I have one advantage over President Oaks and his father. The time at which I served as a corporal in the 145th Field Artillery was just before Noah's ark. They have claim to a more modern period.

Those occasions on which I come to the Y always serve to put me in a position where my heart beats a little longer and a little faster. And I am in trouble—if I put this manuscript on the podium I cannot see it, and if I hold it up I cannot see you. I’ll hold it up. [laughter] Your youth, your hopes, your fears, your anticipations, your buoyancy, and, yes, your despairs seem to be so much a part of me that as I look at you I want to laugh with joy, but I want to weep also. You are so young and so fragile—and yet seem to have such abiding confidence that you know what you are about and where you are going.

The truth is that in a way you do know where you are going—not perhaps during the next fifty years, but during the eons of eternity. By reading a few words in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants each of you may know where, in a larger sense, you are going. You may have the vain hope that by acting in a telestial or a terrestrial manner somehow you will become celestial. Or you may decide in the first place to be celestial and then really reach that goal. The fact which you will ultimately face, whether you like it or not, is that the Lord God does not lie. He keeps his word, and by keeping that word he will inevitably place you in the kingdom you have earned. You, perhaps, will be glad to be where you are placed, thankful that it is better than you dared to hope. But if it is not as good as you could have had, as soon as you get used to the particular light in the place, you will realize that some of those you love are in a place much brighter, and that you could have been with them but did not choose to so live, but thought, rather, that the earthiness of the earth was more pleasure than the promise of the glory of that heaven where you cannot go.

Then you will be faced with the eternal question which constitutes the torture of living hell: “Why did I do the things which forfeited the glory?” No answer will come to you—perhaps that is what hell is like: eternally asking why but never having the satisfactory answer.

S. Dilworth Young was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 30 May 1978.
We all should take warning that the Lord himself said that there be few who find eternal life, and resolve to be one of the few (see Matthew 7:14).

I have found that it helps me to look back to my beginnings—to know the purpose of my being and of the efforts of certain evil ones to circumvent that purpose. I realize that I cannot see it as it really was, but I can imagine the meaning to me of certain commandments given in the beginning, and see more clearly why I must aim high and be consistent—and not falter.

May I go back to the time when I surveyed eternity—and I assure you that for the next 150 pages this account is purely imaginary. There is not a bit of it that you can claim as doctrine—unless you want to—and I cannot be accused of plagiarizing anything.

Each star declares the ordered law of heaven,  
Each rising sun the order of our day.  
Yet we on earth—  
A small one of creation,  
Held in its place by one law, heaven given—  
Ponder at our terrifying speed through space.  
We know exactly when the moon arises,  
And when the comet flashes into view.  
We look with precise telescopic vision,  
And endlessly count galaxies,  
Each one a million stars,  
Each star so far away that  
What we see today  
Took place so many  
Thousand thousand years ago  
That where they are  
Or what they are today  
We cannot know.  
Then, bursting through the cosmic  
Dark, the voice of prophecy is heard.  
We learn that Kolob is the nearest  
To the throne of God;  
Each revolution takes a thousand  
Of our years to make its day;  
That this great star

Has been assigned by Him who dwells  
On high  
To be the measuring rod  
Of our eternal way. [Abraham 3:3–4]

There was our home!  
Our spirits given birth  
By noble parentage;  
The Father of us all,  
A dweller in eternal light,  
Exalted Maker of the universe,  
Exalted Man.  
We bowed before him,  
Calling him by name  
Our Father, Elohim!  
And by his side  
Our heavenly mother sat  
As was her due,  
Not making earths  
Nor giving them law,  
But doing what a heavenly mother does,  
Teaching her spirit children to be true.  
The spirit children ask, as earthlings do,  
How may we be like Father, filled with light?  
How do we obtain a body  
Firm of flesh and bone? How do we gain the right  
To be exalted?

What do heavenly mothers say  
To heavenly children?  
Then faintly to our souls we  
Hear her sweet reply.  
Obey! That is the law  
Hear all of His commands.  
Obey each one. Listen and  
Hear the music of the spheres,  
Of the worlds as they come into being.  
Learn heaven’s rhythm.  
Your Father gives you freedom  
To obey or disobey, but you  
Yourself must make decision  
If you would learn to live  
In heaven.
I now pick up the words of Abraham (so you will know that I am not plagiarizing):

And there stood one among them
That was like unto God,
And he said unto those who were
With him: We will go down,
For there is space there,
And we will take of these materials,
And we will make an earth wherein these
May dwell. [Abraham 3:24; emphasis added]

We—you and I—are “these.” Some of you here today are among those of whom he spoke when he said he would make some his rulers. But “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” as John said (1 John 3:2), or which of you is designated.

I like to imagine what took place in that great assembly. In my mind I compare it, in a sense—though it cannot be compared—to this assembly today. We are all of the earth but from this position on the stand, we, your leaders, look over your thousands and, if the building were full, your twenty thousands, your vast assembly, and think of how it could have been then as the Father spoke to his children.

Let me try to describe it to you as I have imagined it was in that period of our lives—and I do not pretend to know that this is the way it really was, but I like to think that it might have been rather like this:

The vast concourse of heaven
Gathered at the Father’s call
[as you gather here at President Oaks’s call].
In seats of honor sat the noble ones,
Those spirits bright.
Jehovah sat upon his Father’s right
Befitting one who is the
Firstborn son.
Seated next to him, a brilliant son,
His face illumined with an inner light,
Was Michael, then Gabriel
And Raphael strong.

These great ones standing out
Amid the throng,
And there were others, too,
Whose names were not revealed, but later,
Given earthly names,
Would carry forth the Father’s will,
His every word and plan fulfill.

Then to the left were other brilliant sons
Who liked to win their way by argument
And skill in use of words,
These were the angels of the sharp debate,
Who suited sophistry and logic to their gain.
They had not conquered hate. They had not
Learned that love, that all-inclusive law of heaven,
Implements the law that God has given.
And here among them Lucifer held sway.
No one could say he was not brilliant.
He’d earned his name by brilliant thinking power,
Not faith in Elohim and his great love,
Not being kind,
But by the logic and the process of the mind.
A great star, a son of the morning. [Isaiah 14:12]

The Father spoke:
The multitude of spirit children
Silent grew, and listened
To this great exalted Man,
This Man of Holiness,
Their Father, Elohim:

My children all: You see in me
Exalted man, of flesh and bone
And spirit pure. One time, long
Long ago, I was as you, a spirit son
Of an exalted Father. [see HC 6:302–17]
You may become as now I have become
But you must do as I have done.
I’ll send one of my sons
Out into space
Where matter whirls unorganized
Where he, by my command and his own faith,
Will form this cosmic matter into earth
Where each of you may go, and there
Enter within a tabernacle made of earth.
Each cell within your body will be of the earth.
It will respond to earthly stimuli
But you must conquer it
To your own will
Then bend your will to
Be obedient to my command.
If you obey, you shall be given
Life eternal and
Return unto this heaven
To dwell with me forevermore
To be like me, to share my power,
Joint heirs
With all of my exalted
Sons. I give you now
Free agency: the right
To be obedient, or to
Disobey—this right is
Heaven-given to each one.
If you should choose to
Disobey, you lose your
Place in my exalted heaven.
The heavens rang with
Paeons of exalted joy.
The morning stars sang
Forth their hymns of
Praise.
The sons of God with one united
Voice
Shouted hosannas to the
Lord of hosts. [Job 38:7]
All heaven stirred
In holy jubilee.
All nature trembled
In its ecstasy.

But there were those
Who took no part with
The great joyous throng.
To one side in proud disdain stood Lucifer:
This rabble shouts in ignorance
Of what they face.
My plan was better.
I would give them place
Without an effort on their part
If they would follow me.

If I can gain enough of
Following, I may yet
Win what I might have won,
Take exaltation’s throne,
Displace that favored One,
The Firstborn Son.

We do not know the means
That Lucifer employed
To gain his ends,
Nor do we know just
What is “War in Heaven.” [Revelation 12:7]
But war it was,
Fought with the means
At hand.
The hosts of Lucifer
Made a determined stand
But lost. And mighty Michael
And his angels won.

Out of heaven and into the earth
The hosts of Lucifer were driven.
One-third of all the heavenly
Hosts thus lost their heaven.
No home was theirs among
The concourse of the stars.
Their place was gone.
They had no home
Except to roam the earth,
Unwitting agents in the
Lord’s own plan to
Test the agency and
Freedom granted unto man.

Let us consider for a moment what it might
have felt like to be the first man. I have often
thought of that—like being driven up Rock
Creek Canyon with nothing in the canyon
except rocks, suddenly pushed out from a self-
sustaining Eden into a world where every gain
was made by sacrifice and toil.

Adam looked about him
And surveyed the world
In which he lived.
Forgotten was the glory of his past;
Lost to him by heavenly decree,
His life in Eden lost to memory
His greatest worry how to
Feed and clothe his progeny.
And by him was his Eve,
The fairest of the fair
Of that far day.
A woman filled with loveliness.
She’d borne the pain
Of many children,
Scattered now upon the land,
And raising children of their own.
She’d stood by Adam’s side
When first he tilled the land,
And planted seed. Then
Watched the growing plants
And harvested.
She’d learned to cook and sew
The skins which covered them,
To know
The times of change of the moon,
Of making of a home,
And much about a woman’s softening
Touch upon her man.

Let us listen to a prayer that Adam might have offered—I do not think he did, but he might have (see Moses 5:4).

Adam’s Prayer
O Lord, we have not heard thy voice
These many days.
Our sons and daughters grow
Without thy word.
Their children grow apace
In ignorance of thee—except
To know that once thou smiled
On us, when we began to be.
What shall we tell them, Lord?
What is our destiny?
Shall we ne’er see thee more?
Do we but knock in vain
Upon thy door?

There is always an answer to a righteous prayer, you know.

The First Visions
One day while Adam tilled his field,
A wooden hoe he’d fashioned in his hand,
He heard a voice from over Eden way. [Moses 5:4]
The voice was one he recognized
As of the Lord
With sweet accord he kneeled
Upon the land and wiped the perspiration
From his face. I hear thee, Lord!

He heard the voice say:
Adam, offer sacrifice; begin this day!
Take the firstborn and the best from out
Thy flock or herd, build me an altar, and
With a fire consume the beast.
Take not the least, but best.
No explanation given—
Just that voice from over Eden way.

Adam built an altar on
The highest hill, a platform
Three feet high and ten feet square.
There, he said, I think that will
Do.
He laid the sticks and got the fire
Burning fierce and high
Then slew the firstborn lamb—the best
He had. No scrub was this.
It would have won a prize
At any fair.
The smoke, most black and thick
Rose high into the morning sky.
The stench of burning flesh
Was on the air.
His children and his grandchildren
Gathered round and asked:
Grandfather, why do you
Burn up the lamb,
The best one you have?
And he replied:
The Lord commanded me
And I obey.
I pray you children likewise
Will obey.
Said one: If you must burn a lamb or calf
Why do you take the best?
Why not yon scrubby one?
Then Adam said:
The Lord said take the firstlings
And the best.
Some of his children hastened to obey
And others kept their firstlings from
That day.

The days and years passed by.
At stated times the
Sacrifice was made.
The flocks and herds increased
And Adam thus obeyed
The Lord's command.
One day there stood
Before this loyal man
An angel of the Lord
Who said: Adam,
Why dost thou offer
Sacrifice?
I do not know why,
I
Only know the Lord
Called out of Eden:
I recognized his voice.
I had not heard it
For these many years.
He said: Adam, offer
Sacrifice.
I do not question
When I hear that voice.
I offer sacrifice;
The best I have
The firstlings of the flock.
Some of my children offer too,
Which thing
I wish they all would do.

Then spoke the angel.
You are accepted of the Lord
With all they loyal sons.

This act is a similitude
Of what the Son of God
Will do
When time shall
Reach meridian.
He'll die upon a cross
Then resurrected be
That you may come
Once more into his presence,
With all of your posterity,
If they will obey as you obey.
Each time you sacrifice
You will remember him,
Have faith in him,
Repent of any evil acts
You do.
And be baptized, be born again,
Of water and of spirit.
You will then become his son
As all must do. [see Moses 5:5–8; 6:64–68]
Now teach your children
They, too, must obey the
Lord's command
And offer sacrifice and
Be baptized and worship
Constantly the Lord
Who is to come.
One day those sons of Adam
Who were skeptical
Received a visitor.
An angel came and
Spoke to them (that Lucifer,
That Satan to the world):
Your father had an angel
Speak to him and told him
How to worship God— to kill
A lamb or calf. I laugh at such
Foolishness as he has taught.
I, too, am a son of God.
I say, believe it not!
And they believed it not.
Then Adam sent his
Loyal sons to preach to
Those who errant were,
And by the spirit of the
Holy Ghost to bring them
Back, a promise gave
That, if they would repent
And be baptized, they yet
Could gain their paradise.
And many heard the
Word and came
Repenting to their father’s
Home. [Moses 5:13–15]
But many would not come.
Their selfish hearts
Were filled with earthly sin.
They could not feel the
Words of truth within
Their minds—but
Rather, with sophisticated
Thought,
Believed it not,
And bowed their heads
To riches and to
Gain.

Our mother Eve, the mother of all flesh
Grieved in her heart
The loss of these benighted sons
And grieving, prayed:
O Lord, give me a son
Who will a comfort be;
Who’ll grow to manhood strong;
Who’ll worship thee, the Lord,
And pray;
Who’ll keep all thy commands
Who will not stray.

Then Cain was born.
And Eve rejoiced,
Believing that the
Lord had heard her prayer,
And praised his holy name
And said: I have gotten a
Man from the Lord.
But Cain grew up
Rebellious as had Lucifer
Before:
Who is the Lord, he said,

That I should worship him? [Moses 5:16]
His mother Eve mourned o’er
This errant son.
His father Adam sorrowed
That this son rebelled.

Another son was born.
To them was given Abel
To heal their hearts.
This son was one
To be obedient
To be what they had
Hoped that Cain would
Be, And as he grew in faithfulness
He listened to his father
Adam speak the truths
Of God revealed
To him. [Moses 5:17]
Cain, growing tall and strong
And handsome, as such
Men are handsome,
Looked upon a niece with
Lustful fervor and married
Her. But neither knew the
Lord but turned their hearts
Away from Adam, and away
From all he taught and
From the Lord.
They could not hear Him
Speak, nor feel when he
Had spoken.
Then Satan
Came to Cain
And put into his mind
The Oath, the Oath
Of Hell:
Swear by thy throat
That thou wilt not
Tell this great secret
To thy father Adam
And I will show
Thee how thou
May obtain thy brother’s
Flocks and herds. [Moses 5:28–29]
Then Cain swore by his throat
And Satan made it plain
To him
Just how to murder
And get gain.

Adam called his sons
Unto his side and said:
I heard the voice of him
Who is our God
From over Eden way,
Say:
Offer up an offering this day
A sacrifice, a burning
Sacrifice of firstborn
Calf or lamb—an offering
In blood. And I obey.
So likewise you,
Cain, my son, receive
Command to do
As I have done,
And Abel too.
Each one is to obey.
This is a memorial
To one who when
The time is come
Will offer up himself,
The firstborn
Of all the Father’s children
That we may return
Again into his presence.

Then Abel called his family
And said:
My Father said to offer up
The firstlings of my flocks of sheep
And herds of kine
He said God gave the word.

At his command I’ll build
An altar nigh
And send the incense high
To honor God and to
Obey his word.
The offering to be a sign
And the Lord had respect
Unto Abel, and to his offering;
But unto Cain, and to his offering,
He had not respect. . . .
And Cain was very wroth. . . .
And the Lord said unto Cain:
Why art thou wroth?
Why is thy countenance fallen?
If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted.
And if thou dost not well,
Sin lieth at the door,
And Satan desireth to have thee;
And except thou shalt hearken
Unto my commandments,
I will deliver thee up,
And it shall be unto
Thee according to his desire.
And thou shalt rule over him. . . .
And Cain was wroth, and
Listened not any more to
The voice of the Lord,
Neither to Abel, his brother,
Who walked in holiness
Before the Lord. [Moses 5:20–23, 26]

May I now again return to my imaginary account.

Abel’s wife spoke to Adam:
Abel is not home this even’
It’s growing late, and I
Am worried. Some
Fateful thing, the danger
Of the world, the cliff
O’erhangs the valley.
The streams are running
High,
He might have slipped
And fallen.

Then Adam said:
The morrow, daylight dawning,
Giving light, then I shall go
In search of him.
Likely he has gone too

Far in search of a lost lamb
To return in the dark,
And keeps a fire burning
There
To frighten both
The lion and the bear.

In early dawn he then set forth,
Not knowing the direction of
His going.
But soon he came into the field
Where Abel kept his sheep
And saw upon the ground
The lifeless body of his son,
The arms outstretched
(He could not be asleep),
The eyes half-closed
And sightless,
The white teeth showing
Through half-parted lips.
He spoke; he called;
He touched the stiffened
Arm—with no response.
He somehow knew that
This was death.
He knelt beside the
Stiffened corpse and
Wept.

Then Satan to his minions
Makes it plain:
We’ve taught them how
To murder and get gain.

And now we’ll place
Into their minds
Perversion of the
Sacred act of
Procreation,
This gift the Father
Gave to all who
Come to earth,
When all his sons
Were shown that
Home and hearth
Are given as a
Pattern showing men the way
To heaven.
Go forth, you servants of the Devil,
And let men feel the power which
Comes from evil.
Then they, themselves, will
Carry forth his work,
They’ll lie; they’ll cheat;
They’ll rob and murder too.
They’ll teach perversion of
The heavenly gift.
They’ll seek to spoil
All those that God would save.
They’ll soul and body of mankind
Enslave.

Well, these are the last two pages; you will notice that they are 102 and 103. [laughter]

First Great Lie
The Lie
As Cain drove
Forth his brother’s
Flocks to his own
Land, he heard
The voice of God
Speak to his
Very soul, which said:
Cain: Where is Abel, thy
Brother?
And Cain in
Snarling, deep
Satanic speech
Replied:
I know not. Am I
My brother’s keeper? [Moses 5:34]

The Answer
The Lord said [unto Cain]:
[and this is the account that is in the
Pearl of Great Price]
What hast thou done?
The voice of thy brother’s
Blood cries unto me
From the ground. [Moses 5:35]

You know the rest, and you know that it has gone on all the years since. Ever since that day, the conflict has been whether or not we will obey. And Satan, with all the power of his sophistry and smoothness, teaches us all to break all the laws of God.

We could go on and on and see with introspective horror the proud and haughty Cain, acting in the image of his sponsor, reply to the great question: “Where is thy brother?” answering with one of the greatest lies of all time: “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Let us come back to our day and our time.

The first great law still holds. Obey! Obey the commandments of your Father and my Father. Do what I am sure that our heavenly parents taught you to do in that far day. Have the determination to go back into their presence when the time comes. And come it will, whether you like it or not.

If each of you is not there when the final family gathering takes place, your Heavenly Father will weep, as only an eternal being can weep. Let not any of us cause him that kind of sorrow.

Perhaps it was something like I have portrayed in the beginning. Now, after five thousand nine hundred years (plus or minus) we ourselves need not hear the Lord command Adam any more to desire to obey, for we have the Restoration—the full restoration—and that is that.

God surely lives and is our Father, and we know it. And not Adam but Joseph Smith presented his relationship to us through revelation so that we could understand. Joseph Smith was a prophet just as Adam was a prophet, and also a seer and a revelator. He was given the keys to open the way for us to reach out and find and know our Father and our elder brother, his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Let us not fail to reach, to seek, to find, and above all to obey.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.