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The choir sang "Our Father, by Whose Name."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin offered the invocation.

The choir sang "An Angel from on High" without announcement.

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### President Benson

The Tabernacle Choir has just sung "An Angel from on High."

We shall now be pleased to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### An unfolding miracle

My brethren and sisters, I greet you with love and sincere appreciation. I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. Today is the birthday of the Church. It was organized 156 years ago, which was "eighteen hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh" (D&C 20:1). Six men participated as the official incorporating body.

Those original six have now become approximately six million. The growth of this work has been a constantly unfolding miracle, and what an exciting and wonderful experience it is to be a part of it. Although storms of adversity have raged against it, it continues to move steadily forward along the course which the Almighty has outlined for it. It does so quietly, without great noise and fanfare, touching for good the lives of men and women across the earth. Its mission is not empire building. Its mission is to teach faith and repentance, and to bring truth and gladness to all who will listen and hearken to its message.

### Personal testimony of President Spencer W. Kimball

Five months ago a solemn gathering was held in this great Tabernacle to mourn the passing of a beloved leader. I speak a few words of personal testimony of President Spencer W. Kimball. For forty-two years he served as Apostle and prophet. His moving example of sincere humility, his out-

reaching love for people, his quiet and earnest declarations of faith have touched all of us. The majesty of his life was found in its simplicity. There was never any of the ostentatious, the boastful, the proud evident in his character. Yet there was an excellence that shone like gold. He was a man from whose life the husk of mediocrity had been winnowed by the hand of God. I loved him with that love which men in the service of the Lord come to feel and know.

### Transition of authority

Now there is another, and during this conference we shall be constituted as a solemn assembly to sustain as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the man who, under the plan of the Lord, has been chosen, ordained, and set apart to this most high and sacred office.

This transition of authority, in which I have participated a number of times, is beautiful in its simplicity. It is indicative of the way the Lord does things. Under His procedure a man is selected by the prophet to become a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He does not choose this as a career. He is called, as were the Apostles in Jesus' time, to whom the Lord said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). The years pass. He is schooled and disciplined in the duties of his office. He travels over the earth

in fulfilling his apostolic calling. It is a long course of preparation, in which he comes to know the Latter-day Saints wherever they may be, and they come to know him. The Lord tests his heart and his substance. In the natural course of events, vacancies occur in that council and new appointments are made. Under this process a particular man becomes the senior Apostle. Residing latent in him, and in his associate Brethren, given to each at the time of ordination, are all of the keys of the priesthood. But authority to exercise those keys is restricted to the President of the Church. At his passing, that authority becomes operative in the senior Apostle, who is then named, set apart, and ordained a prophet and President by his associates of the Council of the Twelve.

There is no electioneering. There is no campaigning. There is only the quiet and simple operation of a divine plan which provides inspired and tested leadership.

### **Personal testimony of President Ezra Taft Benson**

I have been a witness, a personal witness, to this wondrous process. I give you my testimony that it is the Lord who selected Ezra Taft Benson to become a member of the Council of the Twelve almost forty-three years ago. It is the Lord who over these years has tested and disciplined him, schooled and prepared him. At the death of the prophet he was ready, not of his own choice nor of his own design. He was called, set apart, and ordained November 10 last.

As one who knows him and who stands at his side, I bear witness that he is a man of faith, of tested leadership, of profound love for the Lord and His work, of love for the sons and daughters of God everywhere. He is a man of proven capacity, who has been tempered in the Refiner's fire.

I am grateful for the privilege of association with President Benson in the sacred relationship of counselor

to prophet. I am grateful for the association of President Monson. I am grateful that the First Presidency is fully organized and functioning unitedly together.

### **Gospel meets the needs spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically**

Under President Benson's leadership, the work of the Lord will continue to move forward. No power under the heavens can deflect it from its course. We may expect that there will be some who will try. Their efforts will be like chipping away at a granite block with a chisel of wood. The stone will not be damaged, but the chisel will be broken.

As Daniel declared in prophecy: "The God of heaven set up [this] kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, . . . and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

It grows because it satisfies the needs and desires of the human heart, regardless of age, sex, race, or language.

Speaking at this pulpit one hundred years ago, in 1886, Lorenzo Snow, then an Apostle and later the President of the Church, said: "A religious system is of but little account when it possesses no virtue nor power to better the condition of people spiritually, intellectually, morally and physically" (JD, 26:371).

This gospel, when accepted and obeyed, meets the needs of men and women everywhere. It has the power to improve the individual in each of these categories—the spiritual, the intellectual, the moral, the physical.

### **Opportunity of eternal life**

In His great intercessory prayer, Jesus declared: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Such knowledge is the very foundation of spiritual strength. This is the great basic purpose of the restoration of

the gospel in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times—to declare the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. To know them, to love them, to obey them is to have life eternal. It is our mission to declare with words of soberness and truth that God is our Eternal Father, the God of the universe, the Almighty One; and that Jesus Christ is his firstborn, the Only Begotten in the flesh, who condescended to come to earth; who was born in a stable in Bethlehem of Judea, lived the perfect life, and taught the way of salvation; who offered Himself a sacrifice for all, enduring pain and death on the cross; and who then came forth in a glorious resurrection, the firstfruits of them that slept. (See 1 Corinthians 15:20.) Through Him, and by Him, and of Him, all are assured salvation from death and are offered the opportunity of eternal life.

### Spiritual strength

This is the great undergirding truth of our faith. It is the overarching canopy under which we find our spiritual strength. With this knowledge we grow spiritually, our spirits in kinship with the Spirit of God. It is the way out of darkness. It affords the strength needed to rise above sin.

I recently received a letter from a man, a business executive. He told of the waste of his life in corrupt living, of the pain he had caused his loved ones. Then the influence of the gospel came into his life. I quote from his letter:

"I have come to know that I have offended greatly my Father in Heaven and His Son. As I begin to better understand His great, yet wonderful expression of love to me in Gethsemane I have learned to be grateful for His atoning sacrifice and for the process of repentance. . . . I have walked that bitter road of darkness and despair for so many years that I desire now only to come into the light. As I continue to read and ponder the scriptures and plead with the Lord for an understand-

ing and forgiveness of my past, I have come to love Him and never will I offend Him again. I will always try to the best of my ability to pattern my life after His."

### Example of intellectual and spiritual learning

This restored gospel brings not only spiritual strength, but also intellectual curiosity and growth. Truth is truth. There is no clearly defined line of demarcation between the spiritual and the intellectual when the intellectual is cultivated and pursued in balance with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and strength.

The Lord Almighty, through revelation, has laid a mandate upon this people in these words: "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

The other evening I picked up a new publication of the writings of Dr. Hugh Nibley, a man my age whom I have known and admired for many years. On the dust jacket of the book I read these words:

"As a young man he memorized vast portions of Shakespeare and studied Old English, Latin, Greek, and other languages. As a student at Berkeley, he began reading at the southwest corner of the ninth level of the library and worked his way down to the northeast corner of the first level, studying every significant book that caught his eye" (*Old Testament and Related Studies* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.], 1986).

His encyclopedic knowledge has given him tremendous and well-deserved status among his academic peers. It also has made him a powerful advocate of the work of the Lord. His appetite for learning has been whetted by the gospel he loves.

### Thirteenth article of faith

This Church spends a very substantial part of its resources to train the

minds and hands of its young people, whatever their choice of discipline, be it science, commerce, various of the professions, or the arts.

A declaration of our faith reads: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13). This embraces the truth of science, the truth of philosophy, the truth of history, the truth of art. I emphasize the word *truth*. It is a principle set forth in our scripture that "the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36).

The mind of man is the crowning creation of God, in whose express image man was made. The development of the mind is a companion responsibility to the cultivation of the spirit, as set forth in the revealed principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Moral strength

Accompanying these and growing out of them is the development of moral strength. How sorely this is needed in the world in which we live. Were the standards of Sodom and Gomorrah worse than those of many of this generation?

President Benson, in his opening address yesterday, called on us to repent. Fortunately, there are among those who walk in sin at least a few who have come to know that there is something better, and who now long for forgiveness and an opportunity. I extract a few lines from the letter of one who was excommunicated from the Church because of aggravated immoral behavior. He now writes:

"After I was cut off from the Church, the pain and torment were hell. I did not believe anyone could suffer such pain and still live."

He then pleads for help to come back, and expresses appreciation for those who now are putting their arms around him to give him strength.

### Fortify against moral sin

The Church is the guardian and teacher of moral values. Regrettably, there are some who disregard those teachings. Some are enticed by the reading of pornographic writings and the viewing of pornographic materials to set aside self-discipline and become involved in the quagmire of immorality.

In too many cases wives and children become their victims. I have previously spoken from this pulpit concerning child and spouse abuse. I repeat for emphasis an earlier statement:

"Abuse of children on the part of fathers or anyone else has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church. No man who has been ordained to the priesthood of God can with impunity indulge in either spouse or child abuse. Such activity becomes an immediate repudiation of his right to hold and exercise the priesthood and to retain membership in the Church" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, p. 66; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, p. 51).

If there be any within the sound of my voice who may be guilty of such practices, let him or her repent, and as a part of that process go to his bishop or her bishop and confess, seeking help to do the right thing to remedy the evil.

I repeat, one of the great purposes of this work, as revealed by the Lord, is to fortify against moral sin. To the degree that we accept and follow these teachings we shall be a happy and blessed people.

### Promises of the Word of Wisdom

Finally, there are inherent in the doctrine, the teaching, and the practices of this Church, those elements which will improve the individual physically. The body is the temple of the spirit. It is God's creation as a part of His eternal plan.

As I read and hear of the findings of modern medical science, I give

thanks to our Creator for revealing unto His prophet what we call the Word of Wisdom. It sets forth in language spoken 153 years ago principles now confirmed and taught by modern dietary science. With all of this is given a divinely spoken promise, the like of which is found nowhere else:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:18-21).

What a marvelous, remarkable, and unique statement of religious principle that is. It is a part of our doctrine given by an all-wise Father, our Creator, for our physical and temporal good.

I am not saying that disease will not come, that death will not strike. Death is a part of the divine plan, a necessary step in the eternal life of the sons and daughters of God. But I do not hesitate to say that in this brief but inclusive statement of the Lord is found counsel, given with a promise, which,

if more widely observed, would save untold pain and suffering and lead not only to increased physical well-being but also to great and satisfying "treasures of knowledge" of the things of God.

### God be thanked

All of this of which I have spoken comes of the revealed word of the Almighty to bless His children. We invite you, wherever you may be or whatever your circumstances, to come and partake.

God be thanked for this glorious work, for this day of restored truth and light, for the gospel of Jesus Christ. I bear witness of its divinity as I express unto you, my brethren and sisters, my love for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Our Savior's Love" without announcement.

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### President Benson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### "Great pollutions upon the face of the earth"

Recently our family was viewing what was supposed to be a wholesome movie on videotape. Suddenly, one of the actors used a vulgar expression. Embarrassed, we began to smooth this over for our ten-year-old daughter. She quickly assured us that we needn't worry because she heard worse than

that every day from the boys and girls at her school.

I am sure most LDS parents have had similar experiences. The nature and extent of profanity and vulgarity in our society is a measure of its deterioration.

I cannot remember when I first heard profane and vulgar expressions in common use around me. I suppose it was from adults in the barnyard or the