

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Wicks, Modems, and the Winds of War

Karen Marguerite Moloney

Whenever I think of the War to-day, it is not as summer but always as winter; always as cold and darkness and discomfort, and an intermittent warmth of exhilarating excitement which made us irrationally exult in all three. Its permanent symbol, for me, is a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle, the tiny flame flickering in an ice-cold draught, yet creating a miniature illusion of light against an opaque infinity of blackness.

—Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*

Standing as we still do on the brink of a new millennium, Latter-day Saints share with their neighbors and friends across the globe a profound interest in the fortunes of twenty-first-century war and peace. Not only do we wish to live our lives and raise our children under a quiet sky in safety and peace, far from the addictive savagery to which humankind sinks in time of war, but as an increasingly international church committed to sending missionaries into all the countries of the world, who could dispute the advantages if all those countries were at peace? Narrowing our focus,

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what precisely is the responsibility of the individual Latter-day Saint in an era that remains uncharted, changed, and clouded by the threat of potential apocalypse? If turning to the scriptures yields conclusions as different as those reached by the authors in these pages, if most Latter-day pronouncements on war pre-date the advent of the nuclear age, what kind of compass should we carry to determine that response? Might we claim a higher moral position for ourselves, one that reflects the realities of the changed world in which we find ourselves citizens?

Mormons are becoming known as a violent group—consider Gary Gilmore, the Lafferties, the abductors of Elizabeth Smart—with the national press focused on our record of violence. Could we go on the offensive to counteract that image? Could we look, say, to the path Andrew Bolton proposes in this issue and take “the peace church option”? We’ve grown from our nineteenth-century founding into a powerful religion with worldwide membership. If we were to take a pro-peace, anti-war stance, who could doubt we would engage widespread attention, and what today comes with higher stakes than our response to the rising tide of violence that surrounds us? Isn’t the very essence of Christianity a love-based message advocating peace? Or should we be persuaded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Hogge that the peace we enjoy is purchased with military might? As a church and individually, Latter-day Saints have much vested in the resolution of these questions.

My personal experience with war, like that of many American women my age, has been meager; even so, war provided an ever-present backdrop to my childhood and adolescence. The southern California neighborhood where I lived until age eleven teemed with children. Our games of hide and seek became sprawling events, playing house turned into playing a city of homes, and our TV watching sent us as a bike pack barreling down the streets to create our own episodes of *Rawhide* and *Wagon Train*. We enlarged playing nurse to “living hospital” and turned regular dodge ball into rousing German war ball. For baby-boomer children of the veterans of World War II, our fathers’ overseas service was a point of pride. My own father’s service as a stateside MP, courtesy of a childhood car accident when flying glass punctured his left eye, disappointed my brother, Karl, and me, but it couldn’t prevent us from joining enthusiastically in neighborhood games of war. We learned to distinguish in our speech between A-bombs and H-bombs, the roughneck boys anxious to play the Germans, the gentler boys and all the girls Americans. On

one occasion, acting in a dual role as the Americans' general and head nurse, bolstered by my brother as head spy, I carefully vaccinated all my troops on our back patio before engaging in memorable battle with the boys across the street.

By the time I entered high school, World War II had been replaced by a war our fathers wouldn't fight. As I shifted my role-playing from suburban streets to a high school stage, already graduated cousins, friends, and boyfriends were leaving for Vietnam. A high school junior when troop escalations peaked in 1968, I wrote to them; and one by one they came home, wounded, silent, changed. George required a cane to walk, Rich would be lucky later to father children, Dane was addicted to drugs. The day after Dane's release from rehabilitation, he shot himself with a rifle in the bathtub while his parents attended church. Denny Miller, whom I'd met as a handsome Marine, stopped writing one day; was his the name I traced years later on a visit to the Wall? I joined in one large anti-war rally on the campus of Pomona College in Claremont, California, before transferring to BYU, but my energies were focused on my courses, social life, and the new church I'd joined after high school graduation. When Saigon fell, I was a twenty-something adventurer teaching high school in Australia, and the events seemed remote and unreal.

In 1980, however, during a summer of my own grief and shortly after their reissue, I read two books by British writer Vera Brittain. Her life as a sheltered young Victorian woman, born in 1896, had been shattered by the advent of the First World War. One by one during the course of the war, her fiancé Roland, two close male friends Victor and Geoffrey, and her beloved brother, Edward, were killed. She mourned each death deeply in turn, but their cumulative effect devastated her. She had left Oxford University, one of the first women to attend there, to serve with all the idealism of her generation as a nurse in London, Malta, and at the front in France. Nursing such patients as the victims of mustard gas provided memory-searing close-ups of the horrors of war. When she came home, grief-stricken and depleted, she began her life-long work to prevent anything so calamitous from happening ever again, lecturing, for example, for the infant League of Nations. It would be ten years before she recovered enough emotionally to write *Testament of Youth* (1933; reprinted, n.p.: Wideview Books, 1980), the book at once autobiography, history, and elegy that endeared her to the public. Later, as she documents in its sequel, *Testament of Experience: An Autobiographical Story of the Years 1925-1950*

(1957; reprinted, n.p.: Wideview Books, 1981), Brittain sacrificed that popularity by denouncing, in a widely circulated booklet, Churchill's saturation bombing of German cities during World War II.¹

In Brittain's carefully detailed accounts of the century's first fifty years, I learned the history of modern armament with its escalation to weapons targeting large numbers of civilians rather than limited numbers of soldiers. I also felt the sadness in her comment, made as World War II began, to fellow-veteran husband George Catlin, a political scientist dedicated to preserving peace through different paths, on "the utter failure of all the sincere efforts made for peace through twenty years";² and I admired her as she proceeded nevertheless to convert, slowly and thoughtfully, to pacifism. Then, against the intensity of her efforts to dissuade her country from bombing museums, cathedrals, monasteries, women, and children, I struggled with her to comprehend the genocide perpetrated against Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the logical next step, more terrible by far, in saturation bombing. The event staggered her with its enormity. Reflecting, however, that she, her husband, and their two children had themselves survived the war, she also found herself "increasingly aware of a deep thankfulness which submerged even the guilty sense that too many others were sad and suffering for joy to be appropriate."³ Such a poignant reaction to the horror differed dramatically, nevertheless, from that of the victims.

I think of Michael Ondaatje's character Kirpal Singh, or Kip, the Sikh sapper in *The English Patient* who, during the final days of World War II, painstakingly defuses unexploded bombs to protect the Europeans they endanger. Kip's skin is brown, like the Sri Lankan-turned-Canadian

1. In Brittain's own words, the booklet examined "the history of the Allied bombing offensive, described the development of 'obliteration' tactics, and explained precisely what this meant in innocent suffering even more deadly, in spiritual consequences, to those who inflicted it than to its helpless victims. It pleaded for a return, even while war continued, to the standards set up by Hugo Grotius as a protest against the cruelties of the Thirty Years' War. The precepts of international law which he initiated still maintained that it was ultimately better for a nation to accept disadvantage in war than to descend to those depths of barbarism in which the most savage expedients are condoned if they lead to victory." *Testament of Experience*, 328.

2. *Ibid.*, 214.

3. *Ibid.*, 375.

Ondaatje's, like that of the Japanese victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and when news reaches Kip of the bombs dropped on those two cities, the previously reserved soldier, who had brushed away other racist and personal slights, blasts forth as though he himself had been detonated:

My brother told me. Never turn your back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers. Never trust Europeans, he said, Never shake hands with them. But we, oh, we were easily impressed—by speeches and medals and your ceremonies. What have I been doing these last few years? Cutting away, defusing, limbs of evil. For what? For *this* to happen?⁴

When Kip aims his rifle at the Hungarian count Almásy, the dying burn victim to whom the novel's title alludes, the Canadian Caravaggio reminds him Almásy isn't English. Kip retorts: "American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have . . . Harry Truman of the USA. You all learned it from the English." Caravaggio, Ondaatje tells us, "knows the young soldier is right. They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation."⁵ Perhaps Kip's outrage opens a small window onto the sense of perceived injustice that must have simmered beneath the surface—even for decades—after his return to India and eager resumption of civilian life; perhaps it speaks, too, of the vast, building energy of Eastern resentment toward the West.

Neither Vera Brittain nor an actual person resembling Ondaatje's Kip could have foreseen the events of 9/11, but I don't think the scale of its horror would have surprised them. The decisions made by twenty-first-century terrorists to fly planes into the Twin Towers can be traced like a series of genetic mutations back to landmark twentieth-century adoptions of military strategy: the dropping of the atom bomb on cities inhabited by civilian members of a brown race, Churchill's attempts to obliterate entire German cities, "the technological and depersonalized levels of organized killing begun in World War I [that] have defined warfare ever

4. Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 284–285.

5. *Ibid.*, 286.

since.”⁶ The events of 9/11 will undoubtedly divide us as utterly from the previous century as the atom bomb demarcated the two halves of the twentieth. Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol tell us, “That day brought us to a new era . . . fluid, perilous and very much subject to the contingencies of history that define those moments when one epoch has died and another is struggling to be born,” an era for which a “new roadmap” is required.⁷ But even another round of map-making may not take us where we need to go in the years that lie ahead. For that journey we may well need, too, a new compass.

So we begin our tenure as a new editorial team, twenty years after DIALOGUE published its first issue devoted to war and peace, by publishing a second. I have been heartened, as we begin the daunting task of editing the journal over the next five years, by the large and fervent response we received to my call for papers. Latter-day Saints, not to mention their neighbors and friends, care deeply about the challenges that lie before us. Their solutions vary, at times contradicting thoughtful proposals contained in other essays in this issue, but the deeply felt sincerity of our authors has never been in doubt. In the articles and creative work we offer here, individuals wrestle with the question of the authority of scripture to provide timely solutions to today’s problems, they look for guidance to Mormon history, they consider the role of both church and individual in a time of war, they examine their faith. One author proclaims pacifism as the Christian ideal, another emphasizes the vital role of a strong military in maintaining peace; one laments our military presence in Iraq, another surprises himself with his support of the war. In the true spirit of DIALOGUE, we present here a range of replies to the haunting questions now troubling our sleep and requiring resolution in the new era that awaits.

We offer, then, in the pages to follow a rich sampling of voices on the topic of war and peace. In this spring issue we focus on 9/11, Iraq, and contemporary war; further responses, focusing on nuclear testing and earlier wars, will be published later. If current policy prevails, the testing of nuclear devices may have resumed by then in Nevada’s desert, and Mary

6. Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Anchor, 2002), 85.

7. Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol, *The War over Iraq: Saddam’s Tyranny and America’s Mission* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), vii.

Dickson's forthcoming essay, "Living and Dying with Fallout," will be even more horribly relevant, for no one escapes the radiation carried by those winds of war.

The world in which the 2004–08 editorial team operates has also changed in less dramatic, though significant, ways. The journal's editorial offices move with our new team from Neal and Rebecca Chandler's address in Shaker Heights, Ohio, to the Western United States and into cyberspace. Ours is *DIALOGUE*'s first virtual office; though we still happily accept hard copy, we forthrightly declare our preference for electronic submissions. As editor, I reside in Salt Lake City, but Levi S. Peterson, conscientious associate editor, makes his home with his wife Althea in Issaquah, Washington. Between us lie 850 miles, three states, vast reaches of sage brush country and dryland wheat, and both the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington's Cascades. As little as a decade ago, efforts to edit a journal across such a wide expanse would have collapsed under the strain of the distance. Today, however, not only is electronic collaboration possible, but e-mail and attachments provide an efficient, even speedy, method of receiving, refereeing, and editing manuscripts, not to mention communicating with authors.

Levi and I are joined in our task by a capable supporting cast, many of whom have worked for *DIALOGUE* in the past. I myself served as *DIALOGUE*'s first intern and later as an editorial board member under Mary Lythgoe Bradford; Levi has also served as a board member and as the journal's fiction editor. Todd Compton formerly served as editorial board member; Karen Rosenbaum managed the office in the Stanford days; John Sillito edited book reviews; Linda Sillito edited the journal's poetry; Lavina Fielding Anderson served as associate editor under Linda King Newell and L. Jackson Newell; and Allen D. Roberts, coeditor with Martha Sonntag Bradley, and Gary James Bergera, managing editor,⁸ headed their own editorial team. Brent Corcoran provided production services for them.

But even those of us who have tied our fortunes to *DIALOGUE*'s in the past now assume new roles, and we are joined, as well, by some entirely new players. The result is a talented team that blends the wis-

8. Named as associate editor on the inside front cover during the Bradley and Roberts editorship, Bergera refers to his role as managing editor (e-mail to author, December 4, 2003).



*Karen Marguerite Moloney, editor,
and Mary Lythgoe Bradford, former editor*

dom of experience with the enthusiasm of new blood. Brent Corcoran, our gifted production manager, joins us from his home in Salt Lake City. Our subject editors include Timm Archer, book review editor in Genoa, Nevada; poetry editor Lisa Bickmore in West Jordan, Utah; history editor Todd Compton in Santa Monica, Cali-

fornia; art director Connie Disney in Salt Lake City; fiction editor Karen Rosenbaum in Kensington, California; and Linda Sillitoe, personal essay editor in Ogden, Utah. Lavina Fielding Anderson serves as copyeditor and Jani Fleet as proofreader, both in Salt Lake City; Hugo Oliaz, also in Salt Lake City, acts as webmaster; and Dustin Serr, in Farr West, Utah, signs on as information technologist. Comprising our editorial board are Mark Asplund and Kathleen Petty in Washington; Gary James Bergera, Donna R. Cheney, Robert M. Hogge, Allen D. Roberts, and John Sillito in Utah; and Michael E. Nielsen in Georgia. Karrin Peterson directs our submissions office in Sammamish, Washington. We make up a far-flung but committed team, and we bless the modems that facilitate our e-mail.

I started my own love affair with *DIALOGUE* when Clifton Holt Jolley, then a member of the editorial board, went out of his way to respond by telephone, and later in person, to a poem I submitted to the journal.⁹ His encouragement was sincere, even if he wasn't recommending publication, and his nurturing set an early model for me of the *DIALOGUE* style, a standard I now aspire to reproduce in our relationships with authors.¹⁰ My feelings for the journal didn't diminish while seeing it up close in the daily intimacy of an internship; during subsequent years of faithful subscribing, my affection for the journal has continued unabated. Today, twenty-eight years after Clifton decided my southern California address was close to his and picked up the phone, I am writing an introductory essay for my first issue as editor of the journal I have loved for so long.

Applying for the editorship was not a step I took lightly, a fact I trust the following anecdote will illustrate. Driving home from teaching one day during the fall of 2002, I considered several compelling reasons to abandon my efforts to assemble an editorial team in a bid to be the next *DIALOGUE* editor. If selected, I knew I'd set to one side my own creative and academic pursuits, invite the stress of meeting more deadlines than I already face with my teaching and committee work, and pledge myself to hours on my laptop that might be spent instead

9. "The Stewards" later appeared in *BYU Studies* 23 (Winter 1983): 120.

10. I was especially encouraged when Deborah J. Sheridan, one of the first-time *DIALOGUE* authors featured in this issue (see "From Flanders Fields"), characterized our editorial process as nurturing.

walking in the fresh air around the Capitol Building across the street from my home.

With timing Carol Lynn Pearson would surely label synchronicity, I'd taught the poetry of Padraic Pearse in my Irish literature course that morning. Pearse, one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rebellion later executed by the English for treason, had been fully aware of the risks when he threw in his lot with the other rebels seeking independence for their country. His poems, in fact, had predicted his early death in the cause of Irish freedom. Aptly, one folksong describes him as "a visionary"; equally aptly, the same song also refers to him as "a Gaelic scholar" for his prominent participation in the Irish cultural and literary revival of the early twentieth century. He served in Dublin, for example, as the first editor of the Gaelic League's Irish-language newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis* (*The Sword of Light*).

I recalled all this as I sped along the interstate toward home that autumn afternoon, roused by Pearse's devotion to a cause he believed in. But it was an additional, lesser-known fact of Irish history that struck me even more forcefully that afternoon with its relevance to my current dilemma. I found myself recalling that the second editor of *The Sword of Light*, rising from rural poverty to succeed Pearse in 1909 and serve until the newspaper's suppression in 1916, was my own cousin, Seán MacGiollárnáth. More precisely, Seán was my great-grandmother Ellen Finnegan's first cousin, but that comparative distance in kinship didn't prevent me from telling myself, as I neared Salt Lake City, "This editing business is in your blood. It's genetic." Perhaps I was not so very far off: Seán's nephew Diarmuid Ó Cearbhaill wrote in December (2002) that he had recently begun editing *The Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Contemporary Salt Lake City may be a long way from pre-Rising Dublin, but in a community of intellectuals who care about their unique cultural and religious heritage, DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT is a wonderful instrument, if not a sword, of light. Inspired by Pearse's and my cousin's examples and by DIALOGUE's own historic role as an instrument of light, I committed myself on I-15 that day to the application process—and to serve honorably, if chosen, as the journal's next editor.

I began this essay with an epigraph about another instrument of light, Brittain's flickering candle, buffeted by the chilling winds of war.

Today, when the darkness of which Brittain also spoke threatens to dominate the years that lie ahead, may we think to shelter our own candles and act to steady the flickering of their flames. If DIALOGUE can add to the pooling of our light, as I believe it must, let it do so. To that end I commit my tenure as editor. Sustained, in turn, by the community we serve, may the light we together generate serve to keep the darkness at bay.