

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

I too feel highly honored to be a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and sustain all that has occurred on this sacred occasion.

America is a spiritual country

Sister Wirthlin and I are thankful to be here at home with you again and to tell you how wonderfully the Lord is blessing the work in the European area; three new stakes have been organized in Germany during the past two weeks. It is also our pleasure to report that in the German Federal Republic, where we live, and in most of Europe, America's bicentennial has not gone unnoticed. Many occasions have arisen in which respect and love have been shown to our great country, and the precious principles of freedom and dignity which we accord the individual have been honored.

The sentiments of these nations may be portrayed in the words of one distinguished ambassador, General Carlos Romulo, as he left our shores after serving his government here for nearly a score of years. He said, "I admire and love America. . . . What I have to say in parting is both a tribute and a warning. Never forget, Americans, that yours is a spiritual country. Yes, I know that you are a practical people. Like others, I have marveled at your factories, your skyscrapers, and your arsenals. But underlying everything else is the fact that America began as a God-loving, God-fearing, God-worshipping people, knowing that there is a spark of the divine in each of us. It is this respect for the dignity of the human spirit which makes America invincible."

And this, too, is my tribute to America. We all know that material and physical things are not the source and substance of safety, strength, and freedom of our beloved country.

In August our divinely inspired prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball, and several of our General Authorities held five area conferences in Europe. And what stirring, inspiring, testimony-generating experiences they were for all of us. Those attending will never forget how magnificently they were uplifted and spiritually fed and how wonderfully their testimonies were fortified.

Holland's dikes

In Amsterdam, during the several days we were together, we visited with some of our members, and our conversation turned to one thing that is unique about the country, the dikes. Much of the Netherlands lies considerably below sea level, as you well know. Through the process of building dikes to wall out the salty sea and through pumping the water into canals, the country of the ingenious, resourceful, and doughty Dutch has literally been born of the sea.

The process of wresting the good and precious earth from the bitter ocean waters has been going on for over 700 years, and there is no abatement of the struggle in sight. The gigantic dikes, or sea walls, may rise as high as sixty feet and are often broad enough on the top for a road over which a regular flow of traffic may be driven. The other side of the dike usually slopes down to green meadows. Thus, those on the dike can see down the chimneys of the houses nestling below: the fish on the one side are higher than the birds in the trees on the other.

Then our discussion turned to the question of safety, and it was agreed that there are no dikes tall enough, wide enough, deep enough, or strong enough to give man the security for which his soul cries out, for which he instinctively yearns, and for which he often frantically searches.

Friday, October 1

First Day

At this point, what was said is best described in *Time* magazine of February 9, 1953, in these words: "[Last week] a mournful tolling of church bells and the scream of sirens awakened the Netherlanders' at 4:00 A.M.; it was already too late. Waves chewed like bulldozers at the historic dikes of Holland, breaking through in at least 70 places, to reclaim what centuries of Dutch ingenuity has taken from the sea. . . . To the north, the flood crest went as high as 30 feet. . . . In a matter of hours, roughly a sixth of the Netherlands' 13,000 square miles—an area where 1,000,000 Dutchmen make their homes—was devastated." The desolation here and in nearby countries had taken a toll of over 1,500 known dead.

Other disasters

During this very year, in America's Mountain West in the Teton Valley (Idaho) and the Big Thompson River Canyon, we have been shocked and saddened at the suddenness and unpredictability of tragedy and the realization that mortal life, at best, is surely a fragile and uncertain spark. The globe is constantly threatened by forces, both man-made and inherent in our dwelling places, so devastating and capricious as to stun and stagger us. And when I speak of forces, I mean the innumerable threats to life of every type and kind that abound on the earth, in the earth, and around the earth, whether it be here, in the Netherlands, or elsewhere in the broad universe.

Gospel answers problems

Bookstore operators tell us that the books which head the best-seller list are books on peace and happiness. And since we as a church have the sure answer to mankind's emotional and psychological problems in the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is most urgent that we continue to "lengthen our stride" to reach forlorn, lonely, hungry, and

thirsty hearts, and those whose quest is for the truth.

Jack Robertson

Perhaps I can best emphasize what I feel by recounting the story of a young man by the name of Jack Robertson, an American paralyzed from the waist down, the result of an automobile accident seven years before. He had been a teacher at an elementary school in Scottsdale, Arizona. He had developed a burning desire to swim the English Channel and had trained for two long, grueling years, swimming great distances every day under all kinds of weather conditions in order to build up his strength and endurance. He was the first paraplegic ever to attempt the twenty-one-mile swim across the Channel. The strong, treacherous currents, however, require the swimmer to cover a far greater distance than that in order to reach the opposite shore.

The day finally came when he was to make his heroic attempt. Wearing a wet suit, flippers, and snorkel, he was carried to the beach at Dover by his cousins, Tom and Don Philabaum, where he crawled into the sea. Tom and Don, in the boat that accompanied him, fed him every hour. Jack had hoped to reach the French coast in fifteen hours. "For twelve hours the swim went well," he said. "Then I found myself swimming against the tide." The coast was near, but conditions had decidedly changed. "I gave it all I had," he declared. "Tom was urging me from the boat, saying, 'You've got to do it.' We were so close to France, and yet so far. It was the last few miles that completely drained me. The tides defeated me!" the swimmer exclaimed. His strength ebbed away as he tried to cope with the formidable obstacles in his path. (From *Stars and Stripes*.)

Opposition necessary

Life was made for struggle; and

exaltation, success, and victory were never meant to be cheap or to come easily. The tides of life often challenge us. To understand why it has to be this way, we should maintain our understanding, our faith, and our courage by a constant rereading of Second Nephi, chapter two, the substance of which is set forth in this excerpt: "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things." (2 Ne. 2:11.)

Drink of "living water"

Now let me make a suggestion that will enable us to maintain our spiritual strength and keep our testimonies vitally alive so that the trials, the storms, and the tides of life will not defeat us. This suggestion is that, above all, we should heed the words of Jesus to the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria when he said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.)

How could one's strength ebb or falter when it may be so dependably

and continuously nourished and restored? Here it is made clear that life, at its best and most vigorous, is spiritual and, as such, is the sincere expression of the soul to God. The spiritual self of each of us is that part of us that will never grow old, or ill, or die, but it must be nurtured and invigorated! Drinking of the living water is the unique recipe, the only way! My testimony is that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, who stands at the head of our church, and that President Spencer W. Kimball is our prophet, seer, and revelator, who is guiding the destiny of the true church of our Savior. To this, I testify with all the strength I possess, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just addressed us.

Elder William H. Bennett of the First Quorum of the Seventy will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of the Seventy.

Elder William H. Bennett

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

Our Lord and Savior in His great Sermon on the Mount gave us our greatest challenge and most important goal when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) In these words Jesus challenges us to strive for excellence in all that we do—to develop our talents and abilities—and above all to live in accordance with His teachings.

Our goal is perfection

The pursuit of excellence should be the major work of our lives. Many

people, however, give little attention to it. Perhaps they feel that it is not possible for anyone to reach perfection in this life, and so they let the immediate pressures dominate their actions. While it is true that we cannot attain perfection in a total sense in this life, it is also true that we can attain perfection in many specific areas of activity. Furthermore, if we fail to do what we can and should do in this life, we may deprive ourselves forever of the opportunity to do those things later on and thus lose great eternal blessings.

Let us consider these words of one of our poets, Holland: