

Allegiance and Stewardship: Holy War, Just War, and the Mormon Tradition in the Nuclear Age

THE CRISIS

The present escalation in nuclear weapons technology between the United States and the Soviet Union has progressed beyond the point where any increase in such weaponry necessarily results in increased national security. It has become, in fact, the ultimate act of idolatry, a reliance upon technology, a false god which cannot save us but which will insure our destruction. This idolatry constitutes violation of both of the two great commandments. Our failure to worship God and place our hope of salvation in him destroys our stewardship. Our generation may dissolve forever the linkage between generations, our part of that great chain of parents and children from the beginning through whom civilization and life itself have been bequeathed.

The United States and the Soviet Union are not engaged primarily in an arms race but in a technology race in which each side is seeking such an advantage that the other's armaments are not sufficient to protect the state, its people, and its own nuclear weapons. These weapons have caused us to lose touch with the legitimate and legitimating purposes of defense: the protection of one's people and land from harm by another. "National defense" or "national security" have become thoughtless slogans under which successive administrations in both superstates have developed arsenals equalling 6,000 times the destructive power of every bomb detonated by every nation in every battle in War II — 18,000 megatons of nuclear power (the equivalent of 18,000 million tons of TNT). The danger to peace and to humanity is perceived rationally by a few and intuitively by many. The resulting malaise erodes political alliances within and between states. Should not our instinct for survival lead us to question assumptions of ideology and alliance, of friend and enemy, that propel us toward the abyss of nuclear war? This process of reevaluation may stop our descent into the inferno — unless in fact we have already passed the point of choice.

What is the meaning of "national security" when under that banner we plan military strategy and develop nuclear weapons not simply to deter others

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from their use, but to use them to fight and win such a war? What does it mean to win a nuclear war? If there is any issue upon which political campaigns should be fought and our highest offices attained and lost, then surely this is one. MX may move Mormons mentally from their mountain redoubt to a more sensitive appreciation of the nuclear threat under which Europeans have lived for years. Across generations, geography, and social class, people in Glasgow and London, Bonn and Berlin, even Salt Lake City and Moscow, may perceive that their common humanity binds them more closely to each other than the accident of nationality divides them.

Perhaps not since the rise of the modern nation-state, secular and territorial, replaced religion or feudal relationships as the primary object of loyalty and the basis of social organization has the issue of allegiance been presented on such a scale. Not since the Peace of Augsburg in the sixteenth century or the treaties of Westphalia and Utrecht in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has the issue of ultimate fidelity been so starkly drawn between competing paradigms. The technological revolution of the nuclear age is telescoping the earlier transition of three centuries into a few decades. Can the state demand our allegiance to a decision that will destroy hundreds of millions of people? Is this modern secular state substantial enough to bear such a burden? Has not the state — any state which would make such a demand of genocide — become the penultimate idol, displacing God with a murderous rival, an insane lie which offers annihilation rather than salvation? Are we not bound by the commandments to love God and our fellow humans to reject that idolatrous allegiance?

THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE

For Latter-day Saints, principles related to war and peace have been taught in an atmosphere of pointed political relevance even before the MX controversy. President Spencer W. Kimball in 1976 rebuked our easy equation of weaponry with defense:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel — ships, planes, missiles, fortifications — and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching:

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45)....

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.¹

Five years later, in the heat of the MX missile controversy, the First Presidency unitedly spoke against the nuclear arms race:

¹ Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 6.

We repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry. . . . Its planners state that the [MX] system is strictly defensive in concept, and that the chances are extremely remote that it will ever be actually employed. However, history indicates that men have seldom created armaments that eventually were not put to use. . . . Our feelings would be the same about concentration in any part of the nation. . . .

Such concentration, we are informed, may even invite attack under a first-strike strategy on the part of an aggressor. If such occurred the result would be near annihilation of most of what we have striven to build since our pioneer forebears first came to these western valleys. . . .

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.²

The 1980 Christmas and 1981 Easter messages had sounded similar warnings, and the emphasis of this topic three times within six months through this most formal means of a First Presidency pronouncement represents an extraordinary concern. The Christmas message included this statement:

We are dismayed by the growing tensions among the nations, and the unrestricted building of arsenals of war, including huge and threatening nuclear weaponry. . . .

We call upon the leaders of nations to sit down and reason together in good faith to resolve their differences. If men of good will can bring themselves to do so, they may save the world from a holocaust, the depth and breadth of which can scarcely be imagined. We are confident that when there is enough of a desire for peace and a will to bring it about, it is not beyond the possibility of attainment.³

The Easter message of 1981 reiterated: "We deplore the use of nuclear weapons with their terrible potential for the destruction of life, property and even of civilization itself. . . . Our greatest strength will come of the righteousness of the people."⁴

Even though these statements of concern have unmistakable political relevance, that concern has not been limited to contemporary times. The LDS statements are part of our major biblical tradition. Condemnation of war, severe limitation upon the use of force, warnings against reliance on armaments to insure peace, and encouragement to resolve disputes peacefully have been at the center of prophetic communication to God's children from the beginning.

Certainly Christians can cite Old or New Testament scripture at each other in support of or against the use of violence. If this is to be more than a sterile exercise, one must examine the context of scriptural statements. Christians believing in the tradition of nonviolence must confront the existence of violence in the Old Testament. One could adopt a Marcionite rejection of the Old Testament, but this is impermissible for anyone who recognizes that the New

² The First Presidency, "Statement of the First Presidency on Basing of the MX missile," *Church News*, 9 May 1981, p. 2.

³ The First Presidency, "Christmas Message from the First Presidency," *Church News*, 20 Dec. 1980, p. 3.

⁴ The First Presidency, "Easter Message — A Plea for Peace," *Church News*, 18 April 1981, p. 3.

Testament is, in a significant sense, a commentary on “the scriptures,” the Old Testament, by prophetic Christian leaders, Jews, in the main, including the Messiah, who seemed unaware that their commentary on their times, and their dialectic response to the law and the prophets, was creating more scripture still. We cannot view the Christian testament as repudiating the Old Testament because the Messiah himself never sanctioned such rejection. Despite the admittedly tortuous and perilous tasks of textual interpretation and historical analysis, there is no other way. Clearly Old Testament violence sometimes seemed to be approved by Jehovah, at least in the perception of leaders at the time. Violence also occurred contrary to Jehovah’s command. Nevertheless, it is evident that a pattern is identifiable. And exceptions to the pattern, while not infrequent, do not undermine the legitimacy of the rule.

Finally, with spiritual sensitivity one must attempt to determine which messages of scripture speak most appropriately to our own times, as prophetic leaders from Hosea and Isaiah to Jesus and Paul felt free to do in their own time. Otherwise, we are left without the capacity to use scripture today as all other generations have done. We must ponder our lives and choices, within the particular circumstances of our situations, searching scripture for meaning and guidance. Our ancient but inspired forebears responded similarly as they sought guidance by example from their scriptural records of God’s dialogue with his children through time. Truths made timeless by the eternal nature of both God and humankind assure the continuing relevance of scripture, yet history does not really repeat itself. At best there are remarkable patterns, accompanied by profound dissimilarities, novel challenges. The existence of weapons that can eliminate life from a continent in seconds, and perhaps from the entire globe, is simply the most awesome example of this phenomenon. Hence the necessity to search the scriptures and prayerfully ask what teachings speak prophetically to our own time.

THE PARADIGM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: THE EXODUS AND “HOLY WAR”

In the exodus from Egypt, Jehovah gave Israel its basic pattern for political leadership, relations between states, and the use of force in the first event of its separate existence, which was to provide the paradigm for the future. Jehovah promised to fight Israel’s battles if only Israel had faith. “Fear . . . not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. . . . The Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace.” (Exod. 14:13–14) In fulfillment of that promise, Israel did not engage in physical combat. Jehovah’s miracle smote Pharaoh and his host in the irresistible sea.

Force was used in many instances in the Old Testament, often, undoubtedly, without Jehovah’s approval, but sometimes under his direction. Only by his command, however, is it permissible. God used force against Pharaoh because “I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go. . . . And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt . . . and after that he will let you go.” (Exod. 3:19–20) But Jehovah, not Moses or Israel, administered the blow.

In Moses' last discourses to Israel, he reiterated the promise that if Israel would love the Lord single-mindedly, without deviating to worship false gods, Jehovah would defeat "greater nations and mightier" (Deut. 11:18-19, 22-23). But if Israel aped its enemies and relied on chariots and the "arm of flesh," Jehovah would reject them. (Josh. 24:13, 16.)

Israel is reminded that Jehovah had sent hornets before them when they prevailed over the nations of Canaan; Israel had not prevailed "with thy sword, nor with thy bow" (Josh. 24:12).

The conquest of Canaan was a time of violence, but it took place only under Jehovah's direction and victory was fundamentally possible only through faith in Jehovah. Israel seems to have participated mainly to manifest faith in Jehovah. Consistently inferior to her enemies in military strength, Israel prevails (when she does prevail) through faith rather than through superior armaments. "For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong. . . . for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you, and he hath promised you. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God" (Josh. 23:9-11).

After Moses and Joshua, prophetic teachings concerning war continued to follow the model of the Exodus. Jehovah assured Barak, captain of Israel's hosts, through Deborah, a prophetess and judge: "I will deliver [Sisera, a Canaanite general] into thine hand." Israel, still in a Bronze-Age culture, descended from its mountain redoubt on foot to face the 900 iron chariots of Sisera on valley terrain that gave him the advantage. But this advantage was nullified by a torrential rainstorm that mired the chariots in mud. Though Israel alone was no match for Sisera's host and iron chariots, Israel prevailed by faith in Jehovah.

Similarly, Gideon, another judge and deliverer of Israel, obeyed Jehovah and reduced his fighting men before confronting the much vaster hosts of Midian with the technological edge of camels as cavalry, one of the first times Israel faced such a force in war. Israel prevailed without itself possessing such capacity. (Judg. 6-7) The "Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." Jehovah directed Gideon to send home "whoever is fearful and afraid," and 22,000 left. Still, 10,000 remained. Jehovah directed that only 300 men be retained of the 10,000. The Lord said, "By the 300 men . . . will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand." By inspired strategem — the confusion caused by smashing lamps and breaking pitchers — rather than by Israelite superiority in armaments or animals of war, or numbers of fighting men, the Midianites were tricked into fighting among themselves and completed their own destruction.

After faithlessness in Israel and among its priesthood leaders, Eli's sons, had led to Israel's defeat at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4), a penitent Israel triumphed over the Philistines under the faithful leadership of Samuel. Jehovah intervened with a miracle. "The Lord thundered with a great thunder" upon the Philistines and "discomfited them" (1 Sam. 7:7-10).

Israel disrupted that primary relationship with Jehovah by desiring a king “that we also may be like all the nations” and demanded a king to “go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8:20).

This decision was the point of no return for ancient Israel. Samuel warned that a monarchy would surely result in centralization of government, excessive militarization of the society, and heavy taxation to support both. Without success, Samuel warned that mimicking the world would result in the destruction of the uniqueness of Israel as a standard to the nations, a beacon to those nations whose course of conduct was limited by the secular vision of man left to himself. (1 Sam. 8:11–19) Samuel presents one of the earliest and best descriptions of Leviathan.

After Saul was anointed the first king, he proved himself in battle against the Philistines. But his authority was undermined by his own disobedience, and Israel’s army, facing superior numbers, melted away into the “high places” and caves where the chariots of the Philistines could not follow (1 Sam. 13:5–6).

Jonathan, the son of Saul, then became a savior of Israel, trusting in Jehovah to balance the odds. (1 Sam. 13–14) The Philistines had not allowed Israel to possess armaments or permitted blacksmiths to practice their trades “lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears.” So Israel, trusting in Jehovah, “went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock” and to “sharpen his goad.” An agricultural people, with faith in Jehovah armed themselves with the implements of the farm — and they prevailed.

Jonathan demonstrated saving faith by attacking the Philistine camp with only his armor-bearer, reasoning: “There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14:6). Jehovah was with them. Tumult broke out, exacerbated by a miraculous earthquake, and Philistine attacked Philistine (1 Sam. 14:13–16).

Israel’s greatest king, David, came to that position from an ultimate test of faith in the Lord’s protection — his contest with Goliath.

The Philistine warrior, Goliath of Gath, caricatured the military power of this world. Standing “six cubits and a span” (nine feet nine inches), protected by a coat of mail weighing “five thousand shekels” (125 lbs.) and carrying a spear whose staff “was like a weaver’s beam” and whose head weighed 600 shekels of iron (15 lbs.), Goliath challenged Israel’s faith in Jehovah with the savage power of the world (1 Sam. 17:4–7).

David responded as had Moses and Joshua, Deborah and Gideon, Samuel and Jonathan. “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:37).

He hurled that same affirmation of faith at Goliath:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands. (1 Sam. 17:45–51)

The lesson of the Old Testament is not that armaments are unnecessary or that Israel was never to fight but rather that faith in Jehovah and obedience to his word were the center of Israel's salvation. Reliance upon weaponry alone demonstrated faithlessness in God.

The relationship between modern nations is more complex than is the relationship between patriarchs of tribal groups; rules governing relationships between individuals or small groups do not necessarily apply to relationships between nations. But changes in size, social organization, or weaponry also do not necessarily abrogate such rules. The principle of peaceful resolution remains both a divine mandate and a goal of mankind. And surely the existence of weapons of mass destruction renders the goal of world peace more necessary than ever.

Israel was forbidden to kill and enjoined to have mercy. Many disputes could thus be avoided. And others, once begun, could be more easily ended. Ended with finality, not with simmering, cankering bitterness based upon perceived injustice done to the (temporarily) vanquished. In this way war could be renounced and peace proclaimed.

After the era of the exodus, the conquest, and of Israel's judges, the prophets taught the ways of peace as they consistently challenged the monarchy's ways of war. The kings were constantly chastised by prophetic calls to repentance and to peace: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).

Isaiah taught that reliance upon weaponry and the ways of war would bring destruction, not security. Peace and tranquility could only come through faithful righteousness.

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! (Isa. 31:1)

. . . .

Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isa. 32:16-18)

The Psalmist counseled against placing "trust in chariots" or horses rather than in the Lord: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright." (Ps. 20:7-8) Hosea taught as did Isaiah:

And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. (Hos. 2:18)

. . . .

Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. (Hos. 10:13)

CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS ON FORCE AND WAR

The teachings of Israel's Messiah, the Prince of Peace, are the culmination of the law and the prophets. The message of the Christ is peace and goodwill, love for both neighbor and enemy: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

Jesus knew that no dispute is finally solved by violence. The underlying cause usually remains, simply exacerbated by the evil results of war: hatred of our brothers and sisters as if they were somehow fundamentally different from ourselves, the teaching and glorification of violence, lust, ignorance, propaganda, and finally, suffering, starvation, disease, and death.

Jesus taught not only that we should not kill, but rather that "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." He advised us to agree with our adversary quickly, lest the institutions of the state grind both down. He abolished the law of vengeance and retaliation, recognizing that the ways of violence could do nothing but lead to more violence: Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword (Matt. 5:21-22, 25-26, 38-42; 26:52).

During the first four centuries A.D., Christians during periods of imperial persecution were put to death for refusal to fight in Roman armies or take an oath to Caesar; instead they heeded both the injunction of Jehovah from Sinai, "Thou shalt not kill" and the commandment of the Lord against oaths (Exod. 25:13, Matt. 5:33-37).

After the Emperor Constantine's defeat of his rival Maxentius at Mulvian Bridge near Rome in 312 A.D., and his adoption of Christianity as the state religion in 324, the future of the church seemed inextricably linked to that of the Roman Empire. Although church fathers continued to preach for centuries against militarism and to commend nonviolence as the Christian response to violence, Christian nonviolence came increasingly to be confined to members of the priesthood and particular groups within the church, much later to emerge within Christian history as the dominating characteristic of the Quakers, the Mennonites, and other "peace" churches.

As the empire was threatened by invaders and as assault upon the empire came to be seen as an attack on the church, a doctrine of "just war" developed, giving particular and severely limiting rules whereby the Christian could fight. War was permissible only (1) if the purpose was self-defensive; (2) if a rough proportionality existed between weapons used (damage done) and the nature of the hostilities (i.e., a minor infraction of Caesar's law could not be punished by massive, disproportional retaliation); (3) if weapons used and military

strategy allowed a distinction between combatant and noncombatant; and finally (4) if it were likely that a better peace would emerge if force were used than if restrained.

The disintegration and collapse of the Roman Empire was followed by a feudal social structure which in turn gave way to the modern European nation-state system of today. But many legal principles developed during the era of the Roman Empire which influenced the nation-state system, particularly that body of law which developed to govern and restrain the newly emerging nation-states: the law of nations, or international law.

GROWTH OF SECULAR LAW

The emergence of the modern nation state was accompanied by a secularization of what had previously been the province of theology. From the time of Hugo Grotius, a Dutch jurist and scholar in the late sixteenth century, restraints upon the use of force by states which had originated within Christian heritage came to be considered part of the law of nations: peaceful resolution of disputes was to be anxiously sought; violence must only be self-defensive; if violence were used, it should be contained at the lowest possible level; proportionality should exist between the evil that existed and the force used against it; distinctions must be maintained between combatant and noncombatant; protection should be extended to the prisoner, the sick, and the wounded; and respect must be shown for special repositories of culture, humanity and religion — our churches, museums, art, culture, hospitals, schools.

But technology proceeded inexorably in the other direction. Weaponry and strategy based upon new technology led toward a concept of "total war": war waged against an entire people until collapse of a culture ensued.

The Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century saw economic sanctions like blockading imposed against entire nations without distinction between combatant and noncombatant. Sherman's march to the sea in the American Civil War, was a policy of utter destruction. World War I's new weapons like the machine gun and the use of poison gas brought deaths into the millions. World War II brought the horror of aerial bombardment of civilian targets, blurring the distinction between combatant and noncombatant; the demand for total destruction of an enemy state rather than simple surrender; and the use of nuclear weapons.

International law has tried, with painfully limited success, to keep pace. Witness the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 on the peaceful settlement of disputes, the interwar attempts at disarmament and the outlawing of war, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which protected the sick, the wounded, and the prisoners,⁵ the attempts to prohibit the most savage weaponry such as

⁵ Edwin Brown Firmage, "Fact-Finding in the Resolution of International Disputes — From the Hague Peace Conferences to the United Nations," *Utah Law Review*, April 1972, pp. 421-73.

poison gas and biological weaponry, and finally attempts to limit nuclear weapons from the Non-Proliferation Treaty⁶ SALT I and II.⁷

And the interrelation between law and religion, present at the birth of modern secular law from religious teaching, has continued.

DEVELOPMENT OF MORMON DOCTRINE ON WAR AND PEACE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from its beginning has taught the Christian doctrine of peace. We are forbidden to use the ways of Satan to combat him. If we use his means, he has already won the battle. The Church has consistently spoken in favor of understandings between nations to control these tendencies and to resolve disputes peaceably.

As was his custom on most subjects, Brigham Young minced no words in expressing his feelings on war and armaments in 1861: "A large share of the ingenuity of the world is taxed to invent weapons of war. What a set of fools! Much of the skill, ingenuity, and ability of the Christian nations are now devoted to manufacturing instruments of death. May we be saved from the effects of death. May we be saved from the effects of them! As I often tell you, if we are faithful, the Lord will fight our battles much better than we can ourselves."⁸

He bluntly warned: "When the nations for years turned much of their attention to manufacturing instruments of death, they have sooner or later used those instruments. . . . From the authority of all history, the deadly weapons now stored up and being manufactured will be used until the people are wasted away."⁹

The LDS Church teaches that there are conditions under which force may be used in defense of ourselves, our families, and our homes. But the same teachings, given during the turmoil of persecution in Missouri, stress that we will be blessed for our forgiving those who trespass against us, even if we might have been justified in resorting to force. We are admonished even in the face of offense to "bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge." Our posterity will be blessed to the third and fourth generation if we refrain from force against an aggressor who has done us repeated harm, though we would be justified in repelling force with force. (D&C 98:30-31)

The Church teaches the same principles that Israel heard first from Sinai and again from the Mount of the Beatitudes. We are forbidden to kill. Peace-

⁶ Edwin Brown Firmage, "The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *The American Journal of International Law* 63 (Oct. 1969): 711-46.

⁷ Edwin Brown Firmage and David Henry, "Vladivostok and Beyond: SALT I and the Prospects for SALT II," *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 14 (1975): 220-67.

⁸ 10 Feb. 1861, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: William Budge, 1854-86), 8:324.

⁹ 22 Aug. 1860, *Journal of Discourses*, 8:157.

makers are blessed. Only under dispensation from the Lord Himself are we permitted to deviate from this:

Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace. . . .

And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them.

And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue;

And if that people did not accept that offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord.

Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people.

And I, the Lord, would fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's. (D&C 98:16, 33-37)

To summarize these principles: (1) Latter-day Saints are under God's mandate to "renounce war and proclaim peace." This injunction is not phrased so as to leave us discretion. We are not to renounce war when "the enemy" agrees to do the same. Or to renounce war as long as the enemy disarms. Or to renounce war if the enemy is not excessively fearsome. We are quite simply to renounce war and proclaim peace. (2) We are forbidden as a people (the Church) to "go out to battle" unless the Lord commands it. (3) Even if others initiate war against us we are to "lift a standard of peace" to avert hostilities. These overtures of peace are to be made repeatedly; only afterwards will the Lord justify the use of force. (4) And, most important, consistent with the paradigm of Israel, Jehovah will then "fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's." He will be our warrior so that we need not be.

This picture of violence severely limited by God and excusable only under his direction is the pattern given from Israel's beginning, yet these rules, fully applicable under theocratic government, are qualified by our allegiance to secular and pluralistic states. We believe "that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights" (D&C 134:5). The Church has acknowledged that its members might participate within the armed forces of their respective states, within the boundaries of individual conscience. Our participation as citizens and subjects in secular states, however, has never been held to supplant God's injunctions. Our primary fidelity to God Almighty remains. State-declared war does not negate Jehovah's injunction against killing: mass killing is hardly an exculpation. The lives of neighbor and enemy are as precious to the Lord as our own and we are directed to love accordingly. Christian teaching, in other words, remains and is not invalidated by our living in secular and pluralistic states even after a condition of war exists.

Brigham Young in 1859 dismissed the notion that the mass murder of warfare somehow came outside the Master's mandate against killing:

Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder; but suppose that one family should rise up against another and

begin to slay them, would they not be taken up and tried for murder? Then why not nations that rise up and slay each other in a scientific way be equally guilty of murder? . . . Does it justify the slaying of men, women, and children that otherwise would have remained home in peace, because a great army is doing the work? No: the guilty will be damned for it.¹⁰

I have always loved the centennial statement written by President Lorenzo Snow, 1 January 1901, in his "Greeting to the World":

Awake, ye monarchs of the earth and rulers among nations. . . . Disband your armies; turn your weapons of strife into implements of industry; take the yoke from the necks of the people; arbitrate your disputes; meet in royal congress, and plan for union instead of conquest, for the banishment of poverty, for the uplifting of the masses, and for the health, wealth, enlightenment and happiness of all tribes and people and nations.¹¹

In a conference address three months before the start of World War I, President Joseph F. Smith decried the idea that God caused wars to accomplish His purposes: "I don't want you to think . . . that God has designed or willed that war should come among the people of the world, that the nations of the world should be divided against each other in war, and engaged in the destruction of each other! God did not design or cause this."¹²

The calling of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., to the First Presidency brought together separate but compatible teachings against war and the use of force between states. He brought a rich background in international law. Christian concepts of the "just war" — self-defense, proportionality, the distinction between combatant and noncombatant — had become part of that discipline. President Clark also had extensive experience in government as Solicitor to the Department of State (the modern equivalent would be Legal Adviser to the Department of State), as our negotiator at various disarmament conferences between the two world wars, as Ambassador to Mexico, as the author of the Clark Memorandum to the Monroe Doctrine, and finally as Under-Secretary of State. His ministry truly was that of peacemaker. His service to our government was dominated by attempts to prevent war through arbitration and to negotiate agreements about arms limitations and laws of war if peaceful resolution failed. His ministry continued with remarkable consistency as a member of the First Presidency. His testimony of the Lord Jesus as Christ was at the center of his hope for a world at peace.

As the world lurched toward World War II, the First Presidency issued several statements denouncing war and pleading that the nations of the world resolve disputes by peaceful means. After that war, in general conference on 5 October 1946, President Clark presented his most complete sermon on the

¹⁰ 18 Dec. 1859, *Journal of Discourses*, 7:137.

¹¹ James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 3:334.

¹² Joseph F. Smith, "Opening Address," *Eighty-Fifth Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 Oct. 1914 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), p. 7.

relationship between Christian teaching, the necessity of peaceful resolution of disputes, the laws of war should peaceful resolution fail, and arms limitation. In this memorable sermon, President Clark noted the awesome advent of the nuclear era:

Then as the crowning savagery of war, we Americans wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilian population with the atom bomb in Japan, few if any of the ordinary civilians being any more responsible for the war than were we, and perhaps most of them no more aiding Japan in the war than we were aiding America. Military men are now saying that the Atom Bomb was a mistake. It was more than that: it was a world tragedy. Thus we have lost all that we gained during the years from Grotius (1625) to 1912. And the worst of this Atomic Bomb tragedy is not that not only did the people of the United States not rise up in protest against this savagery, not only did it not shock us to read of this wholesale destruction of men, women, and children, and cripples, but that it actually drew from the nation at large a general approval of this fiendish butchery.

After noting and condemning the development by the United States of chemical and biological weaponry, President Clark continued:

Thus we in America are now deliberately searching out and developing the most savage, murderous means of exterminating peoples that Satan can plant in our minds. We do it not only shamelessly, but with a boast. God will not forgive us for this.

If we are to avoid extermination, if the world is not to be wiped out, we must find some way to curb the fiendish ingenuity of men who have apparently no fear of God, man, or the devil, and who are willing to plot and plan and invent instrumentalities that will wipe out all the flesh of the earth. . . . I protest with all of the energy I possess against this fiendish activity, and as an American citizen, I call upon our government and its agencies to see that these unholy experimentations are stopped, and that somehow we get into the minds of our war-minded general staff and its satellites, and into the general staffs of all the world, a proper respect for human life.¹³

President Clark, a true pastor of his people, attacked our own activities in war, not simply the activities of an enemy, which would have been easy enough to do, demanding no particular courage, however accurate the indictment.

In April conference of 1948, President Clark then turned to that issue within the general problem of war and peace closest to his heart: the necessity of controlling man's inclination to produce ever more fiendish ways to destroy his fellow man. He condemned any thought of our "first use" of weapons of mass destruction, or so-called "preemptive war":

So far as one can judge, the next war is now planning under a system that will call for the use of weapons which will wipe out cities and, if necessary, nations. I have had it reported — I do not know how accurately — that our military men are saying that if we had a forty-eight hour lead, the war would be over. How many of us brethren are really horrified by the thought of the indiscriminate, wholesale slaughter of men, women and children — the old, the decrepit, the diseased; or are we sitting back and saying, "Let's get at it first." How far away is the spirit of murder from the hearts of those of us who take no thought in it? . . .

¹³ J. Reuben Clark, *Conference Report*, 5 Oct. 1946, p. 89.

Today, we sit quietly, with our consciences scarcely stricken when we contemplate Nagasaki and Hiroshima where we introduced the use of the Atom Bomb. Now, if you want to know where the losses of war are, that great field to which I have referred is where you can look.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

Whether it was ever axiomatic that an increase in weaponry represented an increase in national security, it is not true in the nuclear age.

Onrushing technology associated with nuclear weaponry and other means of mass destruction threaten to snap the cord of congruence between people and their governments and consequently between allied governments. The essence of legitimacy of government is that relationship of congruence, of uncoerced affinity between people and government. Weapons now deployed and being developed and strategies based upon their use are visibly incompatible with protecting the people such weapons are supposed to defend. Governments that attempt to convince their people otherwise eventually will lose the credibility and legitimacy upon which their rule depends. Governments seeking to deploy such weapons within allied countries will be similarly rebuffed, as will acceding governments of the host states.

Concepts of national defense and national security and the military technology developed and deployed under such strategies must be congruent with the survival of the individual, society, and the species. Such a proposition would seem sufficiently tautological to be unnecessary. But the United States government, the Kremlin, and any other government which allows the deployment of such weapons systems violate this basic responsibility toward its people.

Self-defense first requires us to honor our sacred spiritual stewardship on behalf of our parents toward our children. In the final prophetic statement before the advent of the Lord, Malachi warned that the day would come that would burn as an oven. We who do wickedly would be as a stubble and would be left without root or branch: without rootedness in our past and without extending ourselves through our branches into the future. But he promised that Elijah would appear before the coming of the Lord to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest we be smitten (Mal. 4). (Significantly, the Lord repeats these words in Doctrine and Covenants 98:16 in the context of his direction to his church to "renounce war and proclaim peace.")

As children of our fathers and mothers we are stewards over all that every previous generation has bequeathed: of civilization and of life itself. As fathers and mothers of our children we must make secure our link in the chain of being by passing on our heritage lest it end with us.

We are stewards under God to protect and preserve all life on our planet.

We are stewards of our air and our water.

We are stewards for everyone who ever wrote a book, composed a song, a poem, or painted a painting.

¹⁴ J. Reuben Clark, *Conference Report*, 5 April 1948, p. 175.

We transmit every discovery of science and medicine, every development of architecture and engineering, of law and government.

Or else we will not.

I believe that man possesses an eternal spirit which cannot be destroyed. But almost everything else can be.

Even the genetic heritage from the beginning of our race: our intelligence, our talents, that pool of genes from the beginning must be bequeathed through our branches.

Or else it will end with us.

Our allegiance to God is manifest as the Lord informs us in the parable of the final judgment (Matt. 25:31–46) by our stewardship toward our brothers and sisters. The Lord instructs us in the parable of the good Samaritan and in the Great Sermon's injunction that we must love our enemy. Such covenant-love must be extended to all the world. And now in the nuclear age this stewardship extends, in both directions, through the veil.