

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is providing the music for this session. They opened this session by singing "O My Father" and will now favor us with "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Sustaining President Benson

My brethren and sisters, President Benson ordinarily would speak to us in the opening session of the conference and extend his warm welcome. We regret that he is not with us. He would wish to be here, and we wish that he were here. It is becoming increasingly hard for him to get out. His age makes public appearances difficult. He is now in his ninety-fourth year. It is not easy for him to do what he once did with such vigor and enthusiasm. His strong and vibrant voice has stirred all of us in times past. His eloquence in expounding the gospel and his tremendous testimony of this work, persuasive in its tone and cogency, have lifted all who have heard him. We miss him and pray that the Lord will comfort him and bless him that he may enjoy much of happiness for the remainder of his life.

His burdens became much heavier when his beloved companion, Sister Flora Amussen Benson, passed away on August 14. They had been married for nearly sixty-six years. They have been an example to the entire Church. He now feels the terrible loneliness that comes to a man with the death of a gifted and beautiful wife, the mother of his children, his great support and comfort.

Our hearts reach out to him in sympathy and love. We pray that the Lord will comfort him and sustain him

and bring gladness into his heart while he yet remains with us as the prophet of God.

He has asked that we go forward with the conference. We do so with his encouragement and with a prayer in our hearts that we will be blessed of the Lord—all who speak—that there may be a great spiritual outpouring among the Saints who will meet in many places and under a great variety of circumstances.

As a reminder of the greatness of his power of expression, and as a reaffirmation to each of us, may I, as we open this conference, give you a statement or two of what he has told us in the past. It is worthy of repetition.

The last and great dispensation

I quote: "This is the last and great dispensation in which the great consummation of God's purposes will be made, the only dispensation in which the Lord has promised that sin will not prevail. The Church will not be taken from the earth again. It is here to stay. The Lord has promised it and you are a part of that Church and kingdom—the nucleus around which will be builded the great kingdom of God on the earth. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God on the earth will be combined together at Christ's coming—and that time is not far distant. How I wish we could get the vision of this

work, the genius of it, and realize the nearness of that great event. I am sure it would have a sobering effect upon us if we realized what is before us" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 19).

Follow the course

"God bless all of us that we may follow the course laid out for us by our Heavenly Father and our greatest example—the Lord Jesus Christ. May we do so regardless of what the world may say or do, that we may hold fast to the iron rod, that we may be true to the faith, that we may maintain the standards set for us and follow this course to safety and exaltation. (See 1 Ne. 8:19.) The door is open. The plan is here on earth. It is the Lord's plan. The

authority and power are here. It is now up to you" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 26).

Such have been the declarations of this man who stands today as the Lord's prophet and our President. We bring you his love, his greeting, and his blessing. And to him we return our love and our loyalty, with a prayer in our hearts that the God of heaven will bless him, comfort him, sustain him, and bring him joy and gladness. I so pray as I give you my testimony that he is the prophet whom the Lord has trained and sustained through all of these years to speak as a prophet unto the nations and as our leader, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Where is wisdom?

Today I would like to pose a question asked long ago by Job: "Where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12).

Leaders of this Church have repeatedly emphasized the importance of education. It is a vital component of wisdom. Not long after the pioneers began construction of their temple in Illinois, they established the University of the City of Nauvoo. The First Presidency proclaimed that this university "will enable us to teach our children wisdom, to instruct them in all the knowledge and learning, in the arts, sciences, and learned professions."¹

A similar scene followed after the persecuted pioneers entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Less than three years later, on 28 February 1850, they instituted the University of the State of Deseret.² Later several academies of learning were established.

Now as Church membership worldwide exceeds eight million, it is evident that a direct role of the Church in secular education is no longer feasible. Yet our commitment to education remains constant.

Scriptures teach that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They also teach that individual "intelligences . . . were organized before the world was" (Abraham 3:22). "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

Our personal intelligence is everlasting and divine. I believe Thomas Jefferson felt that dignity of the human spirit when he wrote, "I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."³