

## ELDER RICHARD L. EVANS

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

It seems that the usual radio technique is grossly inadequate for such a time as this. By the forewarning of a chance meeting with President Grant last Thursday evening, I thought that perhaps the shock of what has befallen me would have been somewhat alleviated yesterday morning, when it was announced here, and also this moment, but such seems not to be the case.

I spent a sleepless night Thursday night, burning old bridges and building new ones. I think that perhaps this call would have come easier to me a little later in life, after I had had a better opportunity to make substance of more of my dreams, but perhaps this is not so. Perhaps I must just exchange old dreams for new dreams.

It is less than three weeks, during a nation-wide Tabernacle choir broadcast, that I read from this pulpit as follows:

There are two things that enter into the life of every man: Those things which we plan for ourselves, and those things which enter into our lives in spite of all our plans. Sometimes, happily, we fare better than we had honestly hoped, and sometimes, unhappily, we find we fall far short of achieving those things for which we have striven. But no matter how well we seem to control those elements which affect our lives, there are always to be considered things unlooked for. Surely it must be better that way. It would be difficult to imagine a more unsatisfactory existence than the life of a man into which nothing unexpected ever came. Furthermore, it is all part of a great plan. The Lord still chasteneth whom he loveth, and all those things which come into our lives in spite of our best laid plans, are part of the education and enriching experience of every child of God who walks the earth. We may think what we would like for ourselves, and then, in the spirit of that resignation born of faith, we must reconcile ourselves at one time or another, to say as in the words of the hymn about to be sung, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord; I'll be what you want me to be."

I knew, when I sent out these words to a nation-wide radio audience, that they weré true, but I did not know that they would return home so quickly. It is a conclusive thing for a man to stand convicted by his own words, and I now so stand before you.

My association with the General Authorities of the Church dates back to about eleven years ago, perhaps a little more, at which time I did not have a speaking acquaintance—with one exception, I think—with any of the General Authorities. At that time I found myself in the British Mission as a young man under twenty-one years of age and was aware of the penetrating eyes of Dr. James E. Talmage looking at me during my first meeting with him at a conference of the Norwich District, shortly after which I was called into the European Mission office at Liverpool and became associated with him in the editorship of the *Millennial Star*. Under his tutelage I found myself squirming at times, but nevertheless greatly benefited by his rigid scrutiny and exacting requirements. It was a good experience. And I love and honor the memory of the man who so painstakingly troubled himself to train me in ways of precision

and exactitude, when oftentimes it would have been much less trouble for him to have done the task in hand himself.

That was followed by the coming of Dr. John A. Widtsoe, and I learned more from him. The rapidity with which he worked, the breadth of his knowledge and abilities, his power to use other men and to help them realize themselves were a source of constant inspiration.

Under him I later became secretary of the European Mission and visited countries from the Mediterranean up to beyond the Arctic Circle, and my heart is filled with thanks to him also for his belief in a young man.

Since that time it has been my privilege to become acquainted with all of the General Authorities of the Church, and their lives have been a testimony to me, because I know that they would not be doing the things they are doing, and would not have left the things they have left, to do the things they are now doing, except that they know of a surety that this is the work of the Lord, and must go forward.

I have been very grateful for the opportunity of engaging in the radio activity that it has fallen to my lot to be engaged in. One of the greatest satisfactions of my life is to read the letters that come in every day, week after week, from people who listen to the nation-wide program from the Tabernacle each Sunday morning, and who find their lives touched by the spirit of it, and find cause to inquire further.

I have known of some conversions that have come directly from this program, resulting in baptisms into the Church, which is an experience that I did not have the joy of observing in the mission field as a direct result of my own efforts.

I know that tens of thousands more, from the character of the mail that comes in, must be deeply touched by the things that go from here each Sunday morning on the Tabernacle Choir broadcast. The music of the choir and the organ prepares the hearts of those who listen for the reception of the spoken messages, and it is very encouraging to me to realize that a truth does not need to be shouted to be appreciated—that a truth quietly spoken has much greater effect than an untruth shouted from the housetops.

It has been a gratifying experience to me to be associated in the editorship of *The Improvement Era*. I struggled with myself for more than six months from the time the Presidency first called me over and suggested that I take the editorship of this magazine, until the time that it was actually undertaken. They did not make their request in the nature of a call. They left it entirely to my judgment, and it took me six months to reach the conclusion that they would not have called me over there if they had not wanted me to do it; but this realization finally settled upon my consciousness and I made the change—for what reason I did not know at the time. I was very grateful that the Presidency have left me some radio activity, because it has meant much to me and I feel that the results are gaining.

I spent a good part of the day yesterday trying to find sympathy

from some of these my brethren, the General Authorities, who are sitting around me here. I found none, so I decided to like what has befallen me. President Clark told me yesterday morning that they had all been through it, and I might just as well cheer up. I reminded him that he had not been called into the work at my age, and President McKay, sitting by him, reminded me that he had; and President Grant reminded me also that no one who ever wanted one of these positions ever got one. So with all these unanswerable rebuttals, and finding no sympathy, I have sincerely decided to like my lot.

At an annual testimony meeting of the General Board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association some months ago, I stated that the two paramount immediate ambitions I had were to assist in the editing of the best Church magazine in the world, and to assist in the production of what I hoped to be the best Church radio program in the world. So far as I am aware, my immediate ambitions have not changed. My remote ambitions will either have to be abandoned or await the direction of these my brethren, in whose keeping I find myself, and whose association I love, and whose judgment I trust.

I keep in my desk a comment by Abraham Lincoln to the effect that he who molds public sentiment does more than he who enacts laws or hands down decisions. I find that to be true; I believe it to be true, and I believe that we in this Church must use every means that is available for molding public sentiment for truth, both within and without the Church. That is why I have been particularly happy with both my radio activity and editing experience, because I believe the press and the radio, combined, are the greatest and most effective means today of molding public sentiment, and we must use them to the utmost, because we must keep in mind that the same facilities that are being used to build public sentiment for truth are also being used to build public sentiment for untruth.

I have often pondered, in my own mind, the reasons why our missionary results have not been comparable to those of the early missionaries to Great Britain, into which history I delved at some length in the immediate past. When I learned of penniless missionaries converting whole communities and baptizing thousands of souls, I was worried and puzzled in some respects, wondering what was lacking in that we are not doing the same today. I have subsequently concluded that there are at least two partial explanations. One is that the Lord advised the Prophet in that day that the field was white and ready to harvest, and indeed it was. Another is that our advantages today are comparatively not as great, or not as much greater than theirs, as it would seem, because we must keep in mind that every means that is being used for the promulgation of the truth is also being used for the promulgation of untruth.

That is why we must not be found sleeping at any time. That is why we must be diligent with every means at our command, to use all modern facilities with greater intelligence, with greater foresight and with greater effectiveness. This we will do increasingly, I feel sure.

Those who were close to my feelings yesterday morning before the announcement of my appointment to the First Council of Seventy was made at this conference were aware that if there had been any way to turn back in honor I would have done so, but I do not know to what point I would have turned back, and I realize keenly that there was no turning back—that turning back would have been turning away.

If I had been of a mind to turn back I should have done it at my mother's knee. I should have done it before she taught me to pay out my first few pennies in tithing. I should have done it before her firm and gentle hand directed my steps into the ways of truth. I should have done it before I came up through the auxiliary organizations of this Church; before I went on a mission; before I went into the service of the Mutual Improvement Association and *The Improvement Era*. It was only necessary for me to think quietly for a few moments to see that there is no turning back for a Latter-day Saint, and he who thinks there is, finds himself not turning back but turning away. I think that lesson may well come into the lives of all of us.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. I have appreciated the kindness, the fatherliness of President Grant, President Clark, President McKay, Dr. Widtsoe, Brother Bowen, and all these brethren. They have all been kind, considerate and helpful to me. My own father died as the result of an accident when I was ten weeks old. My mother reared a family of nine children, all of whom at that time were under eighteen. With a meager and unreliable income, she immediately sent my eldest brother on a mission. Such faith as that in the home in which I was reared, could only produce one result, and the result is that all of my nine brothers and sisters have come up through the program of the Church to be a credit to my mother and to all that this Church stands for.

I am very grateful for all of these things, and with your confidence and the help of the Lord and the advice and encouragement of these my brethren, I hope that I shall not be an unprofitable servant.

I know, as well as I know any of the facts of life, that Jesus was the Son of God, the Redeemer of this world; that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord, as have been all his successors; and that this is the work of the Lord.

The young men of the Church are my friends. They belong to my generation. I know them. They have their difficulties, their problems, their struggles, economically and otherwise, but I have no fear for their integrity or their ability. I have no fear for their willingness to serve as the years roll along. I know that they say in chorus: "Our hearts are not turned back, neither have we departed from thy way," and that is my expression also, in their behalf.

I ask the blessings of the Lord upon all of us, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.