

The Enduring Paradox: Mormon Attitudes Toward War and Peace

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In recent years the subject of war and peace has taken renewed significance for American Latter-day Saints. The announcement by the First Presidency against the basing of the MX missile system in Utah came as a surprise to many and made us aware of how seriously they consider the present arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹ Several Latter-day Saint authors have addressed the issue of war and peace in recent months. Steven Hildreth traced the history of official Church pronouncements on war and peace and offered the conclusion that the Church has consistently condemned militarism and war while advocating the use of patient restraint and negotiation as the viable approach to conflict resolution.² In a similar vein, Eugene England described what he calls the LDS theology of peace from the point of view of the scriptures and statements by leading Church authorities.³ Gary Browning, a Russian specialist, wrote of the images held respectively by Americans and Russians and of the danger of letting these images replace reality in our mutual dealings.⁴ The backlash from his article in subsequent Letters to the Editor demonstrated how accurate and misunderstood was his thesis.⁵ Edwin B. Firmage, a respected jurist, gave a useful history of the devel-

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¹ "First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: 5 May 1981), *Ensign* 11 (June 1981): 76.

² Steven A. Hildreth, "The First Presidency Statement on MX in Perspective," *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 215-25.

³ Eugene England, "Can Nations Love Their Enemies? — An LDS Theology of Peace," *Sunstone* (Nov./Dec. 1982): 49-56.

⁴ Gary L. Browning, "The Nuclear Knot in Diplomatic Ties," *BYU Today*, May 1983, 3-6.

⁵ Letters to the editor, *BYU Today*, Aug. p. 4, and Oct. 1983, p. 5.

opment of law in the settlement of international disputes and warned against justifying aggression on the basis of divine appointment. Thus by accurately depicting the historical context of holy and just wars, he effectively destroyed any spiritual rationale we might entertain for waging recent wars.⁶ In an unsettling paper, Ronald W. Walker reported the debates and pronouncements by leading LDS apostles and prophets surrounding every major conflict since the early days of the Church, revealing an unsteady attitude toward war and even a retreat into apathy in modern times toward the issue of individual conscience vs. social duty.⁷ Stephen L. Tanner illustrated how war as a metaphor permeates our theology and, if improperly understood, may generate martial attitudes.⁸ President Marion G. Romney reminds us in a recent article entitled "The Price of Peace" that peace in the world can only be attained after everyone has gained "spiritual peace"; until then every effort is doomed to failure and is not worth pursuing.⁹ The editors of a popular Mormon magazine published in their June/July 1984 issue an article entitled "LDS in the Military: Blessed are the Peacemakers," which described the role of the military in such terms as "peacemakers," "warriors for peace," and "gospel missionaries," perhaps reflecting a prevalently positive attitude toward the military in the LDS community.¹⁰

While recent writings on Mormons in war and peace reveal a wide range of opinion, Mormon attitudes have been largely neglected except for mention by Browning and Tanner. Although the following essay is largely impressionistic, it is the fruit of over twelve years of membership in the Church. A good part of this time was spent reflecting upon the role of the Church in a war-torn world. My concern for peace arose out of my own combat experience in Vietnam where scenes of atrocity committed by American comrades indelibly imprinted themselves on my mind. Since then I have come to realize that these men were only partially culpable. War creates its own crude logic and makes such deeds permissible. I am convinced that the Vietnam war is a reflection, though an exaggerated one, of patterns discernible in other wars fought by the United States.

For some time I have felt that some of the most cherished ideas held by Latter-day Saints on the subject of war and peace are misleading and even dangerous. While none of these ideas are, nor should be, taught as gospel principles, they are sufficiently close corollaries to be confused with such principles. While there is a stated LDS theology of peace, it is overshadowed by the pre-

⁶ Edwin B. Firmage, "Allegiance and Stewardship: Holy War, Just War, and the Mormon Tradition in the Nuclear Age," *DIALOGUE* 16 (Spring 1983): 47-61.

⁷ Ronald W. Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers, and the State: Mormon Leaders Respond to the Dilemmas of War," *Sunstone* 7 (July/Aug. 1982): 43-56.

⁸ Stephen L. Tanner, "We Are All Enlisted: War as a Metaphor," *Sunstone* 7 (July/Aug. 1982): 27-31.

⁹ Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," *Ensign* 13 (Oct. 1983): 3-7.

¹⁰ Jo Ann Jolley, "LDS in the Military: Blessed are the Peacemakers," *This People*, 5 (June/July 1984): 66-73.

vailing American Latter-day Saint nonchalance toward peace combined with positive concepts of war which are firmly embedded as attitudes.

Latter-day Saint conservatism has identified Mormonism for at least a generation with Republicanism. Probably a majority hold conservative views on defense and foreign policy matters. Although I am aware of no survey data, my impressions are that Latter-day Saints tend to give overwhelming priority to ideological explanations in international relations, omitting the more revealing domestic and socio-economic context of many brutal regimes with which the United States finds itself aligned.

The result of this lack of awareness on domestic and foreign affairs, compounded with the general malleableness of the Mormon community in its response to authority is a set of dangerous attitudes. They are reflected in an enthusiastic support of almost every government dictate that does not adversely affect Mormons. This mind-set can be easily manipulated by unscrupulous politicians who invoke such principles as self-reliance, a strong military, America's divine appointment as protector of the free world, the protection of individual freedoms and democratic institutions, the intrinsic goodness of America, and the wickedness of the enemy.

Many Latter-day Saints, in giving consent to those principles, also assent to the whole conservative package on foreign policy. This package includes a strong reluctance to participate in summit talks with the Soviet Union, a general willingness to ascribe every wrongdoing around the globe to Soviet intentions (thus extending almost every conflict into an East-West confrontation), covert action for the overthrow of Nicaragua's government, the Vietnamization of El Salvador, arms sales to the world, intrusions into the Middle East for economic reasons, indifference to human rights, and the additional deployment of nuclear weapons to Western Europe. In addition, these same unscrupulous politicians may foster the insidious idea that a nuclear war can be containable, survivable, or even winnable, consequently increasing its likelihood. Through its support of conservative causes, the LDS community readily embraces this set of warlike attitudes. An important contributing factor to this peculiarly Mormon mind-set is allegiance to authority. Most Latter-day Saints view authority with a certain awe and tend to regard it as divinely approved, an attitude which fosters uncritical obedience. To many LDS indeed "obedience is the first law of heaven." Neither dissent nor discussion are encouraged in the LDS community. Conservative politicians have found to their advantage that uncritical obedience to spiritual authority transfers smoothly to temporal authority. Such obedience, of course, seriously erodes the democratic spirit and makes it possible for an authority figure to declare war without fear of encountering much resistance from the LDS community. The lessons of the 1960s and early '70s, whereby the credibility and the authority of presidents and high government officials were seriously undermined, seem to have been completely lost on most Latter-day Saints.

As a further reinforcement, many Mormons believe that obedient servants will not be held accountable for the mistakes of their leaders. Unfortunately, it is precisely this attitude which has made it possible for a Holocaust or a

My Lai to take place. When taken to absurd extremes, this belief makes it a sin to disobey, and history provides the instructive example of young Helmut Huebner, to show the working out of this thesis. His posthumous reinstatement into the Church is only vaguely reassuring. In group dynamics, psychiatrist Scott Peck asserts, most individuals regress to the level of children. One aspect of this regression is the phenomenon of dependency upon the leader. When the capacity of self-judgment is given up in highly authoritarian structures the potential for group evil is much greater.¹¹ Atrocities committed at Jonestown, My Lai, and Mountain Meadows were, in the final analysis, the result of individuals failing to make for themselves the correct moral choices.

The general disassociation of Church members from invalid government policies such as the war in Vietnam, our government's support for the *contras* and for mining the harbors of Nicaragua is disquieting. It is difficult to see in this attitude anything but abject complacency and selfishness, the kind displayed by Germany's middle classes during the interwar years. This is an attitude which borders on complicity. Unswerving obedience can only be fostered by reassurances that individuals will not be held accountable for their leaders' mistakes. It enables one to "pass the buck" all the way up the chain of command. Leaders are often unaware of what goes on several echelons below them; and by the time they discover such abuses as My Lai, it is often too late. Should leaders bear full responsibility for these abuses? By altogether refusing to confront the issue of individual accountability and individual conscience in times of war, Mormons evidence a kind of facile thinking which thrives on simplistic solutions to very difficult moral problems.

Patriotism, a noble love of one's homeland, can easily be perverted into uncritical support of government leaders, stereotyping of "the enemy," and justification of war. Patriotic appeals are traditionally made by demagogues, as well as legitimate politicians, to rally support for their policies. It is not unusual to see politicians on both sides of an issue denounce each other for being "unpatriotic."

Martial tradition holds the sacrifice of one's self for one's country as the highest patriotic duty. Unfortunately, this has been extended to include acts of aggression as well as self-defense. Thus, in the Vietnam war Americans were called to defeat nationalist insurgents 10,000 miles from United States shores in the name of patriotism. A valid and on-going debate is the degree to which patriotism is compatible with a gospel that transcends national and cultural boundaries.

Belief in the intrinsic goodness of America pervades LDS thinking. This common belief, which is to be distinguished from a belief in America's prophetic destiny, a principle supported by LDS scriptures, endows every major foreign policy deed committed by America with a special aura of goodness in the eyes of many Latter-day Saints. It literally enables America to get away with murder. Apostle Mark E. Petersen once affirmed to a military audience that America's flag is God's flag and wrote a version of American history show-

¹¹ M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 220ff.

ing that the hand of God had directed the major governmental and cultural decisions.¹² Through such writings, the author appears to be trying to instill in Latter-day Saints respect and love of country, together with a sense of participation in a grand apotheosis. Unfortunately, these writings also whitewash the dispossession of the Indians, the slave trade, the numerous wars conducted by the United States against Mexico, Central American, and Caribbean nations for the building of empire, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and most recently the war in Vietnam, a country no larger than the state of California in which was dropped as much as three times the entire bomb tonnage delivered in all of World War II. After Hiroshima, J. Reuben Clark uttered the following words:

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 fendish butchery.¹³

The belief in a special mission led by America must be understood in its proper context. It must not become a cloak for past and future crimes. The words of Isaiah may apply equally well to America today as they did to Israel's enemies when he wrote them:

Woe, O destroyer never destroyed,
O traitor never betrayed!
When you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;
When wearied with betraying, you will be betrayed.
(New American Bible, Isa. 33:1).

Closely associated with jingoistic patriotism is the view held by many Mormons that the conflict between the United States and Russia is an eschatological struggle between the forces of good and evil. Many LDS authors and even some Church authorities have propagated this Protestant fundamentalist idea in some form or another.¹⁴ There have been witch hunts at Brigham Young

¹² Mark E. Petersen, "The Church in America," LDS Church Military Committee pamphlet (1970), p. 8; available from the LDS Church Distribution Center, order no. FA-279; *The Great Prologue* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), pp. 5-6.

¹³ J. Reuben Clark, *Conference Report*, 5 Oct. 1946, p. 89. For a discussion of Clark's view of America's mission, see J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Diplomat and Statesman*, Ray C. Hillam, ed. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), pp. 207-10.

¹⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, for example, calls communism "one of the major divisions of the church of the devil." *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), pp. 151-52. Another writer calls America "the Lord's Base of Operations" in the war against sin and communism. Jerreld L. Newquist, *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1964), pp. 61-63. Although to my knowledge no one writer has stated that military force should be used against communism, the groundwork has been

University, for example, where students and staff alike were subjected to harassment and forced resignations for discussing Marxism as an academic subject.¹⁵

While I do not intend to defend Marxism as an economic system, it is important to understand the attraction felt by many developing nations toward Marxist ideology. Marxism-Leninism views conflicts between developed and underdeveloped nations as the internationalization of the class struggle. In their pursuit of raw materials and overseas markets, the capitalist nations of the world acquired colonies and built empires. Colonization permitted the exploitation of native labor and raw materials, often under brutal conditions. The outcome was the impoverishment and the dependency of the colonies on their conquerors. Starting with the American Revolution, then spreading to South and Central America, to the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century and to the rest of Asia and Africa in the twentieth century, wars of decolonization shook much of the world. Nationalism, not communism, has been the major agent for change in our times. In the process of ridding themselves of imperialistic rule, several developing nations have adopted a Marxist orientation in their government because Marxism-Leninism offered a theoretical framework as well as a process for struggles of national liberation against the exploitation of their former colonizers. This has been the case with Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, and Ho Chi Minh, for example.

Capitalism has been far from beneficial for much of the Third World. George III was benevolent compared to Diem, Marcos, Somoza, and the juntas of Guatemala and El Salvador. Revolutions against such oppressors usually received no assistance from the United States who, to "protect its interests," has frequently fomented counterrevolutions, coups, assassination plots, and even wars to install and protect regimes more closely allied to itself.¹⁶ In many cases,

sufficiently established to support leaders who advocate the use of force and who, like President Reagan, seem to believe the fundamentalist notion that an Armageddon between the U.S. and the forces of evil, the Soviet Union, is inevitable. See the thought-provoking essay "Does Reagan Expect a Nuclear Armageddon?" in the Outlook section of the *Washington Post*, Sunday, 8 April 1984, pp. C1, C4.

¹⁵ Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, *America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), pp. 232-33. My personal recollections include public and private discussions on the Wilkinson spy ring with BYU faculty, such as professors Lee Farnsworth and Ray Hillam, Dept. of Government, and Annette Horiuchi, Dept. of Asian and Slavic Languages, 1978.

¹⁶ There is evidence of CIA involvement, for example, in the overthrow of Mossaddeq's government in Iran, 1954; the plot to assassinate Lumumba in Congo, 1960. "Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders — An Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities," the United States Senate, Report No. 94-465 Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office, 1975 pp. 19ff; eight plots to assassinate Castro in Cuba, 1960-65 (*ibid.*, 71ff); Rafael Trujillo, the Dominican Republic, 1961 (*ibid.*, 191ff); the overthrow of president Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam, 1963 (*ibid.*, 217ff); the assassination of General Schneider in Chile, 1970 (*ibid.*, 270ff); and the overthrow of President Arbenz, Guatemala (Walter Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: the United States in Central America* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983], p. 9. Lafeber also documents the following U.S. wars of intervention in Central America: Guatemala (111-126); Honduras (9, 42-46, 261-65); Nicaragua (11, 16, 46-49, 65-69); Panama (32); Costa Rica (57-58, 100-102); El Salvador (173-74, 205). The history of the Vietnam war is documented in Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: The Viking

this meant supporting right-wing military dictatorships. In its zeal for victory over communism, the United States thus often achieved the very thing it sought to prevent — totalitarianism.

Many Americans still continue to view the world as bipolar, divided between spheres of interest carved out by Russia and the United States. This Cold War legacy inhibits us from objectively assessing the context of many recent wars, from Vietnam to El Salvador. Unless we seek to understand each of these conflicts on a case-by-case basis, our ideological fervor could lead us into yet further tragedies.

The strong tradition of anti-intellectualism in American thought is compounded by Mormon tradition. The American Revolution, although it was mainly the work of intellectuals, has been interpreted as a grass roots movement. Because of the democratic ideal of equality, Americans have traditionally been suspicious of elites and have been reluctant to admit that theirs is a highly stratified society. A strong emphasis on self-reliance, ingenuity, and free enterprise encouraged bypassing the traditional ladders to success in older societies—a good family background and a good education. The self-containedness of the LDS world view discourages interest in things outside the purview of Mormonism, thus stimulating provincialism and chauvinism among members. Many members perceive a certain disapproval by other members and Church leaders of sources of knowledge other than those officially approved by the Church. This perception results in a self-imposed censorship of essential sources of information on world affairs, such as books on current events, serious publications, participation in conferences, symposia, films, and the like. There exists in members a fear of criticism by peers or by Church authorities which is accompanied by the need to explain any inquiry into sources other than Church approved in terms of gospel doctrine, as if it were a sin to keep informed for the mere sake of keeping informed.

Americans have, though not necessarily more than other imperialistic nations with the same opportunities, persistently attempted to export their values and institutions to foreign countries. Perhaps nowhere else has this been more evident than in our foreign policy. Free elections, free enterprise, dollar diplomacy, democracy, etc., have long been trumpeted as “the American Way,” a sort of “mission civilisatrice.” Some countries have created a semblance of democratic institutions, principally for United States domestic consumption. An example is the referendum, held by President Diem in South Vietnam in

Press, 1983. See especially the report of the Tonkin Gulf incident which led to the now infamous resolution of the same name (366–373; also pp. 22, 344–45, 358, 360–63, 374–76, 491). For the account of one of the participants in the incident, see “I Saw Us Invent the Pretext for Our Vietnam War” by Admiral James Stockdale (USN-Ret.) in the *Washington Post*, Sunday, 7 Oct. 1984, p. D1. Other views on the beginnings of U.S. involvement in Vietnam by historians, statesmen, ex-CIA personnel, policymakers, journalists, military personnel, Vietnamese from both sides of the conflict, are documented in Harrison E. Salisbury, ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered, Lessons from a War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). On El Salvador, Raymond Bonner, a former correspondent for the *New York Times*, recently described the Reagan administration’s cover-up of the conduct of U.S. policy in El Salvador in *Weakness and Deceit — U.S. Policy in El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984).

1956, which was rigged with the help of Americans.¹⁷ Another is the elections held in El Salvador in March 1982, which gave Major D'Aubuisson the majority in the Constituent Assembly. The country's notorious security forces had kept a close watch over the elections, spelling certain doom for those who either did not show up or voted "incorrectly."¹⁸

Neither capitalism nor free enterprise promise much in Third World countries whose populations barely survive above the starvation level and whose wealth is siphoned off by a minute percentage of the population. The feudalistic nations of Central America have a poor record of fostering free enterprise and private ownership. The recent land reform in El Salvador ended after right-wing death squads had killed thousands of peasants who had received land. Not that land reform or other such measures are not laudable. Unfortunately, dictators share neither wealth nor power.

While certain values or institutions do not export well, others should. I see universal principles in the American Declaration of Independence and in the Bill of Rights: justice, the right to overthrow tyranny, the right to self-determination, and the basic dignity of the human being. Argentines who survived the "dirty little war" in which perhaps as many as 30,000 of their compatriots disappeared or were killed, took heart during their darkest hour from U.S. condemnations of such deeds. However, when the chips were down and national interests were at stake, Carter compromised with the military dictators of Nicaragua and El Salvador in the late 1970s. Had he been consistent, Carter would have been forced to disavow dictators of America's own making, thus allowing revolutions to occur sooner. The Reagan administration's record on international human rights has not perceptibly risen above its almost immediate attempt to resume arms sales to the murderous dictatorships of Chile and Argentina.¹⁹

Revolution, a most American institution, has been one that Americans have been reluctant to export. Justly proud of having achieved independence, the United States has denied it to others, especially when it stood in the way of United States expansionism. Latter-day Saints generally understand the Monroe Doctrine as a benevolent enunciation protecting the Western Hemisphere from European interference. Central Americans, however, have seen the United States use it to establish a system of dependency in Central America which makes Washington the final arbiter of those nations' destinies. The implications of this system are profound. According to dependency theorists, this system has been responsible for misshaping those nations' history "until revolution appears to be the only instrument that can break the hammerlock held by the local oligarchy and foreign capitalists."²⁰

¹⁷ Karnow, *Vietnam, A History*, p. 223.

¹⁸ Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, pp. 286-87.

¹⁹ Letter to the editor, *The Washington Post* (30 Dec. 1983): A-16. The author, Michael D. Barnes (D-Md.), is Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs.

²⁰ Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 17.

As a State Department officer, J. Reuben Clark wrote the Clark Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine, which sought to clarify the Monroe Doctrine's role in inter-American affairs, particularly in light of the doctrine's infamous applications, the Roosevelt and Wilson Corollaries. The memorandum denounced the Roosevelt Corollary but it also justified unilateral intervention in Latin America for the purpose of "self-preservation."²¹ The interpretation of what constituted self-preservation was left solely to the United States. U.S. Ambassador to Panama Ambler Moss remarked in 1980 that "what we see in Central America today would not be much different if Fidel Castro and the Soviet Union did not exist."²²

Cynics in and out of government who define power in terms of a nation's interests have decried the use of ethics in international relations. Perhaps we had better look again at some of the equitable pacts and treaties of the past which enhanced national prestige as well. The Congress of Vienna of 1815 permitted victor and vanquished alike an equal voice in their own destiny. The Marshall Plan enabled a broken Europe to rebuild. The peace treaty with Japan, following seven years of one of the most benign and enlightened administrations ever by conqueror over conquered, made it possible for two former deadly enemies to trust, respect, and cooperate with each other. Gandhi, through nonviolence, inspired a nation of 400 million to liberate itself from British rule. Ethics and values do have a place in international relations. If applied wisely, they may be the most potent factor for a successful and enduring relationship between the United States and the Third World. Rather than try to export traditional "home grown" institutions such as free elections, capitalism, and free media, our first priority should be to proclaim human dignity, compassion for the oppressed, and the right of peoples to be free from tyranny even if this means rebellion, as well as their right to self-determination. Such belated endorsement of universal aspirations by the United States would certainly improve its current image abroad and enhance national prestige.

Another evidence of "Americana" in Mormon culture is the prevalence of conspiracy theories. The Book of Mormon describes secret societies and pacts that led to the downfall of nations and prophesies their reappearance in the latter days. Some Mormon authors have undertaken to expose these modern-day counterparts of the Gadianton robbers.

One such writer and lecturer, Cleon Skousen, has become a kind of cultural hero of the ultra right by perpetuating suspicions held by his former boss, J. Edgar Hoover, on less than circumstantial evidence. By continuing the character assassination campaigns started by Hoover against Martin Luther King, for example, Skousen has fanned the flames of racial hatred. With his own brainchild, the Freeman Institute, Skousen attacked the Panama Canal Treaty,²³ one of the most remarkable achievements of the Carter presidency.

²¹ Ibid., p. 80; Hillam, ed., *J. Reuben Clark*, p. 223-24.

²² Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 5.

²³ *The Freeman Digest*, 5 (15 Aug. 1977), an issue consisting entirely of interviews and statements by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) and Strom Thurmond (R-South Carolina), all of whom opposed the Panama Canal Treaty.

It defused a volatile situation in the Canal Zone, which had a high probability of developing into another war in the area.

The damage done by Skousen is profound. Rather than educate the Mormon public, he has often done just the opposite. He has stirred up enmity, suspicion, and divisiveness among Latter-day Saints.²⁴ Hatred of an ideology can easily translate into hatred of those who espouse the ideology. Hatred can be the unifying agent of any mass movement. It often assumes the form of scapegoating. Such unreasonable hatreds are "an expression of a desperate effort to suppress our awareness of our own inadequacy, worthlessness, guilt and other shortcomings of the self. Self-hatred is . . . transmuted into hatred of others."²⁵ The theory that everything is the result of a plot is what the late historian Richard Hofstadter called "the paranoid style in American politics." Hofstadter aptly described the cost of this affliction: "We are all sufferers from history, but the paranoid is a double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only by the real world, but by his fantasies as well."²⁶

Racist theories are intertwined with the charter myths of American history. The idea of America's prophetic destiny, such a charter myth, is found among the pilgrim fathers who saw themselves as latter-day Israelites promised a new Canaan. The myth empowered the pilgrims to break Indian treaties and seize Indian lands. Similar myths were at the basis of the slave trade, first with the Arabs, then with the Portuguese, and finally with the English.²⁷

Racial charter myths played a significant role in our foreign relations. Many U.S. military ventures were directed at poorer nations whose people were racially different. For a variety of reasons and at times on numerous occasions, the United States invaded Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, Santo Domingo, and Vietnam. It subordinated Hawaii, Guam, and Okinawa. It dominated the economies of Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. An underlying characteristic of all these ventures has been the belief that Americans would bring the light of civilization and democratic institutions to these benighted peoples,²⁸ thus puzzling Americans when the almost invariable result has been a legacy of hatred and bitterness.

²⁴ DIALOGUE 6 (Autumn-Winter 1971): 99-116 held an illuminating "roundtable review" on Skousen's work *The Naked Capitalist* (Salt Lake City: by author, 1970) in which professors Louis Midgley and Carroll Quigley detected several misinterpretations, false inferences, and pure inventions in Skousen's book, which was supposed to be a commentary on Quigley's own book *Tragedy and Hope* (New York: Macmillan, 1966). Illuminatingly, during Skousen's rebuttal, he insisted that he read Quigley better than Quigley read himself and compounded his earlier distortions with new ones. Midgley denounced Skousen for promoting cultist agitation and spreading divisiveness among the Saints (p. 108, 116).

²⁵ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer — Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 88.

²⁶ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 40.

²⁷ Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands: The Origins of American Racism* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978).

²⁸ During the height of the Philippines campaign, Senator Beveridge (R-Indiana) gave a speech before Congress on 9 Jan. 1900, in which he gave the myth its classic name, "The White Man's Burden." The speech was racist and imperialistic. Americans, as Anglo-Saxons,

Since the idea of a racial hierarchy is deeply rooted in Mormon belief, charter myths which justify the conquest and domination of other peoples are particularly seductive. Latter-day Saints have become imbued with the Protestant idea that wealth and prosperity somehow mirror spirituality.²⁹ Emphasis upon worldly success, as measured by the high prestige given the Marriotts, the attention spent on the MBA program at BYU, and the business background of many General Authorities,³⁰ for example, creates a Mormon mind-set in conflict with Christ's teachings on compassion for the poor and the oppressed. When American Church leaders come into contact with the poor and the oppressed of Latin America, this mind-set may foster apathy and help create alliances with oppressive power structures. Church leaders with a business background on assignment in Latin America might be unable to comprehend the misery and suffering brought about by structural and systemic inequities. Ex-banker Robert Wells, for example, during his term as area supervisor for the Church in South America, called the CIA-sponsored coup that toppled the democratically-elected government of Chile in 1973 an act that "served the purpose of the Lord," and called the dictator Augusto Pinochet "one of the great leaders of Latin America."³¹ Rex Carlisle, assistant to the mission president, later declared that the Lord had played a part in the overthrow of Allende's government.³²

When family members of guerilla leader Julio Cesar Macias, an inactive Mormon, were killed in Guatemala, their deaths were reportedly brought about by information supplied by high-ranking American Church officials.³³

Journalists Gottlieb and Wiley assert that rubber industrialist J. F. O'Donnell, a key Church figure in Central America, was suspected by a number of Central American Mormons to have worked closely with the U.S. ambassador to help overthrow Jacobo Arbenz, president-elect of Guatemala, in 1954.³⁴ Guatemala is notorious for having one of the world's worst records on human rights since 1954. "In Central America," BYU history professor Lamond Tullis told Robert Gottlieb in a 1982 interview, "our church might be on the losing side of history."³⁵

In conclusion, over the past several decades, Latter-day Saints have become increasingly aligned with jingoistic and self-serving conservative policies. Faced with possible cultural and social ostracism against keeping informed, most Latter-day Saints prefer giving their unquestioning assent to authority, spiritual

are to be their brothers' keepers over the world. Asians are not capable of self-government, being of a different race than that of English-speaking peoples of Teutonic background.

²⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

³⁰ Gottlieb and Wiley, *America's Saints*, Ch. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

and temporal, despite its damage to the democratic spirit which demands an informed citizenry.

Although much of the rhetoric used by conservatives appears to reflect cherished Mormon beliefs, a Christian perspective asks how we can participate in Nicaragua's invasion, supply arms to often repressive regimes, and allow our prosperity to rest upon the military-industrial complex, an enterprise Spencer W. Kimball has denounced as reliance upon "the arm of flesh."³⁶

Americans and Latter-day Saints have denied others the right to revolt against tyranny. For Mormons, the American revolution is seen as a unique and almost sacred event in history, which should not be interpreted as a pattern for others to follow, even when circumstances warrant it. On one hand, this belief prevents endorsing anarchy and terror; on the other it effectively shuts off the Mormon experience from that part of humanity who yearns to be free from institutionalized terror. The distortion of Mormon beliefs into attitudes supporting nationalism and the use of force are a form of self-deception and intellectual laziness. We must also be careful to avoid perverting the LDS concept of "chosenness" and a sense of participation in America's prophetic destiny into narcissism or pride. Narcissism and laziness, psychiatrist Scott Peck warns, may lead to evil, the evil of unwitting destruction of life and spirit.³⁷

It is ironic that Mormons, an outcast and repressed group in the nineteenth century, have taken sides with their former oppressors, no longer sharing in the sufferings and the humiliation of the oppressed. Gottlieb and Wiley describe what they term "the Great Accommodation" the integration of the Mormon community into the larger, dominant American culture.³⁸ From my perspective as a former Canadian, American Mormons subsume under the LDS religion the religion of American nationalism with its pantheon of saints (the founding fathers), its demons (communists), and its priesthood (government of the United States, presidency, and the Republican Party). This would remain a rather quaint and innocuous attitude if Latter-day Saints did not attempt to sanctify deeds committed under an aggressive United States foreign policy. The question must be asked: Isn't the attempt to justify war in the name of the Prince of Peace slightly blasphemous? Should we not be peace-makers — forgiving, conciliatory and loving? I sense that the Jewish Diaspora, the persecution of early Christians, the Holocaust, the extinction of the Nephites, and the Missouri period in Mormon history all point to some important lessons: In spite of Mormons' "chosenness," we may not be spared a similar fate ourselves, unless we seek to humble ourselves and comprehend the suffering of others. In a modern rendition of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which role would Mormons now take?

This analysis of LDS attitudes on war and peace with specific references to American foreign policy does not discuss the real threat posed by the Soviet Union. The brutal repressions and aggressions conducted by the Soviets at

³⁶ Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 6.

³⁷ Peck, *People of the Lie*, Ch. 2.

³⁸ *American Saints*, p. 49.

home and abroad are amply documented. However, in its conflict with the Russians, America has aligned itself with brutal dictatorships, endorsing terrorism, torture, and genocide. The American CIA apes the Soviet KGB in its methods. The military-industrial complex in both countries wields enormous power. In many ways our two nations have become alike. ·

Let us hope that Latter-day Saints will recognize and abandon their belligerent ideas and attitudes. A clear Mormon voice for peace could benefit a troubled world.