

# The Mormon Church and the Spanish-American War: An End to Selective Pacifism

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**T**he impact of the Spanish-American War on the people of the American West has been overshadowed by its profound effect upon the American nation as a world power. A little-known sidelight to the war is the influence that it exerted upon the Mormons. For a half century the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) had maintained its right to participate or not participate in any given conflict, the discretionary power resting with the current prophet. This position, which can be called "selective pacifism," was derived from Mormon theology and was inseparable from the Mormon "Kingdom of God," one of the most powerful theocratic autonomies in nineteenth-century America. When the Mormon Church was forced by the federal government to abandon polygamy in 1890, it lost some of its political and social power. Another significant step in the disintegration of that power was the elimination in 1898 of selective pacifism, a practice that was abandoned following an internal conflict in the church over Mormon participation in the Spanish-American War.

The Mormon theological aspects of pacifism were first discussed by Joseph Smith, Jr.<sup>1</sup> Claiming to have had communion with the deity as early as 1820, Smith asserted that his canonical writings and pronouncements were equal, if

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<sup>1</sup> For general studies of pacifism, see Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960); Peter Brock *Pacifism in the United States from the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968); Merle Curti, *Peace or War: The American Struggle, 1636-1936* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1936); George H. C. Macgregor, *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism and the Relevance of an Impossible Ideal* (Nyack, N.Y.: Fellowship Publications, 1960); Peter Mayer, ed., *The Pacifist Conscience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966); and John A. Rohr, *Prophets without Honor: Public Policy and the Selective Conscientious Objector* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

not superior, to the authority of the Bible. His first production of new scriptures was the Book of Mormon, published in 1830 as a translation of the writings of pre-Columbian residents of America. His own revelations were published in 1835 as the Doctrine and Covenants of the Latter Day Saints. During Smith's lifetime, these two volumes, together with the Bible, continued the canon of Mormon theology and were the basis of nineteenth-century Mormon attitudes toward war and peace.<sup>2</sup>

The Book of Mormon, first of all, dispenses with the traditional cleavage between the Old and New Testaments concerning war. The warlike Jehovah and the pacifistic Christ are represented as the same individual; commands to kill and exhortations to peace are uttered by the same divine being. The heroes of the book are involved in successive wars of defense against aggressors for which they are specifically absolved of wrong-doing. In the accounts of the valor of these defenders (especially with reference to the warriors called Sons of Helaman), there seems to be an enthusiasm for militarism. (1 Ne. 19:7-10; Alma 43:46-47; 46:11-21, 30-31; 53:18-22; 56:10-11.)

Along with these examples of militarism, however, there are also evidences of pacifism in the Book of Mormon. One group refuses to participate in one of these "defensive" wars and even allows itself to be massacred. Its members seem to feel their spiritual welfare precludes shedding the blood of their enemies. Although the dominant segment of the community has to jeopardize itself to defend these pacifists, praise rather than condemnation is given to the noncombatants who paid to their protectors a large amount of money to defray the military costs deriving from their nonparticipation. (Alma 24:1-22; 27:21-30.) Toward the end of the narrative one of the generals of the army refuses to lead his people into battle because of his disgust at their motives for war and atrocities they commit. His position is not condemned in the book but emerges as one deserving commendation (Morm. 3: 11, 16; Moro. 9:9-10.) These two examples significantly contrast with isolated instances in which men who refused to defend the community are executed because they sought to subvert it in favor of the enemy.<sup>3</sup> Conscientious pacifism is as much an accepted practice within the Book of Mormon narrative as is militarism.

The foundations of Mormonism's theological position on war and pacifism were further defined in revelations announced by Joseph Smith. With the admonition to "renounce war and proclaim peace," an 1833 pronouncement assures the Latter-day Saints that God will protect them and fight their battles. Individuals and their families are instructed to endure attacks from enemies until the fourth assault. At the fourth attack, retaliation in kind is authorized, but the revelation promises that continued forbearance will bring God's blessing upon the individual and generations of his descendants. In reference to war, the document states, "And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine

<sup>2</sup> This article will focus primarily upon the question of Mormon participation in war, rather than upon the more diffuse question of violence on the Mormon frontier.

<sup>3</sup> Alma 46:53; 62:9-11. Commenting on the fate of these men as described in the narrative, Mormon historian Hugh Nibley writes: "These were no pacifists or draft-evaders, but were [insurgents] armed to the teeth. . . ." *BYU Studies* 14 (Autumn 1973): 122.

ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, *save I the Lord, command them*" (D&C 98:12-16, 22-38). The document further specifies that after the fourth attack by an enemy nation, the people are justified in going to war.

This early pronouncement by Joseph Smith presupposes three essentials concerning Mormon participation in war. First, the decision of participation or nonparticipation in war is independent of the prerogatives of secular government. The authority of secular government is conspicuous by its absence in this document. Second, this policy statement on war assumes that divine injunctions for war and peace will be conveyed through the Mormon prophet, God's spokesman on earth, rather than by any secular leader. Third, the document presupposes that in matters of war and peace the Mormon community will give absolute obedience to the commands of the prophet, irrespective of the decisions of governmental authority, either local or national.

Thus, as early as 1833 the Mormon *Weltanschauung* implied a theocratic community independent of secular government. Moreover, in 1831 another of Smith's revelations had affirmed: "And it shall come to pass, among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion [the central habitation of the Latter-day Saints] for safety" (D&C 45:68-69). The Mormon community was intended to be a haven for those seeking to avoid participation in national wars. It was not until 1844, the year of his death, that Joseph Smith actually organized the Mormon community as a theocratic commonwealth with a prophet-king, a governing political body ("Council of Fifty"), and a grand design to establish a Mormon state within a state.<sup>4</sup> In these early revelations on war Smith presaged the establishment of Mormon theocratic prerogatives.

The developing tradition of the church during Smith's administration mirrored his theological dualism with respect to war. When the Mormons in Jackson County, Missouri, were mobbed by anti-Mormons in 1833, they suffered without retaliating. Smith, however, in 1834 organized a military company, "Zion's Camp," which he led a thousand miles from Ohio to Missouri to win back Mormon losses by force if necessary. Upon reaching Missouri, Smith faced a suicidal confrontation with the Missourians. Recognizing that the kingdom of God would not be advanced through a Thermopylae, he became conciliatory with the anti-Mormons and the company returned to Ohio without bloodshed.<sup>5</sup> In 1836, the church organ, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, carried an editorial arguing at length in favor of defensive war by

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<sup>4</sup> The standard reference on the political kingdom is Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1967). The standard work on the economic aspects of the Mormon kingdom is Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Brigham H. Roberts, ed., 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 1:36-40; Paul Bailey, *The Armies of God* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 8-29. Bailey's book is a popularized survey of nineteenth-century Mormon militarism.

threatened communities, implying the Mormons had that right. Yet during the same month Smith issued a letter stating that the Mormons "would suffer their rights to be taken from them before shedding blood."<sup>6</sup> In 1836 the Mormons did exactly that, allowing themselves to be peacefully expelled from Clay County, Missouri, where they had fled from the mobs in Jackson County. Depending upon whether nonviolence or armed resistance was most advantageous, the contradiction in the two official statements would presumably be resolved according to the needs of the latter-day kingdom.

Two years later in Caldwell County, Missouri, Mormon ambivalence concerning war was brought into a sharp and disastrous focus. On 4 July 1838, Smith's first counselor in the church, Sidney Rigdon, delivered a sermon in which he stated that the Mormons would annihilate their enemies in the event of anti-Mormon attacks. Joseph Smith himself allegedly made some inflammatory remarks during this period, proclaiming himself as a modern Mohammed and threatening holy war under the motto: "Joseph Smith or the Sword." After two expulsions, this hyperbole was intended to intimidate the Mormons' enemies; instead it enraged them. The Mormons were marshaled for defense in a county militia under the control of Church leaders. In addition, a secret guerrilla organization of reprisal, the "Danites," had been organized by some prominent Mormons. A fracas on election day ignited anti-Mormons and Mormons into open hostilities. Suffering murder, rape, and pillage, most Mormons chose to flee their enemies rather than fight. The Danites, however, waged guerrilla reprisals against the non-Mormons, and virtual civil war resulted. By this time the Mormon militia and anti-Mormon militia were in open confrontation. A Mormon apostle, David W. Patten, was killed at the so-called Battle of Crooked River, and seventeen Mormons were murdered at Haun's Mill by a company of the Missouri militia. Encircled by anti-Mormon forces at the Mormon settlement of Far West, Smith and other leaders of the church were betrayed to the mercy of their enemies. Far West became the scene of wholesale rape, brutality, and destruction by the anti-Mormon militia, while Joseph Smith and other church leaders narrowly escaped summary execution. Smith officially repudiated the Danites, and excommunicated one of the Danite leaders. The Mormons were expelled from Missouri, and Smith languished for six months in prison.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (July 1836): 337-40. The article was authored by Warren A. Cowdery, subsequently the editor of the publication. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-71) 1:77.

<sup>7</sup> For sources concerning the difficulties of the Mormons in Missouri, see *Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders &c in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons; and the Evidence Given before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the State of Missouri . . .* (Fayette, Mo.: Missouri General Assembly, 1841); Brigham H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1900); Warren Jennings, "The City in the Garden: Social Conflict in Jackson County, Missouri," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, eds. F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1973), pp. 99-119; F. Mark McKiernan, "Mormonism on the Defensive: Far West, 1838-1839," in *Restoration Movement*, pp. 121-40; John Corrill, *Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day*



Ambivalence with respect to war continued at the next haven for the Mormons in Illinois. Draining a swamp land on the Mississippi, the Mormons erected the city of Nauvoo. Joseph Smith became lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion, which by 1844 may have had as many as four thousand men in its ranks. Aside from the pomp and spectacle of this Mormon army, its existence (though legal) bespoke disturbing implications of the prerogatives assumed by Joseph Smith as the commander-in-chief, mayor of Nauvoo, and in 1844 candidate for the U.S. presidency. Smith's designs pointed westward rather than eastward, however, and by 1844 he had already decided the Mormons would have to go into the unsettled West for their protection. In June 1844, Smith, after being charged with the destruction of a printing press used by Mormon dissenters who opposed polygamy, voluntarily surrendered himself to the custody of unsympathetic officials. He did so even though it appears he was convinced that by so doing he would be murdered. When a mob entered his prison cell to kill him, he fired upon them with a pistol he had obtained for his last defense. His successor, Brigham Young, wisely chose not to use the Nauvoo Legion for a retributive attack which the mobs feared would follow the assassination of the prophet. Living in fear of his own life, Young carried a bowie knife for self-protection at Nauvoo, yet he had nightmares about the possibility of killing an assailant.<sup>8</sup> Rather than test the ability of the Nauvoo Legion to protect the Mormons in their own city, Young negotiated a truce, and in 1846 led the Mormons in an orderly retreat into the wilderness.

As the Mormons were preparing to leave United States territory for the Great Basin, in Mexican territory, the Mexican War developed. Young had

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*Saints (commonly called Mormons) Including an Account of the Author of Leaving the Church* (St. Louis: By the Author, 1839); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 208-40; Reed C. Durham, Jr., "The Election Day Battle at Gallatin," *BYU Studies* 13 (Autumn 1972): 36-61; Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, ed., *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 301-4; and Roberts, *History of the Church* 3:41-340 (esp. p. 167n). Joseph Smith's responsibility for organizing and promoting the Danites is still a question subject to analysis. In addition to the testimony on the Danites found in *Documents containing the Correspondence . . .*, assertions concerning the Danites can be found in Jerald Tanner, ed., *The Reed Peck Manuscript: An Important Document Written in 1839, Concerning the Mormon War in Missouri and the Danite Band* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, [1965]); Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell, Man of God, Son of Thunder* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966); and John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis, Mo.: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1877), pp. 57-85. Evidence that Joseph Smith and the highest leaders of the Church had only transitory association with the Danites is indicated in Corrill, *Brief History*, pp. 31-32. Moreover, the personal journal of Luman Andros Shirliff, a member of the Danites in Missouri, records his mistrust of such high Mormon ecclesiastics as John Taylor, because they were not privy to the secret oaths of the Danite organization. Lyman Andros Shirliff, *Journal* (Oct. 1838), 1:125, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives. In the minds of some Danites, however, there was no distinction between the Danites and the official Mormon militia. See Albert P. Rockwood to unknown, 29 Oct. 1838, Albert P. Rockwood Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>8</sup> *History of the Church*, 6:555, 618. The bowie knife incident is related in Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, 12 Sept. 1857, LDS Church Archives. Reference to Young's nightmares about shedding blood is in John D. Lee, *Diary*, 17 March 1846, Church Archives.

sent an ambassador to President James K. Polk, volunteering 2,000 Mormon men to enlist and form an expeditionary force which would precede the Mormon emigrants into the Great Basin and the American Northwest. Now that the war had begun, this regiment of Mormons would liberate Mexican territory for the American government, and the Mormon pioneers would occupy it. The entire operation would be conducted, according to Young's design, in a region of Mexican territory which was devoid of Mexican troops and which, therefore, did not require Mormon soldiers to engage in actual warfare.

The canniness of this scheme was not unnoticed by Polk, who countered the offer with the proposal that only 500 men be enlisted to march along the present U.S.-Mexican border to California, engaging the enemy where necessary. This not only destroyed Young's hope of having a government-employed vanguard of Mormons along the pioneer route, but it also put the Mormon volunteers in the position of possibly having to fight Mexican forces. Having made the original offer of volunteers, Young could hardly refuse Polk's counterproposal, but he promised the volunteers in the Mormon Battalion that they would not have to shed blood in military engagements. His prediction was fulfilled.<sup>9</sup>

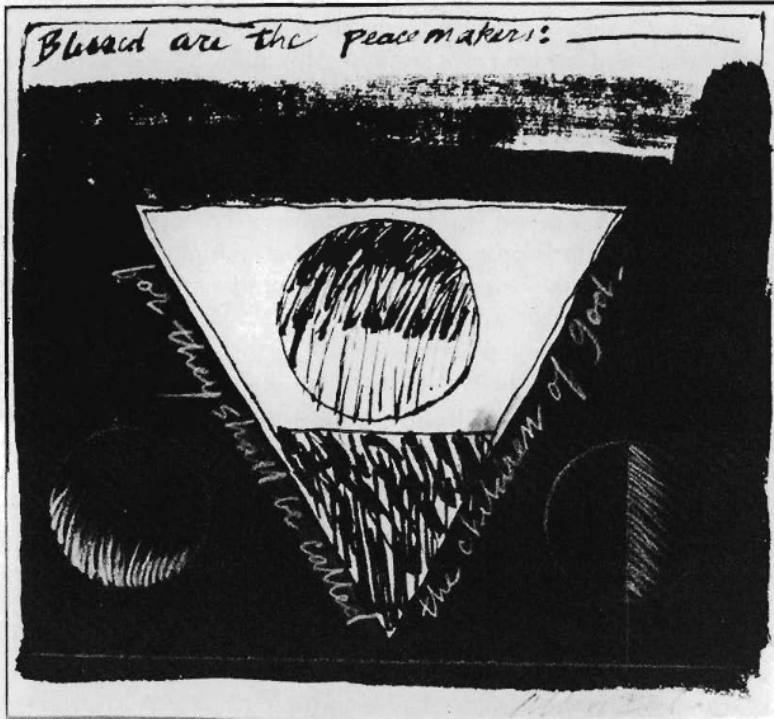
Young complied with the counteroffer and persuaded the Mormons to enlist for the economic benefits. Nevertheless, incensed that Polk had not only frustrated his plans but had also put the Mormon volunteers in jeopardy, Young began to intimate that the whole idea had been foisted upon him by Polk as a plot to injure the Mormons.<sup>10</sup> Despite Young's disappointment, the battalion brought cash in excess of \$50,000 to the common fund of the church.<sup>11</sup> The Mormon Battalion did not fulfill Brigham Young's anticipations for a military expedition of Mormon explorers and pioneers, but it represented a willingness to give limited support to a military effort in order to benefit the larger needs of the Mormon kingdom. Ironically, in later years the Mormon Battalion would be cited as an example of patriotic response to the nation's wartime needs.

Although Brigham Young continually sought peaceful relations with the native Americans in the Great Basin, he did not oppose Mormons defending themselves against Indians. Young's policy was to educate the Indians, proselyte them, and have Mormon missionaries marry Indian women. When Indian wars occurred, Young sought for cessation of hostilities without punitive retribution. During the first decades of Utah's territorial period, the Mormons

<sup>9</sup> Brigham H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 3:66-76; Eugene E. Campbell, "A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1952), pp. 76-82. See also the revisionist essay by W. Ray Luce, "The Mormon Battalion: A Historical Accident?" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42 (Winter, 1974): 27-38.

<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young made this accusation immediately after the arrival of the first Mormons in the Salt Lake Valley. Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, 28 July 1847, LDS Church Archives. He also repeated this charge 13 September 1857. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London, England: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854-86), 5:235.

<sup>11</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, p. 21.



maintained a strong military stance, requiring all men between 18 and 45 years of age to serve in the territorial militia, the Nauvoo Legion, while boys 14 to 16 years old served in the "Juvenile Rifles," and men between 45 and 75 years of age comprised the "Silver Greys."<sup>12</sup> This reinforced the popular image of Mormonism as a militaristic religion.

Moreover, in early Utah, Mormon rhetoric often threatened destruction upon the enemies of the church, especially during the first decade of Utah's settlement. But like the bombast of Rigdon in Missouri, it was primarily literary metaphor.<sup>13</sup> Some isolated Mormons in the southern settlements of Utah took

<sup>12</sup> For an account of Mormon relations with the Indians during the overland trail experience, see William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal*, Lawrence Clayton, ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1921), pp. 44-45, 80-81, 86-87, 104, 181-82; Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 4:33-51; Ralph Hansen, "Administrative History of the Nauvoo Legion in Utah" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1954), pp. 10, 23; Lawrence G. Coates, "A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, 1969), pp. 70-221.

<sup>13</sup> Mormon hyperbolic threats were common prior to 1858. See *Journal of Discourses*, 2:186 (discourse delivered by Brigham Young 15 Feb. 1855); 2:311 (discourse delivered by Young 8 July 1855); 5:110 (discourse delivered by George A. Smith 2 Aug. 1855). Contemporaries of Brigham Young and many current historians accept the hyperbole of Brigham Young and other leaders at face value, which is exactly what Young intended. In his public sermons and in conversations with non-Mormons, Young generally adopted a bellicose stance, threatening destruction upon apostates and gentile armies. In his private conversations with trusted associates, however, Young revealed an abhorrence of war and bloodshed. (Lee, *Diary*, 17 March 1846; Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, 15 April 1856, 26 Feb. 1858, LDS

the rhetoric seriously in 1857 during the war hysteria caused by the unannounced march of federal troops on Utah. The result was Mormon participation in the massacre of an emigrant train at Mountain Meadows, an incident which horrified Brigham Young when he learned of it.<sup>14</sup> After that awesome and much celebrated tragedy, the inflammatory rhetoric and threats virtually ceased as Mormon leaders became aware of the unforeseen outcome of their primitive psychological warfare.

When the Utah expedition was ordered to the territory in 1857 by President James Buchanan to suppress a presumed but actually nonexistent rebellion, the Mormons feared extermination and could easily have resorted to bloodshed. Instead, however, they obeyed Young's order to follow a scorched earth policy and not to fight. When members of the Nauvoo Legion burned federal supply trains to aid the war of attrition against the army, they did so without his knowledge or authorization. When confrontation finally seemed imminent, he adopted the "Sebastopol plan," which had recently attracted world sympathy in the Crimea: he ordered a general evacuation and a burning of Mormon settlements in preparation for still another pacifistic hegira into the wilderness. In 1858, peaceful settlement of the difficulties ended the strangely nonviolent "Utah War."<sup>15</sup>

The events of 1857 seem to have been a turning point in the attitudes of the Mormon leaders toward violence and war. Inflammatory rhetoric had contributed to the paranoia which pressed some Mormons into committing a massacre, whereas passive resistance had won the right of the Mormons to the land they had conquered. At the close of this bloodless conflict, Young furiously condemned all war: "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?"<sup>16</sup> War for any reason became anathema to him.<sup>17</sup>

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Church Archives). By threatening destruction, Brigham Young hoped to intimidate enemies of the Mormon kingdom. When rhetoric failed, Young withdrew pacifistically, as he did in Missouri, Nauvoo, and in the Utah War. The sensationalistic claims of Mormon vengeance in Utah can be found in William A. Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Being the Life Confession and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, The Danite Chief of Utah* (New York: G. A. Crofutt, 1872). Hickman claimed his crimes were committed with the sanction of Church leaders, but, as early as 1859, they were privately repudiating him and his claims. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 31 Aug. 1859.

<sup>14</sup> The standard work on this subject is Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970); see also Hofstadter and Wallace, *American Violence*, pp. 316-20.

<sup>15</sup> Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850-1859* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 119-203. Young in 1859 referred to his opposition to the burning of the supply wagons. LDS Historian's Office Journal, ms., 4 Oct. 1859, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>16</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 7:137 (discourse delivered on 18 Dec. 1859).

<sup>17</sup> Some writers have suggested that Brigham Young did not hesitate to have the Utah militia forcibly suppress the schismatic Morrisites of Utah in 1862 in the so-called Morrisite

When the American Civil War began, Young kept the Mormons and Utah with the Union but declined to involve them in the conflict. With theocratic aplomb, ex-Governor Young granted Lincoln's request for men to guard the mail routes in the territory but sourly commented that "all this does not prove any loyalty to political tyrants."<sup>18</sup> Young regarded the Civil War as insane, criminal, and tragic.

I care for the North and the South and if I had sufficient power with the Lord, I would save every innocent man, woman and child from being slaughtered in this unnatural and almost universal destruction of life and property. I pray that the Lord Almighty will so order it that all those who thirst for the blood of their fellowmen may be found in the front ranks that they may be cut off speedily and the war come to an end, that the innocent may escape.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from pacifistic motivations, Young was unwilling to involve Mormons in a conflict which would not benefit the Mormon kingdom.

Young's successor, John Taylor, continued a pacifist theme and argued that even though wars and bloodshed were inevitably going to plague all nations, "these things are with the people and with God. It is not for us." When these wars occur, he argued, the role of the Latter-day Saints should be to preach the gospel and establish a haven of peace to which the people may escape from the warring nations. Questions of national interest were clearly secondary to the welfare of the Latter-day Saints. Therefore, Mormon leaders consistently preached against participation in national wars, and scoffed at the folly of European wars.<sup>20</sup>

Peace again ended for the Mormons when the federal campaign against Mormon polygamists began in the 1880s. Ill feeling ran high on both sides of the conflict between the Mormons and federal authority, and on at least two

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War. See Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 223-24. The Morrisite War has yet to be adequately examined, but several factors should be considered before alleging that Brigham Young and the Mormons suppressed this schismatic group by force of arms. First, Young was not the governor of Utah in 1862 and the militia was not under his direction; second, the non-Mormon chief justice of Utah, John F. Kinney, authorized the arrest of the Morrisite leaders for criminal activities and also authorized the use of a military force to arrest them; and, third, the federally-appointed secretary of state of Utah and acting-governor, a non-Mormon named Frank Fuller, ordered the militia to arrest the Morrisite leaders, by force if necessary. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: History Company, 1890), pp. 615-20; Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892-1904), 2:48-57; M. Hamlin Cannon, "The Morrisite War," *American West*, 7 (Nov., 1970): 5-9, 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 10:107 (discourse delivered 8 March 1863).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10:272 (discourses delivered 6 Oct. 1863).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19:305-6 (discourse delivered 8 April 1878). One scholar has suggested that the pacifistic reputation of the Mormons was sufficient to make Utah a refuge during the Civil War for deserters from both sides of the conflict. See Robert Joseph Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862-1890)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1941), p. 7. The present writer is also aware of European Mormons, who deserted their nation's armies or fled conscription and emigrated to Utah during the nineteenth century. A thorough demographic study, however, will be necessary to determine to what extent Utah was regarded as and actually became a pacifist refuge during the nineteenth century.



occasions unarmed polygamists were gunned down by federal deputies.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly recognizing the possibility of violence during the federal campaign against polygamy, Mormon apostle Franklin D. Richards told the church membership that, unlike God's people of ancient times, the Latter-day Saints were not authorized to shed blood. Citing the example of King David, whom God did not permit to build the ancient temple because "he had been too much a man of war," the apostle urged the Saints to keep themselves free from such evils and thereby remain worthy to build modern temples.<sup>22</sup>

Although nineteenth-century Mormonism has been regarded as primarily bellicose and militaristic by some authors,<sup>23</sup> Mormon theology and activities had clearly reflected both militarism and pacifism.<sup>24</sup> To some extent, the military spirit had been active throughout the nineteenth century and was a legitimate part of the Mormon heritage of Zion's Camp, the so-called Danites, the Nauvoo Legion, the Mormon Battalion, the Utah War, and Utah's Indian wars. Underlying these external manifestations, however, had been a pacifistic undercurrent which had subdued the demonstrations of militarism. The passive endurance by most Mormons of the Missouri depredations, the surrender of Joseph Smith to his enemies at Nauvoo, the nonviolent departure from Nauvoo, the scorched-earth resistance during the Utah War, the willingness to flee Utah rather than resort to force of arms, and the nonviolent resistance to the federal campaign against polygamy were all part of the pacifistic tradition of Mormonism.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 6:116-17, 162-63.

<sup>22</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 23:107-8 (discourse delivered on 8 April 1882).

<sup>23</sup> Bailey, *The Armies of God*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> This duality is alluded to in Gaylen L. Caldwell's "Mormon Conceptions of Individual Rights and Political Obligation" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1952), p. 183, and in Robert Jeffrey Stott, "Mormonism and War" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974). The ambivalence on warfare and pacifism has enabled Mormon polemicists to approach pacifism from both unsympathetic and sympathetic viewpoints. Mormon political conservative Jerreld L. Newquist, in his compilation, *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1964), pp. 468-87, uses quotes from twentieth-century LDS leaders to emphasize the importance of American isolation from foreign wars and the importance of defensive warfare by Americans. Representing an ultra-conservative political viewpoint among Mormons, Richard Vetterli's *The Constitution by a Thread* (Salt Lake City: Paramount Publishers, 1967), pp. 99, 106, 248-98, aligns pacifism with communist conspiracy and demonstrates a positive enthusiasm for militarism as an alternative for Mormons. A doctrinal analysis of the Mormon position on war by Hyrum L. Andrus, "War and the Saints," appears on pages 246-68 of Richard Vetterli's *The Challenge and the Choice* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969). Andrus's essay acknowledges the Mormon predilection for peace, but devotes most of its attention to Mormon militaristic justification consonant with Vetterli's emphasis against pacifism, against military disarmament, and for military response to subversives and foreign enemies. In contrast to all of the above, Gordon C. Thomasson's *War, Conscriptio, Conscience and Mormonism* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Mormon Heritage, 1971), presents a collection of official and unofficial statements against war which indicate that pacifism is a legitimate alternative for Mormons. Implicit in Thomasson's potpourri is an effort to justify contemporary resistance against the Vietnam war by Latter-day Saints. All of these writers overlook or disregard the complexity of the Mormon position on war and pacifism, although Thomasson does acknowledge that he is providing only an alternative Mormon viewpoint.

Beyond the external manifestations were two ideological premises which reinforced selective pacifism. First, there was a theological framework which, although allowing for defensive warfare, extolled pacifism as the highest good. More significant was the Mormon attitude that national matters were subordinate to the welfare and progress of the Kingdom of God. This philosophy was the basis for the Mormon policy of selective pacifism. If passively enduring the onslaughts of mobs or armies would benefit the kingdom, then the Mormons would do so. If it was not to the advantage of the Mormon kingdom to engage in a national conflict (as in the American Civil War), then the Mormons remained aloof. If militarism was to the advantage of the Mormon kingdom in a particular situation, then the Mormon prophet called upon the Latter-day Saints to take up arms in defense of the kingdom. As a state-within-a-state, the Mormon community's response to war had assumed that these prerogatives would always be open to the prophet. This ambivalent heritage presented a complex matrix upon which the Mormons had to draw for their reactions to the Spanish-American War.

When the United States moved toward war with Spain in 1898, Utah had been a state in the Union barely two years. Repeated efforts to obtain statehood had been made by Utahns since the conclusion of the Mexican War. Six proposed state constitutions (1849, 1856, 1862, 1872, 1882, 1887) had been submitted to Congress with petitions for statehood, only to be rejected or tabled indefinitely. The Mormons were unpopular: their political and economic domination of the West alarmed federal officials, and their practice of plural marriage outraged the sensibilities of the nation.

Lacking the sovereignty of statehood, the Mormons of Utah Territory (established by the Compromise of 1850) found their prerogatives successively undermined by the federal government. The territorial court system was restructured to eliminate Mormons from the judiciary; legislation was enacted which prevented Mormon polygamists from serving on juries, voting, or holding public office; Mormon immigrants were denied entry to the United States merely because of their belief in polygamy; alien Mormons in Utah were denied naturalization by federal judges on the same grounds; and the common law protections preventing a wife from testifying against her husband were denied to wives of polygamists. In 1887 the LDS church was disincorporated by federal law, its properties and monies were confiscated, and numerous Mormon leaders were jailed for practicing polygamy.<sup>25</sup>

In 1890, the United States Supreme Court gave approbation to the extremes of the anti-polygamy crusade by upholding the constitutionality of legislation which denied all rights of citizenship merely because of membership in the Mormon Church.<sup>26</sup> Faced with such severe sanctions, LDS President Wil-

<sup>25</sup> See Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1971). The federal "raid" against polygamists was accomplished through liberal interpretations by federal appointees of the anti-polygamy Edmunds Act of 1882. The economic attack against the LDS Church was accomplished through the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887.

<sup>26</sup> *Davis v. Beason*, 133 U.S. 333 (1890).

ford Woodruff announced in September 1890 that polygamy should cease among the Mormons. The public abandonment of polygamy and the dissolution of the Mormon political party, "the People's Party," the following year contributed to an "Era of Good Feeling" among the Mormons, their gentile neighbors in Utah, and the federal government.

As the political, economic, religious, and social relations in Utah began to reflect the norms of American society, Congress became responsive to Utah's long efforts for statehood. Amnesties were granted by the U.S. President to polygamists in 1893 and 1894, and an enabling act was issued which prepared the way for Utah's statehood. Utah adopted its seventh proposed constitution in 1895 and gained statehood in 1896. Two years later the United States was verging on war with Spain. Now a state in the Union, Utah was unable to maintain the aloofness characteristic of its position during the Civil War. Utahns, and therefore the predominant church in Utah, were inextricably involved in the nation's commitments.

The conflict with Spain centered on Spain's rule over Cuba. The efforts of the Cubans to revolt against the Spanish rule in 1868-78 and 1895-98 were generally approved by Americans. Stories of Spanish atrocities in Cuba were exaggerated and even fabricated by the yellow journalism of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst in the 1890s. Moreover, the nationalistic fervor to compete with the European powers in territorial expansion and world power found many Americans advocating that the nation enter the imperialistic competition of the turn of the century. American sentiment, already bellicose, was inflamed when the U.S. battleship *Maine* was blown up in Havana Harbor 15 February 1898. Official as well as public sentiment in America held that the Spanish had deliberately destroyed the ship in retaliation for America's pro-Cuban stance. Diplomatic relations between the two nations progressively deteriorated while war hysteria in the U.S. mushroomed. Finally, in April 1898, Congress declared that a state of war existed between the United States and Spain.<sup>27</sup>

Officially, Utah was in the forefront of the clamor for war. On 8 February 1898, Utah's Senator Frank J. Cannon, son of the first counselor of the LDS presidency, introduced a resolution in the U.S. Senate in which he stated that, if Spain refused to grant the independence of Cuba on or before March 4, "the Government of the United States will on that date recognize the belligerency of the Cuban patriots and *will within ninety days thereafter assert the independence of the Republic of Cuba.*" This was a week before the *Maine* was destroyed. On 29 March 1898, nearly a month before war was declared, Utah's Senator Joseph L. Rawlins introduced a resolution declaring war on

<sup>27</sup> For general studies of the Spanish-American War, see Jack Cameron Dierks, *A Leap to Arms: The Cuban Campaign of 1898* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism*, 2 vols. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1963); and Richard H. Titherington, *A History of the Spanish-American War of 1898* (1901; reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971).

Spain, and on April 5, he urged the Senate to declare war without waiting for President William McKinley to request it.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the bellicose pronouncements of Utah's senators in Congress, the position of the Mormon Church tended toward restraint in the developing crisis with Spain. On February 16, an editorial in the church organ, the *Deseret Evening News*, praised the "chivalrous" aid which the Spanish officials in Havana gave to the wounded Americans on the *Maine*. Concerning the cries of Spanish responsibility for the incident, the editorial continued, "There can, of course, be no suspicion that the Spanish officials are in any way responsible for the destruction of the ship." The day following, however, the editorial reflected greater willingness to acknowledge Spanish responsibility for the explosion. As the national war fever increased, the *Deseret News* returned to its original position, affirming on March 28 that neither the Spanish government nor officials in Cuba were responsible for the incident.<sup>29</sup> While the press of the nation was feeding the fires of war fever, the Mormon press was taking a more cautious position.

With respect to the war fever itself, the Mormon position tended to regard the rise of militarism in the United States with concern. In an editorial entitled "The Age of Militarism," the *Deseret News* criticized German and, by implication, American militarism. The editorial reasoned that the rise of one national military power would cause an inevitable chain of militaristic reactions by the other world powers, resulting finally in one war after another.<sup>30</sup> Two days later, at the conference of the Salt Lake Stake of Utah, Joseph M. Tanner, president of Utah Agricultural College at Logan, criticized America's war spirit and the falsification of the news by the popular press.<sup>31</sup> He was followed by Joseph F. Smith, second counselor in the LDS first presidency: "Pres. Smith followed deploring the spirit of war that is abroad in the land. He said if it were not for war we would be burdened with the pension list; that costs our nation Millions of dollars."<sup>32</sup> The suspicion of national militarism reflected one aspect of the previous Mormon tradition.

The imminence of war with Spain was shown in the addresses given to the annual general conference of the LDS church in Salt Lake City, April 6-8 and 10, 1898. On April 7, several LDS authorities specifically referred to the war situation. Apostle Matthias F. Cowley introduced the subject by saying that, in the eschatological wars of nations, the people declining to shed blood must

<sup>28</sup> Emphasis added. *Cong. Rec.*, 55 Cong., 2 sess. (1898), 1534, 3293; "Journal History of the Church," 5 April 1898, p. 2, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>29</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, 16-17 Feb. and 28 March 1898.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 March 1898.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 March 1898.

<sup>32</sup> Angus M. Cannon, Journal, 12 March 1898, LDS Church Archives. Cannon recorded that officials of the *Deseret Evening News* "refused to publish anything of what Pres. Smith said." This was apparently to avoid criticism of him by the non-Mormon community. The above excerpt from Cannon's journal is apparently the only recorded account of Smith's antagonistic statements about war on this occasion. See *Deseret Evening News*, 14 March 1898.

flee to Zion for safety and peace. Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., followed with the comment that, in order to be a haven of peace for those who decline to shed blood, Zion must be separate from the pollution of the world. He was followed by a lesser Mormon official, Brigham H. Roberts, who cited the present war spirit as fulfillment of prophecy and, referring to the preceding remarks of Young, quoted from the *Doctrine and Covenants*, beginning, "Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free; entangle not yourselves in sin, but let your hands be clean until the Lord come" (D&C 88:86). Apostle John Henry Smith indicated that the Saints abhorred war but were loyal to the nation. Although Apostle Francis M. Lyman introduced the possibility of engaging in war, he affirmed, "The last thing for Christians to ever do is to fight for peace."<sup>33</sup> During the first three days of the conference, Mormon dualism on the issue of war was implicit in the discourses of the authorities, but there was no sharp demarcation between the viewpoints. Most significant is the fact that virtually every pacifistic sentiment was aligned with the welfare of the Mormon kingdom.

After the U.S. War Department on April 10 announced its decision to call for 80,000 men from the militia, war had not only become more imminent, but the possibility of Mormons engaging in it had become a reality. The problem was reflected in a sharper division of attitude which appeared in the final afternoon session of the LDS general conference on April 10.

Sixteen years earlier Apostle Franklin D. Richards had cautioned the Mormons against shedding blood in war and he now returned to the theme. Stressing the necessity to remain at peace and offer a haven for those who flee war, he added: "Nations are ready to go to war and anxious for the opportunity. It seems as if the spirit of war had gone forth until great men who pose as patriots, and would like to be considered statesmen, are ready and clamoring for war. Latter-day Saints have always taught the principles of peace and good will."<sup>34</sup> Now that the War Department had called upon the state militias, his remarks approached an overt encouragement for Mormon pacifism in a U.S. war. Moreover, his slur against surrogate patriot-statesmen struck not only against the nation's leaders, but also against the activities of Utah's two senators, one of whom was the son of George Q. Cannon, first counselor to the president of the church.

When George Q. Cannon began the concluding discourse of the conference, his remarks were stated as a direct response to those of Richards: "The remarks which have been made by Brother Franklin D. Richards concerning the position the inhabitants of the earth are in, and *particularly our position*, and his reference to the revelation that was read the other day concerning the necessity there would be for those who desired peace to flee to Zion, suggests the reading of some promises and predictions that the Lord has made concerning this land."<sup>35</sup> Cannon continued with quotes from the Book of

<sup>33</sup> *Conference Report* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1898), pp. 9, 24-28, 31, 56, 58-59.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-88; italics added.



Mormon concerning the western hemisphere: that it would be a land of liberty, having no kings, and being fortified by God against its enemies. After commenting on the previous willingness of Mormons to die for their religion, he added: "We should be equally willing, if it should be necessary, to lay down our lives for our country, for its institutions, for the preservation of this liberty that these glorious blessings and privileges shall be preserved to all mankind, and especially to those with whom we are immediately connected."<sup>36</sup>

Although his remarks fell short of an official rebuke of Richards, they constituted a repudiation of the suggestion that Mormons refuse to participate in the impending war. The Mormon tradition of ambivalence concerning war had resulted in an observable cleavage within the hierarchy concerning the advisability of supporting an American war in 1898. In response to the pacifistic inclinations of his associates in the hierarchy, George Q. Cannon, known to his contemporaries as the "Mormon Premier,"<sup>37</sup> had clearly become the advocate of the militaristic side of the Mormon tradition.

The editorials of the *Deseret News* (whose editor was John Q. Cannon, a son of George Q. Cannon) had already assumed Mormon participation if war occurred. As early as March 9, an editorial had stated: "The demand now is not only peace, but peace with honor."<sup>38</sup> After giving a grisly description of the inhumanity of war, the editorial of March 31 nevertheless affirmed that, "If our glorious Union shall become involved in war, she will never number, in all her armies, a truer, braver, or better soldier than the Mormon recruit." With respect to the question of religious pacifism, John Q. Cannon's editorial of April 18 amplified his father's position with the argument that "a robust common sense" refuted the idea that Christianity precluded war.<sup>39</sup> As the nation moved more definitely toward war in 1898, it received the support of the Mormon Church through President Cannon, and his sons in Congress and on the staff of the *Deseret News*.

The reaction of the people of Salt Lake City to the departure of the troops from Fort Douglas was also supportive of the impending war effort. The 24th Infantry, comprised of Negro soldiers, had been stationed in Salt Lake City since October 1896. When the troops marched to the train depot on April 20, 1898, the populace wildly cheered them.

The scene that was presented at the depot while the troops were boarding the trains has seldom been equalled in its manifestation of popular feeling and enthusiasm in the intermountain region. A vast and dense mass of humanity packed the depot grounds, and wave after wave of thunderous cheering rose from it while the soldiers

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<sup>36</sup> Mark W. Cannon, "The Mormon Issue in Congress, 1872-1882, Drawing on the Experience of Territorial Delegate George Q. Cannon" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, 9 March 1898.

<sup>38</sup> The character of war was described in these terms: "War means a sudden and awful death to many men; the maiming and mangling of many more; the ravishing of pure women; the murder of innocent children." *Ibid.*, 31 March 1898.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 April 1898.

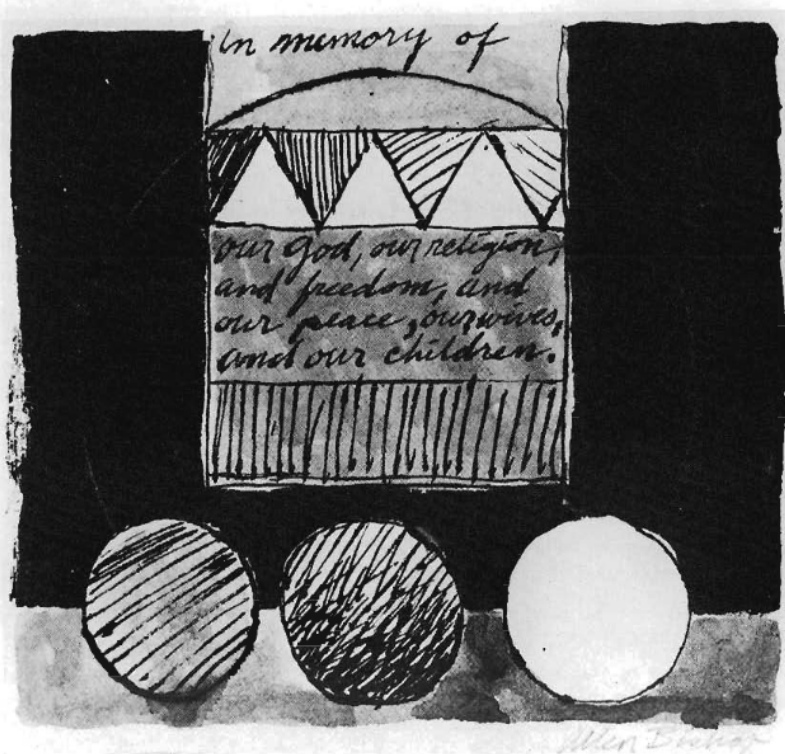
were entering the cars. Such a show of patriotism was glorious and inspiring in the highest degree.<sup>40</sup>

Although of a different race, and virtual strangers to Utah, the troops elicited the spontaneous enthusiasm for military parades and soldiers' departures which was characteristic of the rest of the nation in 1898.

The enthusiasm was not universal in Utah, however. Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., had long felt contempt for American motives in the war crisis. As early as February 22, he had written in his private journal: "The excitement over the destruction of the 'Main.' It seems to me that Americans are determined to provoke a war with Spain. I know it is to sell papers, hence I think it wicked to lie the people into an excitement of perfect frenzy for war."<sup>41</sup> Despite his distaste for the situation, Young had remained silent, and his remarks at the general conference had been far more tentative than the open pacifism of Richards. The gentle rebuke by George Q. Cannon at the closing of the LDS conference had apparently discouraged Richards, Cowley, and perhaps others of the hierarchy from pursuing their pacifistic inclinations. And so it was that Brigham Young, Jr., alone began a campaign against the participation of Mormons in the Spanish-American War.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 20 April 1898; see also "Journal History," 19–20 April 1898.

<sup>41</sup> Brigham Young, Jr., Journal, 22 Feb. 1898, LDS Church Archives. Punctuation corrected in all excerpts.



Apparently the outburst of enthusiasm at the military parade of troops caused Young to assert his opposition to the war. At a meeting of the LDS presidency and apostles on April 21, the very day Congress later declared the war had begun, he directly challenged the advocates of Mormon participation in the war. His journal reads as follows: "Meeting of Council at 11 a.m. Temple. Pres. Cannon remarked to me this morning that 'Our young men might distinguish themselves in this war.' 'Yes, they would undoubtedly extinguish themselves. If I knew of any young men who wanted to go to this war, I would call them on a mission to preach the gospel of peace.' Our mission is to preach and to save souls." In the next few days following this encounter, Young's antiwar sentiment increased. During this time he discussed his views with others and apparently gave private counsel to young men not to enlist.<sup>42</sup>

His resistance to the war reached a climax on Sunday, 24 April 1898, when he preached a public sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The previous day McKinley had called for 125,000 volunteers for the war, and Young directed part of his remarks to that issue:

It is wrong for us to think of sending our young men to Cuba to fight in the present conflict. The fact that they would go from these lofty mountains into the malarial swamps of the South would make them much more liable to catch fevers and perish than volunteers from almost any other part of the country. *There are other ways in which we can show our patriotism than by sending our sons to fight for our country at this crisis.* The United States needs money with which to prosecute this war, and it will be far better for us to subscribe to this \$50,000,000 bond issue than to send volunteers to perish miserably and uselessly in the swamps of the Southern coast.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, a Mormon apostle was publicly urging Mormons to refuse to fight in a popular war of their nation.

The reaction to his remarks was immediate. The non-Mormon press accused him of cowardice, treason, and conduct worthy only of "a mischief-maker and sneak."<sup>44</sup> Prominent gentiles and Mormons alike heaped verbal abuse on him, but the most telling criticism came from members of his own family.<sup>45</sup> His brother Willard Young and nephew Richard W. Young were both graduates of West Point, with commissions in the Utah militia. They appealed to the president of the LDS Church, Wilford Woodruff, saying that Brigham Young, Jr.'s discourse was "diametrically opposed to the views they entertained and the mission in which they expected to be engaged." Young insisted that he was not disloyal to the government but was merely opposing

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22-23 April 1898.

<sup>43</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 March 1907; italics added. An official verbatim transcript of this discourse does not seem to be available. Apostle Young indicated that his remarks had been misinterpreted in the summary published in the *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 April 1898, but the sentiments in this later quotation from the *Tribune* correspond with those in his journals, the summary of his remarks in the *Journal History*, 24 April 1898, and in his defense before the LDS First Presidency. See *Journal History*, 25 April 1898.

<sup>44</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 April 1898.

<sup>45</sup> Young, *Journal*, 25 April 1898; Cannon, *Journal*, 26 April 1898.

the national spirit of war. Anxious that something be done to ameliorate the situation, Woodruff had John Q. Cannon write an editorial in the *Deseret News* concerning the enlistments for the war. Titled "No Disloyalty Here," the editorial was an effort to counterbalance Young's remarks.<sup>46</sup>

The following day, Brigham Young, Jr., his brother, and nephew were summoned before President Woodruff and George Q. Cannon, at which time the apostle was chastised for speaking without authorization and was told not to oppose the enlistment of Mormon volunteers.<sup>47</sup> Upon the conclusion of this meeting, Brigham Young, Jr., ceased his open campaign against the Spanish-American War. It had lasted less than a week.

The end of vocal resistance to the war did not quiet Young's inner dissatisfaction with the participation of Mormons in a national war. On April 28, the LDS presidency issued a proclamation encouraging Mormons to enlist, at which time Young reflected: "It suits me all right and now that the First P[residency] have spoken we know what to do. It is an unrighteous Cause in my opinion, and Americans have gone wild with a blood thirsty spirit which will bring disaster, I fear." Despite his feelings about the war, he steadfastly refused to preach what the LDS president had chosen to "interdict." The reflections of his private journal, however, indicate his hostility toward Mormon participation in the war: "News from Cuba is stirring the hearts of the people. There is no public demonstration when a good soul dies perfectly in bed . . . but when men are killed in battle dying in the supreme effort of their lives to destroy their fellow men, the whole people go wild, shouting honor and glory to our brave defenders, be they aggressor or contrarywise."<sup>48</sup> Officially silenced, Brigham Young, Jr., accepted the situation Cassandra-like. Three of his cousins died in the war.

Such opposition to the Spanish-American War was not uncommon in the United States at the time, even though this was one of America's most popular wars.<sup>49</sup> On the same day that Apostle Young delivered his anti-war sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, a Roman Catholic bishop in St. Louis declared the war an unnecessary conflict and a blot on the national character. He also was criticized by members of his own church.<sup>50</sup> In Utah, several LDS General Authorities had concurred with the philosophy upon which Young had based his antiwar campaign. Even after Apostle Young had been repudiated by the LDS First Presidency, some Mormons continued to treasure his remarks against the war as the higher view. Prominent among those who opposed Mormon participation in this American war was Angus M. Cannon, president of the

<sup>46</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, 25 April 1898.

<sup>47</sup> Young, Journal, 25 April 1898, Journal History, 25–26 April 1898.

<sup>48</sup> Young, Journal, 28 April, 4 May, and 2 July 1898.

<sup>49</sup> Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898–1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Harold U. Faulkner, *Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890–1900* (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 223; Julius W. Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish-American War," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 14 (May 1934): 163–291.

<sup>50</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 April 1898.

prestigious Salt Lake stake of the church and brother of George Q. Cannon.<sup>51</sup> All of the Mormon leaders on both sides of the debate were asserting arguments derived from the conflicting Mormon tradition concerning war. The divergence in 1898 not only split the Mormon hierarchy but also such prominent Mormon families as the Youngs and Cannons.

The division within the Mormon Church about participating in the war of 1898 was more complex than might appear on the surface. First of all, the three national wars of Mormonism's nineteenth century experience were not defensive wars. The Mexican and Spanish-American Wars were expansionist rather than defensive, and the Civil War resulted from efforts to prevent the splitting of the Union. Had the war of 1898 been an indisputable act of national defense against an aggressor, it is probable that no Mormon would have opposed it. As for Brigham Young, Jr., he disliked American war motives in 1898, was appalled by yellow journalism and war fever, and mourned the senseless loss of life and the disorientation of values caused by war. His opponents in 1898, George Q. Cannon and other advocates of Mormon support of the war, seemed to have shared these feelings.

The controversy was also not simply a contest between Mormon pacifists and militarists. The central pacifist in this struggle, Brigham Young, Jr., had been capable of intense militarism when he learned in 1891 that the government might confiscate the Mormon temples in Utah: "I would rather fight if it is the Lord's will than submit longer to these curses who disgrace the Gov. they represent. If it were in my power I would stand by those Temples and kill the first hound from the President of the U.S.A. down to the dasterdly U.S. Marshals from Franks down to Pratt before they should desecrate those sacred buildings."<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the central militarist in the 1898 controversy, George Q. Cannon, as late as 1881 had publicly rejoiced in the fact that the Mormons had been able to remain aloof from direct participation in the Civil War.<sup>53</sup> The dichotomy in the respective expressions of Young and Cannon represents the selective pacifism characteristic of nineteenth-century Mormonism. To Young and the other Mormon pacifists of 1898, the central issue was clear: the Mormon kingdom could not be benefited by sending its promising young men to die in a conflict to enhance the national interest. The Mormons who opposed Young believed that by giving their political and military allegiance to the national government, rather than to the Mormon kingdom, they would benefit the larger interests of the ecclesiastical part of that kingdom.

According to one recent scholar, the pacifism of the Quakers and other religious groups was not significantly affected by the Spanish-American War.<sup>54</sup> For the Mormon Church, however, the Spanish-American War was a crucial event in its tradition of selective pacifism, which had been tied narrowly to the

<sup>51</sup> Young, *Journal*, 29 April 1898.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 Feb. 1891.

<sup>53</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 23:104-5 (discourse delivered 20 Nov. 1881).

<sup>54</sup> Brock, *Pacifism in the United States*, p. 886.



immediate welfare of the Mormon community. Faced with the possible destruction of their church over the issue of plural marriage, the Mormons in 1890 had capitulated to the sovereignty of federal authority. From that surrender Utah had obtained statehood and the Mormon Church had gained the privilege of existing peacefully within the federal domain. The Mormons could not maintain that relationship with the federal government and still insist upon the LDS prophet's right to determine what wars of the nation they would or would not support as combatants. Total pacifism was an alternative, but it was incompatible with the ambivalent tradition in Mormonism concerning war. The Mormon pacifists of 1898 were still arguing for the prerogatives of the Mormon community against those of the national government, still insisting on the right of selective pacifism. The argument failed because it lacked political reality.

The surrender of selective pacifism was spearheaded by George Q. Cannon, a Latter-day Saint whose nationalistic orientation and political realism had developed during ten years in Congress as Utah's delegate (1872-82). Supporting the Spanish-American War became the Mormon Church's opportunity to soften the previous twenty years' defiance of federal authority concerning polygamy. To Cannon, Woodruff, and other Mormon leaders, the Mormon community benefited most from surrendering such special prerogatives as selective pacifism.<sup>55</sup> That loss inevitably eroded the political kingdom of God while allowing its ecclesiastical counterpart, the LDS church, greater security in a previously hostile world. After 1898, individual Mormons might do as they wished, but the Mormon church, recognizing national authority as supreme, would no longer claim the right to determine when and where Mormons would fight and die.

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<sup>55</sup> LDS President Wilford Woodruff apparently felt it would be dangerous for the Church if it failed to support the war. One researcher, basing his study on materials in the Church Archives as well as upon interviews with members of the Young family, said that when Woodruff silenced Brigham, Jr., "President Woodruff felt that it would be inappropriate for the Church not to support the Government 'in the present crisis,' and that the young men of the Church should be ready to serve when called upon." Louis Paul Murray, "The Life of Brigadier General Richard W. Young" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1959), p. 92. For details of the service of Utahns in the conflict, see A. Prestiss, *The History of the Utah Volunteers in the Spanish American War and in the Philippine Islands* (Salt Lake City: W. F. Ford, 1900).