

President Harold B. Lee

We have just listened to Elder James E. Faust, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, who has delivered a most meaningful talk to fathers. We would hope that all the careless fathers have listened also.

He was followed by the Taber-

nacle Choir singing "God So Loved the World."

We welcome those joining us on television and radio in this first session of the 143rd Semi-Annual Conference of the Church.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Of the Council of the Twelve

President Lee concluded our last conference in April, with the statement that in his 32 years as a General Authority he had learned that the most inspired preaching is always accompanied by beautiful, inspired music. I am grateful this morning to be sustained by the beautiful renditions of the choir.

Use of music

"Music," Addison said, "is the only sensual gratification in which mankind may indulge to excess without injury to their moral or religious feelings."

If that were true in his day, it is not in ours. Music, once that innocent, now is often used for wicked purposes.

It has been obvious for centuries that lyrics of the worst kind can be set to music that is innocent of itself. Words which are bad can be set to music which is otherwise good, and lead men astray.

Recently the First Presidency restated this counsel:

"Through music, man's ability to express himself extends beyond the limits of the spoken language in both subtlety and power. Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction. It is therefore important that as Latter-day Saints we at all times apply the principles of the gospel and seek the guidance of the Spirit in selecting the

music with which we surround ourselves." (*Priesthood Bulletin*, August, 1973.)

Music corrupted

In our day music itself has been corrupted. Music can, by its tempo, by its beat, by its intensity, dull the spiritual sensitivity of men.

Studies citing physiological effects from some of the extreme music of today neglect the most serious thing concerning it.

Our youth have been brought up on a diet of music that is loud and fast, more intended to agitate than to pacify, more intended to excite than to calm. Even so, there is a breadth of it, some soft enough to be innocent and appealing to our youth, and that which is hard, and that is where the problem is.

Willingness to compromise

One of the signs of apostasy in the Christian churches today is the willingness of their ministers to compromise and introduce into what had been, theretofore, the most sacred religious meetings the music of the drug and the hard rock culture. Such music has little virtue and it is repellent to the Spirit of God.

The pity of it is, their foolishness has not accomplished the ends they sought. Their young people are not

drawn to them as they hoped and expected. Rather, young people are inventing so-called churches of their own, groping and seeking for something that they find missing in their lives.

Better standards for youth

Some have been critical when our leaders have exercised restraint on the kind of music we will allow at church activities.

"Do you want to lose your youth?" they ask.

I would remind all such that it is not the privilege of those called as leaders to slide the Church about as though it were on casters, hoping to put it into the path that men or youth will be safe within it.

President J. Reuben Clark said: "We may not, under our duty, provide or tolerate an unwholesome amusement on the theory that if we do not provide it the youth will go elsewhere to get it. We could hardly set up a roulette table in the Church amusement hall for gambling purposes, with the excuse that if we do not provide it the youth would go to a gambling hall to gamble. We can never really hold our youth thus. Our task is to help the home to plant better standards in the minds of the youth."

And so we urge parents in the Church to show as much interest in the records and tapes their children purchase as they would the books and magazines they bring into the home. There are many parents who would not for one moment tolerate a pornographic magazine in their homes who unwittingly provide money for music, some of which in its influence can be quite as damaging.

Hard music

Someone said recently that no music could be degrading, that music in and of itself is harmless and innocent.

If that be true, then there should

be some explanation for circumstances where local leaders have provided a building—expansive, light, and inviting—and have assembled a party of young people dressed modestly, well-groomed, with manners to match. Then overamplified sounds of hard music are introduced and an influence pours into the room that is repellent to the Spirit of God.

The youth of the Church, by and large, have found a sensible and reasonable adjustment to the grooming and dress styles of our day. Our young men and women can dress with decency and modesty and yet not be unstylish or look all that different or odd.

We have said a good deal through our youth organizations and at our Church schools about dress and grooming standards and have been successful.

By comparison, we have not given sufficient counsel and attention, I think, to the music that our young people consume. And "consume" is a proper word. There is much of today's music that they may well enjoy, if they avoid the hard kind.

Wise counseling

Parents and Church leaders who counsel young people in this area soon learn that they must move very wisely.

If a little child picks up a sharp object, sometimes a foolish adult will grab for it, frightened for the safety of the child. Instinctively, the child will grip it more tightly and perhaps be injured. The wise parent will trade him for it—some equally appealing, but harmless object, given in exchange, so that he lets go willingly and without tears.

Keep that in mind when you have a problem with young people and their music. To change it may take some time and require inspiration.

Confidence in youth

In the Church we have great confidence in our youth; and, particu-

larly in the last year or two, we have moved to a pattern of programming where their desires and wishes are more dominant in our activities.

This places great responsibility on you, our young people. Pay careful attention to the music you program for your activities.

It is not that we lack confidence in you. However, the breach between the world and the extremes of its music and the Church is wider in our day than ever in generations past. And the middle of the road runs through an entirely different valley now than it did a few years ago.

Remember, young leaders, He is your Lord, and it is your Church quite as much as it is ours.

Keep the best

I would recommend that you go through your record albums and set aside those records that promote the so-called new morality, the drug, or the hard rock culture. Such music ought not to belong to young people concerned about spiritual development.

Why not go through your collection? Get rid of the worst of it. Keep just the best of it. Be selective in what you consume and what you produce. It becomes a part of you.

If you are blessed with musical talent, develop a wide range of good music.

There is so much wonderful, uplifting music available that we can experience to our advantage. Our people ought to be surrounded by good music of all kinds.

Parents ought to foster good music in the home and cultivate a desire to have their children learn the hymns of inspiration.

Musical training

The time for music lessons seems to come along when there are so many other expenses for the family with little children. But we encourage parents to

include musical training in the lives of their children.

Somehow Andrew and Olive Kimball did, and Spencer learned to play. Somehow Samuel and Louisa Lee managed to do it, and Harold learned to play. And now, as the leaders of the Church assemble for our sacred meetings in the upper room of the temple, we always sing a hymn. At the organ is President Spencer W. Kimball or President Harold B. Lee.

How wonderful is the music instructor who will teach children and youth to play and will acquaint them with good music in their formative years, including the music of worship. To have such music as a part of one's life is a great blessing.

The Lord has said, "For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads." (D&C 25:12.)

I think I would like to share with the young people something about how such music has been very important in my life, although I am not trained as a musician.

Controlling your thoughts

Probably the greatest challenge to people of any age, particularly young people, and the most difficult thing you will face in mortal life is to learn to control your thoughts. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7.) One who can control his thoughts has conquered himself.

When I was about ten years old, we lived in a home surrounded by an orchard. There never seemed to be enough water for the trees. The ditches, always fresh-plowed in the spring, would soon be filled with weeds. One day, in charge of the irrigating turn, I found myself in trouble.

As the water moved down the rows choked with weeds, it would flood in every direction. I raced through the puddles trying to build up the bank.

As soon as I had one break patched up, there would be another.

A neighbor came through the orchard. He watched for a moment, and then with a few vigorous strokes of the shovel he cleared the ditch bottom and allowed the water to course through the channel he had made.

"If you want the water to stay in its course, you'll have to make a place for it to go," he said.

I have come to know that thoughts, like water, will stay on course if we make a place for them to go. Otherwise our thoughts follow the course of least resistance, always seeking the lower levels.

I had been told a hundred times or more as I grew up that thoughts must be controlled. But no one told me how.

I want to tell you young people about one way you can learn to control your thoughts, and it has to do with music.

Mind like a stage

The mind is like a stage. Except when we are asleep the curtain is always up. There is always some act being performed on that stage. It may be a comedy, a tragedy, interesting or dull, good or bad; but always there is some act playing on the stage of the mind.

Have you noticed that without any real intent on your part, in the middle of almost any performance, a shady little thought may creep in from the wings and attract your attention? These delinquent thoughts will try to upstage everybody.

If you permit them to go on, all thoughts of any virtue will leave the stage. You will be left, because you consented to it, to the influence of unrighteous thoughts.

If you yield to them, they will enact for you on the stage of your mind anything to the limits of your toleration. They may enact a theme of bitterness, jealousy, or hatred. It may be vulgar, immoral, even depraved.

When they have the stage, if you let them, they will devise the most clever persuasions to hold your attention. They can make it interesting all right, even convince you that it is innocent—for they are but thoughts.

What do you do at a time like that, when the stage of your mind is commandeered by the imps of unclean thinking?—whether they be the gray ones that seem almost clean or the filthy ones which leave no room for doubt.

If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits, even degrading, personal habits. If you can learn to master them you will have a happy life.

Inspiration of sacred music

This is what I would teach you. Choose from among the sacred music of the Church a favorite hymn, one with words that are uplifting and music that is reverent, one that makes you feel something akin to inspiration. Remember President Lee's counsel; perhaps "I Am A Child of God" would do. Go over it in your mind carefully. Memorize it. Even though you have had no musical training, you can think through a hymn.

Now, use this hymn as the place for your thoughts to go. Make it your emergency channel. Whenever you find these shady actors have slipped from the sidelines of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, put on this record, as it were.

As the music begins and as the words form in your thoughts, the unworthy ones will slip shamefully away. It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is uplifting and clean, the baser thoughts will disappear. For while virtue, by choice, *will not* associate with filth, evil *cannot* tolerate the presence of light.

In due time you will find yourself, on occasion, humming the music inwardly. As you retrace your thoughts, you discover some influence from the world about you encouraged an unworthy thought to move on stage in

your mind, and the music almost automatically began.

"Music," said Gladstone, "is one of the most forceful instruments for governing the mind and spirit of man."

I am so grateful for music that is worthy and uplifting and inspiring.

Hard music not harmless

Once you learn to clear the stage of your mind from unworthy thoughts, keep it busy with learning worthwhile things. Change your environment so that you have things about you that will inspire good and uplifting thoughts. Keep busy with things that are righteous.

Young people, you cannot afford to fill your mind with the unworthy hard music of our day. It is *not* harmless. It can welcome onto the stage of your mind unworthy thoughts and set the tempo to which they dance and to which you may act.

You degrade yourself when you identify with all of those things which seem now to surround such extremes in music: the shabbiness, the irreverence, the immorality, and the addictions. Such music as that is not worthy of you. You should have self-respect.

You are a son or a daughter of Almighty God. He has inspired a world full of wonderful things to learn and to do, uplifting music of many kinds that you may enjoy.

Courage from pioneer hymn

The choir, I think, will sing in conclusion, that pioneer hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

I have a brother who became a brigadier general in the Air Force. During World War II he was a bomber pilot and took part in some of the most dangerous and desperate raids in Europe. He returned to an assignment in Washington, D.C., about the time I finished pilot training in the same B-24 bombers and was heading for the Pacific. We had a day or two together in Washington before I left for overseas.

We talked of courage and of fear. I asked how he had held himself together in the face of all that he had endured.

He said, "I have a favorite hymn—'Come, Come, Ye Saints,' and when it was desperate, when there was little hope that we would return, I would keep that on my mind and it was as though the engines of the aircraft would sing back to me:

*'Come, come, ye saints,
No toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you
This journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.'*"

—Hymns, no. 13

From this he clung to faith, the one essential ingredient to courage.

Influence of good music

There are many references in the scriptures, both ancient and modern, that attest to the influence of righteous music. The Lord, Himself, was prepared for His greatest test through its influence, for the scripture records: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." (Mark 14:26.)

I bear witness that God is our Father, that we are His children, that He loves us and has provided great and glorious things in this life. I know this, and I thank Him for the uplifting influence of good music in my life and in the lives of my children. There are many things we can do together as a family; inspired music we can feel together. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following Elder Packer's address, the hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints," was sung by the Tabernacle Choir without announcement.
