

ever seek to become the pure in heart. Zion is the beautiful, and the Lord holds it in His own hands. Our homes can be places which are a refuge and protection, as Zion is.

We do not need to become as puppets in the hands of the culture of the place and time. We can be courageous and can walk in the Lord's paths and follow His footsteps. And if we do, we will be called Zion, and we will be the people of the Lord.

I pray that we will be strengthened to resist the onslaught of Babylon and that we can create Zion in our homes and our

communities—indeed, that we may have “Zion in the midst of Babylon.”

We seek Zion because it is the habitation of our Lord, who is Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. In Zion and from Zion, His luminous and incandescent light will shine forth, and He will rule forever. I bear witness that He lives and loves us and will watch over us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Robert S. Wood

Hearts stirred up to anger

I have a friend who is a member of a political panel that is seen each week on national television. Explaining her role, she said, “We are encouraged to speak before thinking!” We appear to be living in an era in which many are speaking without thinking, encouraging emotional reactions rather than thoughtful responses. Whether it be on the national or international stage, in personal relations or in politics, at home or in the public forum, voices grow ever more strident, and giving and taking offense appear to be chosen rather than inadvertent.

The Lord has warned that from the beginning and throughout history, Satan would stir up people's hearts to anger.¹ In the Book of Mormon, Laman set a pattern of so murmuring as to stir anger, to stoke rage, and to incite murder.² Time and again in the Book of Mormon, we find deluded and wicked men inciting rage and provoking conflict. In the days of Captain Moroni, the apostate Amalickiah inspired “the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi.”³ Amulon and the wicked priests of Noah; Nehor; Korihor; and Zoram the apostate (the dishonor roll goes

on throughout the Book of Mormon) were agitators who inspired distrust, fueled controversy, and deepened hatreds.

In speaking to Enoch, the Lord indicated that both the time of His birth and the time preceding His Second Coming would be “days of wickedness and vengeance.”⁴ And the Lord has said that in the last days, wrath shall be poured out upon the earth without mixture.⁵ *Wrath* is defined both as the righteous indignation of God and as the very human instances of impetuous ardor and deep or violent anger. The former arises from the concern of a loving Father whose children are often “without affection, and they hate their own blood,”⁶ whereas the latter wrath arises from a people “without order and without mercy, . . . strong in their perversion.”⁷ I fear the earth is experiencing both wraths, and I suspect the divine wrath is very much provoked by those who are stirring up the hearts of men to wickedness, slander, and violent hatreds.

Patterns of slander and stereotyping

The first casualties of human wrath are truth and understanding. James counseled that we be “swift to hear, slow to

“speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”⁸ As Enoch observed, God’s throne is one of peace, justice, and truth.⁹ Whether they be false friends or unrighteous teachers, artists or entertainers, commentators or letter writers to local newspapers, seekers of power or wealth, beware of those who stir us up to such anger that calm reflection and charitable feelings are suppressed.

Alma at the waters of Mormon invited those who would enter into a covenant relationship with God to stand as witnesses of God and to bear one another’s burdens.¹⁰ As those who have indeed entered into a sacred covenant, we must remain true to the way, the truth, and the life, who is Jesus Christ.

Have we who have taken upon us the name of Christ slipped unknowingly into patterns of slander, evil speaking, and bitter stereotyping? Have personal or partisan or business or religious differences been translated into a kind of demonizing of those of different views? Do we pause to understand the seemingly different positions of others and seek, where possible, common ground?

I recall that as a graduate student I wrote a critique of an important political philosopher. It was clear that I disagreed with him. My professor told me that my paper was good, but not good enough. Before you launch into your criticism, she said, you must first present the strongest case for the position you are opposing, one that the philosopher himself could accept. I redid the paper. I still had important differences with the philosopher, but I understood him better, and I saw the strengths and virtues, as well as limitations, of his belief. I learned a lesson that I’ve applied across the spectrum of my life.

General Andrew Jackson, as he walked along the line at the Battle of New Orleans, said to his men, “Gentlemen, elevate your guns a little lower!” I think many

of us need to elevate our “guns” a little lower. On the other hand, we need to raise the level of private and public discourse. We should avoid caricaturing the positions of others, constructing “straw men,” if you will, and casting unwarranted aspersions on their motivations and character. We need, as the Lord counseled, to uphold honest, wise, and good men and women wherever they are found and to recognize that there are “among all sects, parties, and denominations” those who are “kept from the truth [of the gospel] because they know not where to find it.”¹¹ Would we hide that light because we have entered into the culture of slander, of stereotyping, of giving and seeking offense?

Mockery and cynicism

It is far too easy sometimes to fall into a spirit of mockery and cynicism in dealing with those of contrary views. We demoralize or demean so as to bring others or their ideas in contempt. It is a primary tool of those who occupy the large and spacious building that Father Lehi saw in vision.¹² Jude, the brother of Christ, warned that “there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”¹³

Closely related to mockery is a spirit of cynicism. Cynics are disposed to find and to catch at fault. Implicitly or explicitly, they display a sneering disbelief in sincerity and rectitude. Isaiah spoke of those who “watch for iniquity” and “make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”¹⁴ In this regard, the Lord has counseled in latter days that we “cease to find fault one with another” and “above all things, clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.”¹⁵

Instruments of the Lord's peace

President George Albert Smith observed, "There is nothing in the world more deleterious or harmful to the human family than hatred, prejudice, suspicion, and the attitude that some people have toward their fellows, of unkindness."¹⁶ In matters of politics, he warned, "Whenever your politics cause you to speak unkindly of your brethren, know this, that you are upon dangerous ground."¹⁷ Speaking of the great mission of the latter-day kingdom, he counseled: "This is not a militant church to which we belong. This is a church that holds out peace to the world. It is not our duty to go into the world and find fault with others, neither to criticize men because they do not understand. But it is our privilege, in kindness and love, to go among them and divide with them the truth that the Lord has revealed in this latter day."¹⁸

The Lord has constituted us as a people for a special mission. As He told Enoch in ancient times, the day in which we live would be one of darkness, but it would also be a time when righteousness would come down from heaven, and truth would be sent forth out of the earth to bear, once more, testimony of Christ and His atoning mission. As with a flood, that message would sweep the world, and the Lord's elect would be gathered out from the four quarters of the earth.¹⁹ Wherever we live in the world, we have been molded as a people to be the instruments of the Lord's peace. In the words of Peter, we have been claimed by God for His own, to proclaim the triumph of Him "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."²⁰ We cannot afford to be caught up in a world prone to give and to take offense. Rather, as the Lord revealed to both Paul and Mormon, we must neither envy nor be puffed up in pride. We are not easily provoked, nor do we behave unseemly.

We rejoice not in iniquity but in the truth. Surely this is the pure love of Christ, which we represent.²¹

In a world beset by wrath, the prophet of our day, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has counseled: "Now, there is much that we can and must do in these perilous times. We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but never let us become a party to words or works of evil concerning our brothers and sisters in various nations on one side or the other. Political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord's people may be at peace one with another during times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties."²²

Let us not fall into darkness

As true witnesses of Christ in the latter days, let us not fall into the darkness so that, in the words of Peter, we "cannot see afar off," but let us be fruitful in the testimony of Christ and His restored gospel, in thought, in speech, in deed.²³ God lives. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the Restoration, was the instrument by which we have been constituted as a people, led even today by a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Let us daily renew in our hearts the pure love of Christ and overcome with our Master the darkness of the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 28:20; Doctrine and Covenants 10:24.
2. See 1 Nephi 16:37–38.
3. Alma 48:1.
4. Moses 7:46, 60.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
6. Moses 7:33.
7. Moroni 9:18–19.
8. James 1:19–20.
9. See Moses 7:31.
10. See Mosiah 18:8–10.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12; see also 98:10.
12. See 1 Nephi 8:26–33; 11:36.
13. Jude 1:18–19.
14. Isaiah 29:20–21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:124–25.
16. *Sayings of a Saint*, sel. Alice K. Chase (1952), 30.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1914, 12.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 44.
19. See Moses 7:62.
20. 1 Peter 2:9–10.
21. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–6; Moroni 7:45–47.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 80.
23. See 2 Peter 1:8–9.

Elder H. Bruce Stucki

Help in finding a lost arrow

It was the day after Christmas, 1946, in Santa Clara, Utah. As a young nine-year-old boy, I asked my mother if I could take my Christmas gift, a new bow and arrow set, and go up on the hill behind our home to hunt for rabbits. It was late in the afternoon, and Mother was reluctant, but with my coaxing she agreed to let me go, but only if I was back home before dark.

As I reached the top of the hill, I put an arrow on the bow and started walking quietly through the sage and chaparral bushes, hoping to see a rabbit feeding at the base of the brush where the tender grass was still green.

I was startled by a large jackrabbit that jumped out from a sage bush right in front of me. I pulled back on the bow, taking a quick aim, and let the arrow fly at the fleeing, darting rabbit. The arrow missed, and the rabbit disappeared through the brush ahead.

I went to where I thought the arrow had hit the ground to retrieve it. Only three arrows came with the bow, and I didn't want to lose this one. I looked where the arrow was supposed to be, but it wasn't there. I looked all around the area where I was sure it landed, but I couldn't find it.

The sun was setting in the west; I knew that it would be dark in about 30 minutes, and I didn't want to be late getting home. I searched again the area where the arrow should have been, look-

ing carefully under every bush, but it was not to be found.

Time was running out, and I needed to start for home to get there before dark. I decided to pray and ask Heavenly Father to help me find the arrow. I dropped to my knees, closed my eyes, and prayed to my Father in Heaven. I told Him I didn't want to lose my new arrow, and I asked Him to show me where to find it.

While still on my knees, I opened my eyes, and there in the sagebrush immediately in front of me, at eye level, I saw the colored feathers of the arrow partly hidden by the branches. I grabbed the arrow and began to run for home, arriving there just before dark.

I will never forget that special experience. Our Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. That was the first time I had prayed for Him to help me, and He did! That evening I learned to have faith and trust in my Heavenly Father.

The stepping-stone of prayer

When we need help, even as a naive little boy with an important concern, our Heavenly Father hears our prayer, and with love He gives us the guidance we seek.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, said to us, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."¹

From the scriptures, James instructed us: