

## ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

*First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that I may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord and have an interest in your faith and prayers during the few moments that I shall stand before you.

## SOURCES OF THOUGHT

The ancient one declared:

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he . . . (Prov. 23:7.)

This ancient writer fully understood the relationship between our minds and our hearts and the deeds that would come from our thinking as expressed in the emotions and passions that we find in our hearts. "First the thought and then the deed." "Noble thoughts, noble deeds." Shelley declared: "Strange thoughts beget strange deeds."

For a moment or two I would like to consider with you the sources of our thoughts. I think they fall in four categories: what one sees, and what one hears, what one reads, and then that great source of thought that comes to us through the inspiration of the Lord's Holy Spirit, provided that we are so clean and sweet in our thinking and in our deeds that we might enjoy the association of the Holy Ghost. Time does not permit to discuss these four sources of thoughts, hence I should like to speak about the third one, what one reads.

## PRESENT-DAY LITERATURE

Sometime ago I stood in a railroad station waiting for a train. Having some little time on my hands, I was attracted to the magazine rack, and there I counted forty-seven magazines that had to do with crime and sex problems, all of them procurable at a price from ten to twenty-five cents each. I have observed as I have traveled over the country during the period of the war, the material that our boys in the armed forces have been reading. In many instances I found them reading the same kind of material that I noticed on the magazine rack in the depot.

Of recent date there are certain writers in our country who are using biblical characters around which they build stories, and unfortunately, they are not portraying to the reading public of America the fine qualities of these great characters but rather their weaknesses. Recently there came into my hands a story about David of old. Some four or five chapters were devoted to his relationship with the wife of Uriah, and described in such minute detail as to be disgusting and vulgar.

There are sensational newspapers which play up the morbid side of life. There are some newspapers which have comic strips,

so-called, and which strips I am sure are inculcating into the minds and hearts of our boys and girls that read them, thoughts that, if they are expressed in deeds, will get them into serious difficulty.

There are books now on birth control, books on common law marriage, and many other books that are not conducive to the morals or the best thinking of those who read them. In a recent poll taken of 7,600 middle class average homes, the startling fact was revealed that forty percent of these homes did not own a Bible.

#### CAUSES OF YOUTHFUL DELINQUENCY

Dr. Walter Athren conducted a survey which covered the entire country. This survey showed that seventy percent of the youth of America grow from infancy to maturity without any constructive, systematic instruction and training either in morals or religion, and from sixty-five to seventy out of every one hundred children are brought up in utter ignorance of the Bible. In addition to all of these, we must not forget the fact that we are spending, in the United States, more money for intoxicating beverages than is being spent in the interests of education.

What does this all add up to? It adds up to what we call delinquency, but I think the time has come now when we shall have to use the term "general delinquency" because this delinquency embraces not only the youth of the land but adults too. When you stop to consider that over ninety percent of the divorces in the United States are caused by what is termed infidelity, which means nothing more or less than immorality, adding to general delinquency out of which is developed vandalism, immorality, mental and physical indolence, and profanity. I mention profanity because much of this modern-day literature spells out in bold type some of the most vile oaths that any of us have ever heard.

What about a change in all of these conditions? Is there not something that can be brought about to awaken the American people to a destiny of degradation and weakness, spiritually, mentally, and physically unless the sources of reading material are changed, affording only that which is noble, uplifting, and cultural? As in ancient days when the finger of the God of Israel wrote the doom of Babylon, this same penalty hangs over any nation that forgets God to the extent that the Bible is found in few homes and where the youth of the country are not familiar with the teachings of Holy Scripture. Yes, just as Babylon was called to an accounting by the God of Israel, so will the people of this great nation be called to an accounting for permitting youth and old alike to be indoctrinated with the principles of the evil one through the reading of immoral and vulgar literature.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

What about us, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? The Lord has loved us to the extent that he has

been kind enough to give us the safeguards against evil thoughts, for he has revealed to us:

And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith. (D. & C. 88:118.)

Then, back in the days of Kirtland, there was set up the School of the Prophets for the sole purpose of acquainting our leaders with the best that could be found in wisdom, and among other things was said that this school was not only for the high priests, but it was also for the deacons. And so the Lord intended that all should enjoy revealed wisdom, revealed truth, that we might be enabled to carry forth his great work and consummate his plans here upon the earth.

The great responsibility in guiding the thinking of youth rests in the home. That obligation rests squarely upon the shoulders of parents. I sometimes think that we parents are prone to leave the matter of what our boys and girls think too much in the hands of the schools. As Bishop Richards indicated yesterday, doctrine is being taught to our boys and girls that will undermine their faith, and I say that the Lord is going to hold us accountable as parents if we fail to take an inventory of what is being taught to our boys and girls in the institutions of learning in the land. Not only that, we as parents usually are very careful about the kind of associates our sons and daughters shall have. But I want to say to you there are other associates to which we should also give very careful consideration; namely, the books they read, for, after all, books are more than associates because they are so intimate. Let us remember that the books that these young men and young women read will store away in the storehouse of memory the thoughts that will either motivate them to deeds of nobleness or evil.

#### BOOKS FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT HOMES

In every Latter-day Saint home we should find the library of the Lord. It is small as far as the number of books is concerned. There are but four, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In addition to these there can be purchased thousands of books written by inspired men, and I am sure that the Lord expects us to have in our homes his library. Brigham Young made it plain that without the library of the Lord we would walk in darkness and that we would not enjoy the Spirit of our Heavenly Father. Brigham Young had this to say:

On reading carefully the Old and the New Testaments we can discover that the majority of the revelations given to mankind anciently were in regard to their daily duties; we follow in the same path. The revelations contained in the Bible and the Book of Mormon are examples to us, and the book of Doctrine and Covenants contains direct revelation to this Church; they are a guide to us, and we do not wish to do them

away; we do not want them to become obsolete and to set them aside. We wish to continue in the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ day by day, and to have his spirit with us continually. If we can do this, we shall no more walk in darkness but we shall walk in the light of life. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1943 edition, p. 12.)

I am sure there are no Latter-day Saints here but what are anxious that their children will understand the revelations as found in the Bible, in the Book of Mormon, and in the Doctrine and Covenants. How often do you or I ever sit down with our children and take up one of the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, point out the great truths revealed therein, and what it will do if we apply these truths in our daily lives?

#### MEMORIZING THE SCRIPTURES

I think the time has come when it would be a fine thing to take at least one verse a week and have the whole family memorize it. Think of what Brother Matthew Cowley told us yesterday with reference to his father—at the age of nineteen having memorized four hundred eighty-three verses of scripture. I am quite sure when this young man went into the mission field he was able to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ vigorously, intelligently, and to do a great work. If we were to teach our children one verse of the scriptures a week, that would amount to about fifty-two verses a year, and in ten years it would amount to five hundred twenty verses. And think of their going out to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with five hundred twenty verses of scripture at their command! Think of the time it would save! Think of the impression that it would make upon those that they come in contact with. And far and above this, it would inculcate into their minds and hearts, great truths and light which would motivate them to noble deeds. We should consider the Book of Mormon, for, as President Grant said:

I am convinced in my own mind, my dear brethren and sisters, that this book, the Book of Mormon, is the greatest converter of men and women as to the divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in every way a true witness of God, and it sustains the Bible and is in harmony with the Bible.

How many of our young people become acquainted in the home with this American Bible? You and I can best answer that question. I think if we are to protect youth against the evils of the land, against evil thinking, against evil books, we can do no better than to teach them the great truths that are found in the Book of Mormon. There we find the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ given to us in its fulness, and its simplicity.

#### WISDOM OBTAINED THROUGH GOOD BOOKS

Speaking of rules that we should adopt, to discriminate against that which is bad in our reading, may I give you a suggestion as it comes from President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. He said this :

My rule now is, never read anything that is not worth remembering. I know now that all the wisdom of the past is for our use, and that the only place we can learn that wisdom, which comes from all that men have thought, and worked, and suffered, and achieved, is from good books; and wisdom is one of the most precious gifts that the Lord has to give. When Solomon of old was made king, he asked the Lord for wisdom only, and because he did not ask for the lives of his enemies, nor for riches, wealth, and honor, the Lord gave all of these to him and then wisdom also in great abundance, so that from that time until now, Solomon has stood as the wise man of the ages.

Then, too, brethren and sisters, if we are going to have the kind of home that Latter-day Saints should have, we might well follow the counsel found in Proverbs 24:3-9.

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety. Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate. He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Never let us forget that the glory of God is intelligence, and that no man will be saved faster than he gains knowledge and intelligence. Therefore, as we think of our minds and our thoughts as related to our hearts, our hearts should become pure, if we understand the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. What did the Lord say about the pure in heart?

Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, Let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—the pure in heart; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. (D. & C. 97:21.)

May we have as a motto the words of that lovely old song: "Beautiful Zion for me," and always remember the scripture of that ancient one: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he, . . ." which I pray for in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I think, my brethren and sisters and friends, that no apology for repetition is necessary during this conference. The pioneer theme so dominates the occasion and our thinking that we can scarcely be expected to do other than speak about it. So I propose to address myself to the subject, "What did the pioneers bring?"

#### PURPOSE OF MORMON PIONEERS IN SETTLING THE WEST

Pioneer movements for reclamation of new territory were not uncommon in America a hundred years ago. Land was the most commonly accepted form of wealth, and the availability of new