

ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I crave an interest in your faith and prayers, my brethren and sisters, that in the short time that I stand before you I may be able, under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, to give utterance to a thought or two that I have had in my mind for some time.

There have been several references to the dedication of the very wonderful monument at Winter Quarters. It was my good fortune, together with my wife, to be numbered with that party. I sat under the canopy and listened to the wonderful addresses that were made by our own leaders and the leaders of the State that was host to us on that occasion. I had very many interesting thoughts pass through my mind as that program unfolded. The outstanding feature of it all, of course, was the very friendliness of the people who were receiving us and bidding us welcome, a very great contrast to the condition that prevailed at the time when that cemetery in which we were dedicating the monument became a necessity.

I sat right behind the Governor of the State of Nebraska when the President of the Church made reference to the fact that our people had been driven from one place to another until they were finally forced to occupy Winter Quarters under the very adverse circumstances which prevailed.

The Governor turned to the Mayor and said, "We must remember that that was twenty years before the State of Nebraska came into existence." They were very grateful for the fact that they had not been a party to that persecution.

My mind went back to the organization of the Church and the very difficult task which devolved upon the Prophet in its organization in the harmonizing of the many conflicting attitudes of men who came into the Church in the early days. His was, indeed, a herculean task, and he did his duty well and nobly. I am quite sure that without the inspiration of the Lord which he enjoyed this task would have been impossible. To bring from the many nations of the earth the people that he did, and to crystallize their thoughts into a unit and harmonize them in their activities was indeed a tremendous task, and he did it well.

It brought into my mind a picture with two sides. I saw on the one side men and women of sterling character, firm in their purpose, true in their faith and courageous in sustaining their officers, willing to do as those people did who lie buried in that cemetery—to lay down their lives at any time should it be required. I am sure that my grandfather and grandmother stood ready to do that, along with yours. A faithful people they were, a struggling people, trying to find the truth, or to live according to the truth they had found, and do their full duty.

On the other side of that picture, I saw a smaller number perhaps of people who had come into the Church with different motives, whose faith was not of the same high and pure and holy character, who were

avaricious, ambitious, and designing men who came in and availed themselves of the counsels of the Prophet and the leaders of the Church only to misapply them and turn against them. I believe that the persecutions that came upon the people were largely due to the activity of such men. So the Evil One came in, as he always does, and opposed the truth. I believe that to be an actual fact.

I believe also this to be true: that there is a way to bind the Devil—the way of faith. If we want to bind him up and bind him strong, we will unite ourselves together in a solid band, with a single purpose, to sustain our leaders, to live the Gospel, and to honor God. If our people at that time had been a unit in that purpose, had there been no opposition and no treason within the Church, I wonder if the sacrifices of Winter Quarters would have been necessary. I believe they would not. To bear me out in that statement, I am going to read just one or two verses from the 105th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people—

Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the Church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

That is the answer to that question in my mind. If they had been sufficiently united, sufficiently of one mind and one purpose, had they been able to so completely eliminate from their hearts selfishness and greed and avarice, so that they could walk together with their arms around each other in that unity of purpose, then the redemption of the center stake of Zion would, according to the word of the Lord, have been a possibility.

They were not so united, unfortunately, and they had to pay the penalty in trouble and sorrow and death to learn the lesson. Now out of those experiences, evidently, we have learned some lessons, because we are now, I believe, a more united people, and I believe that that is the reason the Lord turned the good will of the people who were once our enemies to us and that we are now enabled to be friends with them.

That does not mean in any sense that we tolerate the things which we deem sin, which some people indulge in and which we try to eliminate from our midst—not by any means. But it does mean that we can be charitable towards them, that we can lend them the hand of fellowship and assistance where it is possible.

We are faced with a problem right now. The Presidency of this Church has made a promise to the people, not only to the people of the Church but to the people of the world, and we have the problem of redeeming that promise. It will be possible only through a united effort of this people. If there be those among us who go around sowing the seeds of dissension, distrust and criticism of their policies, success will not be so great. But if we can eliminate from our hearts all distrust

and attack our problem with a sympathetic urge and an interest in its accomplishment the world will see this people redeem that pledge.

I trust that we may rally to it, every man and woman of us, that we may show the world that there is in this Church a power in the priesthood which is active, vigorous, and will endure.

God bless you all. Amen.

ELDER SAMUEL O. BENNION

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I am very happy, my brethren and sisters and friends, to be able to attend this conference and listen to the testimonies that have been borne. The addresses that have been made have all been for our good and benefit.

The longer I live the more I am convinced that the Lord, our God, has a planned program and that he is anxious that it be taught to his children in their daily walks of life. I am sure that the Savior had received this plan from his Father when he said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."

I think the scriptures are absolutely correct in their teachings concerning the great work which our Father intended should be done by his sons and his daughters. Men and women were known of him long before the foundation of this earth was laid. He knew them and gave them promises upon their obedience, as a result of the life they had lived.

When the Lord showed unto Abraham the intelligences that were created before the world was organized and that among them there were many of the noble and great ones, he said: "These I will make my rulers. . . . Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born."

And again to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

I think we knew the plan that was to be brought about in this earth. There were great men and undoubtedly great women in the spirit world, who were selected, and ordained to take part in the work to be accomplished for the salvation of men. In that pre-mortal state men and women enjoyed free agency. They enjoyed the gift of intelligence and had the power to choose their course, and through faith and works they achieved success. They were known unto the Lord, and they grew and developed in character under the leadership and under the planning of God. They were to be prophets when they came into the world. They were to be leaders of men.

We find that in this dispensation of time in which we live the Prophet Joseph Smith made the statement that every missionary who has a call to go into the world was ordained to that calling before the