Church*, 2:431).

I like those words, "pursue a steady course." I hope that we shall never forget them. The Church has grown consistently stronger because those who have gone before us have pursued a steady course. There are those who would fracture our strength by leading us in the pursuit of objectives which are not pertinent to the central mission of the Church. We are constantly invited, yes, even strongly urged, to get out and march with others for this cause or that cause. There are some causes with which we properly should be involved, which are directly related to the Church, its mission, and the well-being of its people. The determination of these must be left to those who have been called to leadership. Such causes will be few, since we must husband our strength and resources for the far greater obligation to pursue a steady course in building the kingdom of God in the earth.

Our great, basic message to the world is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; that he gave his life as a sacrifice for all mankind; that he rose from the grave that first Easter morning, "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20); that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians

15:22); that he lives, our resurrected Lord and Master.

As has been said before from this pulpit, he has given us a threefold mission: first, the teaching of the restored gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; second, the building of the Saints in their faith and encouraging them in all of their activities to walk in obedience to the commandments of the Lord; and third, the great work of salvation for the dead. This vast mission contemplates all generations of mankind—those who have gone before, all who live upon the earth, and those who will yet be born. It is larger than any race or nation or generation. It encompasses all mankind. It is a cause without parallel. The fruits of its labors are everlasting in their consequences. In the pursuit of that mission we must follow a steady and uncompromising course and never be enticed therefrom.

### **Accelerate missionary work**

We must enhance and enlarge our missionary endeavor. President Kimball has repeatedly called for an acceleration of this work.

I know that our young men are under a great obligation to qualify themselves through education to fill positions of responsibility in the world. Their time is precious. But I do not hesitate to promise that the time spent in faithful and devoted service as a missionary declaring the Master will only add to their qualifications for positions of responsibility in the future. Regardless of the vocation they choose to pursue, they will be better qualified in their powers of expression, in their habits of industry, in the value they place on training, in the integrity of their lives, and in their recognition of a higher source of strength and power than that which lies within their native capacity.

### Gauge perfecting of Saints by love

We must be more diligent and effective as we pursue a steady course in instructing and perfecting the lives of our own people. We must hold to first principles. We must prioritize our teachings to emphasize that which is of the greatest worth.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40).

This must be the foundation of our instruction: love of God and love for and service to others—neighbors, family, and all with whom we have association. That which we teach must be constantly gauged against these two standards established by the Lord. If we shall do so, this work will continue to roll forward. We shall become as a city set upon a hill whose light cannot be hid. (See Matthew 5:14.)

### He slumbers not, nor sleeps

Then, in a spirit of love and consecration, we must extend ourselves in the work of redemption of the dead through service in the temples of the

Lord. This service more nearly approaches the divine work of the Son of God, who gave his life for others, than does any other work of which I know.

My brothers and sisters, if we will pursue a steady course in carrying out this great triad of responsibility, then we shall be participants with our Father in Heaven in the accomplishment of his eternal purposes. You and I may fail as individuals and miss the blessing. But his work cannot fail. There will always be those he will raise up to accomplish it. He has declared: "Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isaiah 14:24).

I bear witness to you this morning that he, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps. God help us to be faithful to the great trust he has placed in us, I humbly pray as I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang "God of Power, God of Right" without announcement.

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### President Benson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "God of Power, God of Right."

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Following Elder Maxwell's address, the Choir and congregation will join in singing "Hope of Israel."

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Hopelessness—a modern problem

For many years now—in literature, film, and music—we have wit-

nessed increasing expressions of a profound sense of what has come to be called existential despair, a hopelessness beyond hope. Granted, the