



1-1-1985

Violence and the Gospel: The Teachings of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon

Edwin Brown Firmage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>

Recommended Citation

Firmage, Edwin Brown (1985) "Violence and the Gospel: The Teachings of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 25 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol25/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Violence and the Gospel: The Teachings of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon

Edwin Brown Firmage

INTRODUCTION

A United Nations study estimates that the direct effects of an all-out nuclear exchange—the initial blasts, the consequent radiation, and the ensuing fires—would kill 1.1 billion people.¹ Beyond those direct effects, indirect, radiation-related effects would create an unprecedented pandemic that would kill another billion people.² As though such a human toll were insufficient evidence of the perverseness of modern weaponry, recent studies on the long-term atmospheric and biological consequences of nuclear war raise the spectre of a “nuclear winter” that would devastate the earth, perhaps to the point of the extinction of all life.³

Concerned people everywhere are searching for ways to avoid these disasters. Throughout history, law—often inspired by and based on religious teachings—has been used in attempts to prevent or limit force and war as means of resolving disputes. That legal steps are absolutely necessary, and every effort should be made toward such short-term measures as arms control agreements, is as true today as ever.⁴ Nevertheless, one must question the capacity of law to furnish a lasting solution: the fundamental solution is beyond the reach of law. But even if by some miracle—or at least by a mighty feat of political genius and courage—nuclear weaponry could be radically reduced or eliminated altogether, every generation forever will possess the awful capacity to develop, manufacture, and deploy these weapons of ultimate destruction. We can never again return with innocence to a prenuclear Eden.

Perhaps only a collective change of mind can achieve the fundamental solution beyond the reach of law. Whether through an elevation of social consciousness or a religious conversion, humankind

must come to perceive itself, across national, racial, and religious boundaries, as brothers and sisters of common descent.

A previous article of mine examined the Old Testament doctrine of Holy War as the paradigm of allegiance and discussed Latter-day Saint teaching on force and war from Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to Spencer W. Kimball.⁵ In this article, I continue my study of religious teachings on force and war as they apply in the nuclear age. In particular, I shall examine Old Testament prophetic teachings, as distinguished from Israel's experience in the conquest of Canaan through the Davidic monarchy; teachings of Jesus on force and violence; and Book of Mormon teachings on force and war. These teachings may be more important now than ever. All of them culminate in a sublime, transcendent message for our day: we must learn to love God above all and to love others as ourselves, to see all humankind as our brothers and sisters.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETIC TRADITION ON FORCE AND WAR

The Later Prophets consistently challenged the ways of war endemic to monarchy by reiterating Israel's commitment to Yahweh as the Divine Warrior.⁶ Yahweh was Israel's provider and defender, and only faith in Yahweh could provide the security kings sought in armies and weapons of war. The prophets inherited this notion from available traditions.⁷ Although the idea of God's acting in history is not unique to Israel, the prophets stressed its implication to an unparalleled degree.⁸ This emphasis, rather than particular forms of warfare, is Israel's legacy to the world.⁹

The antiquity of the idea of Yahweh's unchallengeable kingship over Israel is clearly evident in the great debate occasioned by the institution of an earthly monarch in Israel (see 1 Sam. 8–11). Israel's proposal to have a king "like other nations" directly challenged Yahweh's exclusive rights to their loyalty. Yet, while this reaction no doubt represents one view, it cannot be maintained that the prophetic message, taken as a whole, is essentially antimonarchical. On the contrary, it suggests a synthesis of the two camps, an integration of what for Israel was the new idea of an earthly monarch into the older ideology of the federated tribes under Yahweh's command.¹⁰ Such a synthesis was obviously effected, since even the monarchy's harshest critics, the prophets, never hinted at its ultimate abolition. Isaiah, for example, foresees the coming of a virtuous king when the present era of history ends (see Isa. 11:1–4). Books such as Deuteronomy,

while they carefully regulate the behavior of the king, do not view kingship itself as antithetical to the principles of Israelite religion (see Deut. 17:14–20).

The ultimate testimony of the way in which kingship became an essential part of Israel's religion, as opposed to a tolerated aberration, is the messianic hope. Without the experiences, good and bad, under the kings, the notion of a messiah—the anointed king—might have been incomprehensible, perhaps historically impossible. When we speak therefore of the biblical conception of kingship, and especially when we attempt to draw theological conclusions from it, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with an evolving phenomenon which changed to meet the needs of circumstance.

The monarchy brought fundamental changes to Israelite society. Especially during the eighth century, when classical prophecy arose, the monarchy and its foreign policy simply devastated the lower classes. With furious anger, Isaiah attacked the unscrupulous nobles and judges who had conspired to rob the helpless of their rights (see Isa. 1:21–23, 3:13–15, 5:8, 10:1–4).¹¹ He denounced the decadent upper class, pampered and concerned only for material possessions and venal pleasures (see Isa. 3:16–4:1, 5:11–12, 22). Israel was like a vineyard that should have brought forth good grapes but was being consumed by briars and thistles because of her lavish rituals by which she hoped to placate Yahweh's demands (see Isa. 1:10–14). Israel could repent and become God's dwelling place, however, by giving up her faith in human armaments and placing faith in Yahweh's judgment:

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into
pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall
they learn war any more.

(Isa. 2:4)

Isaiah's prophetic call required him to oppose a national pride vested in military superiority and strong alliances. Isaiah first challenged Judah's national policy in 735–733 B.C. when the Aramaean–Israelite coalition came against Jerusalem to compel Judah's alliance against Assyria.¹² Isaiah confronted King Ahaz about his plan to appeal to Assyria for help, promising that the coalition would fail in its purpose if Judah would trust in Yahweh's promises (see Isa. 7:1–8). Ahaz refused Isaiah's prophetic counsel, however; he sent a tribute to Tiglath-pileser and surrendered Judah's independence (see 2 Kgs. 16–17). Isaiah responded by prophesying national calamity (see Isa. 7:18–25, 8:5–8).

Isaiah also opposed Judah's alliance with Egypt against Assyria about 714–712 B.C. Isaiah insisted that Yahweh would defend Judah and overthrow Assyria in due time if Judah would only wait (see Isa. 14:24–27). Dressed as a prisoner of war, Isaiah walked through the streets of Jerusalem to symbolize the dire results of Judah's reliance on Egypt rather than Yahweh (see Isa. 20). Isaiah again predicted disaster for Judah's idolatrous reliance on armies and alliances with Egypt rather than waiting upon Yahweh (see Isa. 28:14–22, 30:1–7).

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

(Isa. 31:1)

Isaiah taught that Judah's reliance upon weapons and the ways of war would bring destruction, not security. Peace would come only through righteousness and faith in Yahweh.

Isaiah was vindicated when King Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, stood firm against the Assyrian invasion of Judah about 688 B.C. Isaiah alone stood by his king in declaring that the Assyrian pride had exhausted divine patience (see Isa. 37:21–29). He promised that Yahweh would never allow Jerusalem to be taken by blasphemous Assyria as long as Judah placed faith in Yahweh (see Isa. 29:5–8, 37:33–35). Hezekiah heeded Isaiah's counsel, and the city successfully survived the Assyrian siege.

Isaiah apparently did not give up hope that his teachings could change a spiritually corrupt people (see Isa. 6:9–10); his belief in God was too expansive for him to suppose that Judah's unfaithfulness could frustrate divine purpose no matter how much it injured divine love. Judah's impending tragedy manifested the divine chastening of a people that would purge the dross and leave a purified people (see Isa. 1:24–26, 4:2–6). As a sign of his hope, Isaiah gave his first son the ominous name of *She'ar-jashub* ("a remnant shall return"), emphasizing not the exile but the remnant that would return. Thus, Isaiah turned to the future fulfillment of God's promises to provide hope to Israel, God's chosen people.

Moreover, Isaiah taught that peace among nations and with all nature would eventually result from a virtuous king's judgment. The lamb would lie with the wolf, the leopard with the kid, and the cow with the bear (see Isa. 11:6–9). Zion's defense would be the munitions of rocks, and Jerusalem would be a quiet habitation, a place of beautiful rivers and streams (see Isa. 33:16, 20–21). Zion would be characterized

by a love of peace and trust in God: “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isa. 32:17–18).

God revealed himself to Israel in his covenant. Yahweh chose to manifest his divine vulnerability in making a covenant that entailed divine response to human commitment. Israel’s greatest prophets consistently employed the most intimate relationships known to mortals to characterize Yahweh’s relationship with wayward Israel. God is Israel’s Father and Israel his infant child; Yahweh is Israel’s husband and Israel his unfaithful bride. Yahweh’s promise to David is expressed in terms of the father–son covenant:

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.

(2 Sam. 7:14–16)

Hosea echoes Yahweh’s pain at Israel’s rejection of his covenant. He applies the excruciating metaphor of a loving husband who remains faithful despite his wife’s infidelities. Hosea is commanded by God to marry a prostitute. He is to heal her with redeeming love, a type of what Yahweh promises to do by covenant love with Israel (see Hosea 1:2). So Hosea married Gomer, a prostitute, who bore him children, named of the Lord to symbolize Israel’s infidelities to Yahweh. The first son is named *Jesrel*, where Jehu massacred the descendants of Omri; the daughter, *Not having obtained mercy*, “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel.” The next son was named “Not my people,” since Israel was “not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hosea 1:3–9). Gomer responded by returning to prostitution, seeking fulfillment in her lovers and their money (see Hosea 2:5–10).

Yahweh, who had demonstrated his love for Israel as Hosea had to Gomer, withdrew his corn, his wine, wool and flax that “were given to cover her nakedness; And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers” (Hosea 2:9–10). He would reveal her shame until she recognized that Yahweh, like Hosea with Gomer, was really the source of Israel’s well-being and redemption. No progress was possible without commitment to Yahweh (see Hosea 2:11–13). Through unrequited love, Israel, like Gomer, would be wooed back to a faithful relationship (see Hosea 2:14–18).

When that day comes—it is Yahweh who speaks—she will call me “my husband.” A faithful covenant of unbreakable love will be made between Israel and Yahweh encompassing all life and all nature: “and in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. . . . I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God” (Hosea 2:16–23).

Yahweh then directed Hosea a second time to redeem Gomer from the slave market and once again to betroth her. “Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods.” So Hosea purchased her and asked a pledge of fidelity. “Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee”—just as Israel, long without a king or country, one day would be redeemed by her Messiah (Hosea 3:1, 3).

These divine metaphors playing upon the most profound human emotions are not mere literary convention; they reveal to us the nature of Israel’s God. As Terence Fretheim recently demonstrated,¹³ the prophets of the Old Testament interacted with a God who suffers because of a broken relationship, the people’s rejection of his loving covenant. God suffers with the people who suffer. God suffers for his people. As foreign as the idea may be to classical theology that emphasizes impassibility and immutability, the Old Testament prophets express the incomprehensible divine hurt that, in spite of all God had done for the people, they have ignored his call. Thus, Jeremiah begins his book with a picture of the pain and anguish of God rejected as a parent and a husband:

But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me. Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

(Jer. 3:19–20)

Yahweh’s love for Israel is expressed by the Hebrew *hesed*, or “faithful and intimate, redemptive covenant love.”¹⁴ *Hesed* is the basis

for atonement of humankind and all creation, the healing of a relationship vital to human welfare or salvation. As the parent heals the child and the mate transforms the marriage partner with long-suffering and unconditional love and mercy, so the Messiah will reconcile Israel and all the world with their Father, amongst themselves, and within the inner cosmos of every person's soul. This concept of covenant-love was Judaism's most influential teaching on early Christianity. The concept of atonement and the Father's intimacy with humans became the hallmark of Jesus' teachings. The Apostle Paul expressed this tenderness when he described the movement of the Spirit within us impelling us to become God's sons and daughters, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Jesus was unique in applying the term *abba* that must have shocked his contemporaries with its connotations of intimacy. Jesus did not invoke the more common liturgical form, *abinu* ("our father"), by which God was addressed in the synagogue, nor even the more personal *abi* meaning "my father." Instead, Jesus used the domestic word by which a father was addressed in the affectionate intimacy of the immediate family, thus expressing a sense of nearness to God engendering implicit trust.¹⁵ *Abba* literally means "daddy," the most intimate tender-hearted and child-like expression of the relation between child and father (compare Mark 14:36). Jesus' teachings are a profound expression and fulfillment of God's love for Israel expressed through the great prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah, among others.

Jesus would expand the concept of faithful covenant-love to the entire world. He would direct his disciples, as lights in a darkened world, as the salt of the earth, to carry the message of redeeming love through example, direct teaching and parable. The Good Samaritan would teach early Jewish Christianity to broaden the concept of neighbor. The Laborers in the Vineyard and the Wedding Feast would establish that God's love is universal and the kingdom open to all, whatever ancient Israel's heritage of thousands of years. The teaching of enemy love would complete a mandate of converting, atoning, redemptive covenant-love requiring Christians to accept all people no matter what their beliefs, nationality, or politics. The great commandment linked inextricably the necessity of love of others and self as any distinction between them was obliterated forever. To externalize evil was prohibited as a beam would preclude seeing the mote. Jesus had come to heal the broken relationship.

VIOLENCE AND THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Without repudiating the Law and the Prophets, Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God. Isaiah had seen that to Israel a child would be

born, a son given: “and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Redemptive, sacrificial love was seen by the gospel writers as the crux of the Messiah’s atoning act and his teachings. Matthew particularly saw in Jesus the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the Suffering Servant.¹⁶

Jesus announced his messianic fulfillment and the inauguration of the kingdom of God at the beginning of his public ministry. Speaking in a synagogue in Nazareth, where he grew up, Jesus turned to a text of Isaiah and read from chapter 61:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

(Isa. 61:1–3)

Luke then records that Jesus closed the book, returned it to the minister, sat down and, while “the eyes of all” were “fastened on him,” he pronounced that the kingdom of God was upon them in his fulfillment of the messianic prophecy: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:20–21). The Righteous King had come.

After the calling of the Twelve, Jesus gave them his great ordination address, the Sermon on the Mount. There, as The Prince of Peace, he presented the core of his gospel. Blessed would be the poor in spirit who recognized their total dependence upon the Father; those that mourn would be comforted. One need not be aggressive against another to acquire territory, for the meek would inherit the earth. By extending mercy (as in avoiding judgment of others) our own hearts can be softened and our spirits made contrite; we may therefore receive mercy. Peacemakers will be God’s children.

The goal of the gospel, as Jesus announced his Father’s kingdom, was that we be whole, be complete, as the Father is whole or complete. Jesus taught all who would listen and comprehend that the kingdom of God is, in a sense, within them. Dramatic transformation of their minds and souls, their very being, is what was demanded. Jesus’

kingdom was not of this world. Jesus asked for the conversion of souls, not simply outward conformity.

To be part of this kingdom, not only must we not kill, but we are forbidden to be angry without cause. Ritual, even worship, will not speak to our souls as an aid to their transformation. We may not approach and emulate the Father in worship unless we first be reconciled with our brothers and sisters. Christian reconciliation he stated not as immutable law, ignorant of the enormous problems of institution and circumstance; rather, he enjoined our efforts to the greatest extent possible with our capacity and situation. He advised conciliation with our adversary lest the institutions of the state grind both down. He excluded vengeance from the life of the disciple and repealed the *lex talionis* (proportionate retaliation). An eye for an eye, while far better than indiscriminate massacre and blood feud, was nevertheless beneath a son of God.

Finally, in climax to the Great Sermon's description of the personalities that would inhabit his Father's kingdom, Jesus preached love for one's enemy:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. . . .

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

(Matt. 5:43-44, 46-48)

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. . . .

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

(Luke 6:27-28, 32-33, 35)

It takes no special effort to love those who love us and hate those who hate us. But the Christian's mission is to make both neighbor

and enemy our brother and sister in the kingdom of God. And how else can we touch them, inspire them, and convert them, but by loving them? Then we will indeed be the light of the world, a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. In this way we transform ourselves, with the spirit of Christ, as we extend redeeming love to others, neighbors and enemies, as he did for us all. We must love as he loves. In no other way can we be his disciples and children of our Father, whole and complete, faithful to the covenant.

For the Christian, nonviolence, then, is not primarily based upon its necessity for our preservation in a world gorged with thermonuclear weapons, however accurate that perception. Nor is nonviolence practiced simply as a higher moral principle than violent response to provocation. Rather, Christ's mandate that we love neighbor and enemy as brother and sister and children of our Father compels that we love and not kill.

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

According especially to Matthew's gospel, following Peter's confession of faith, Jesus "from that time forth began . . . to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21).

John's gospel records what is in all probability his remembrance of Peter's confession in a somewhat different circumstance and locale (at Capernaum rather than Caesarea Philippi), at the conclusion of the Master's profound sermon on the Bread of Life, following the miracle of the loaves and fishes (see John 6:48-51).

Jesus taught a "hard saying": that he would sacrifice his flesh and his blood in order that an atonement for all humankind could be accomplished. Only in such a manner, he taught, could he "raise [us] up at the last day" (John 6:44).

Many in Israel, including presumably Jesus' disciples, had expected a Messiah who would free Israel from foreign dominion and establish again an independent and united state. The concept of a Messiah who would transcend death and hell and accomplish atonement between God and all his children by offering himself as a sacrifice through crucifixion was more than most could comprehend. (I believe, in fact,

that this spectre of a crucified Messiah was in all probability more than any disciple contemporary with Jesus could comprehend, until after the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Pentecost. Only retrospectively, and with the gift of the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance all Jesus had taught, would the Apostles themselves come gradually to comprehend a concept so unfamiliar and transcendent.) John records that “many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:60, 66).

Then John records Peter’s confession of a faith without alternative:

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

(John 6:67–69)

Yet Matthew records that Peter, convinced that his Master was indeed Israel’s Messiah, still did not comprehend the nature of his transcendence, the way of atonement: that indeed Jesus’ kingdom was not of this world.

Peter, in natural human response to Jesus’ teaching of his impending death, and reflecting misunderstanding about the nature of the Messiah’s role as healer of us all in atonement with his Father, rebuked Jesus: “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Matt. 16:22).

Jesus’ response rejected the natural human reaction of resort to violence. Jesus refused even that level of violence implicit in Peter’s statement, itself evidently far short of the Zealot alternative. Jesus said to Peter: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23).

Then Jesus directed his words and his example to all who would be disciples, words that contain the power to heal and atone between men as well as between man and God:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

(Matt. 16:24–26)

The complete fruition of Jesus' transcending power to lift all humanity to him through atonement rests upon such discipleship.

Jesus rejected Peter's attempt to use the forceful ways of the world. Such ways, even if successful for a time, would have prevented Jesus' atoning act, the transcendent act of redemptive love. Jesus commands that we follow: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. . . . A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:33–35).

He recognized that violence could do nothing but lead to more violence. Even after Jesus' rebuke following Peter's confession, Peter did not comprehend. At the betrayal and arrest Peter again sought to defend his Messiah with the sword. Jesus again commanded: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Tertullian, a second-century Christian leader in North Africa, concluded: "The Lord afterward, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier."¹⁷

THE PROPHETIC TRADITION AND FORCE AND WAR IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

[The Book of Mormon] should convince all living souls of the futility of war and the hazards of unrighteousness. A few prophets, swimming in a sea of barbarism, find it difficult to prevent the crumbling and final collapse of a corrupt people.¹⁸

—Spencer W. Kimball

The so-called "battle-books" of the Book of Mormon, those grim chapters most readers ignore, are classical history in the best sense. Like the historical books of the Old Testament and the greatest Greek history, Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, they have a moral purpose, one consistent with the intent of the work as a whole. The express desire of the authors is not so much to chronicle history for its own sake, for they ignore the vast majority of their history, but to preserve a record of their doings for posterity—a testament to their faith and an insistent, but loving warning to our own society.

The Book of Mormon exhibits many of the literary traditions evident in the Old Testament, among them the exodus typology of divine deliverance instead of heroic deliverance through military

strength.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Book of Mormon does not altogether follow the pattern of biblical warfare. It demonstrates a complete disregard for the ritual purity associated with that tradition in the Old Testament texts available to us. The Book of Mormon also demonstrates other responses to war such as pacifism and what would best be described as a “just war” theory. All of the Book of Mormon approaches to war demonstrate one thing in common: only faith in God can insure well-being, while trust in human military might is idolatry and insures destruction.

Divine Deliverance and Exodus Paradigms

The purpose of the exodus typology, evident throughout the Old Testament, is to demonstrate that Yahweh is mighty to deliver his people from their enemies in remembrance of his covenant.²⁰ The presence of exodus typology in the Book of Mormon has been demonstrated previously. The Book of Mormon writers repeatedly employ exodus typology in constructing their narrative: Alma is delivered from King Noah (see Mosiah 18:1–19:2), the people of Limhi are delivered from bondage under the Lamanites (see Mosiah 21:13–22:16), and Alma is again delivered from the Lamanites (see Mosiah 24:10–25). Alma departed from King Noah’s court and established a colony in a place called Mormon, near “a fountain of pure water.” When Alma’s small colony learned that King Noah had dispatched an army to apprehend them at this secret place, “they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness” (Mosiah 18:34).

After escaping from King Noah, Alma’s people came into bondage under the Lamanites who were “taskmasters over them” (Mosiah 24:9). Alma’s people thus began to “cry mightily to God” that he would deliver them and God responded: “Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage” (Mosiah 24:10–13). The Lord then gave instructions to Alma, as he had to Moses, to deliver his people from bondage (see Mosiah 24:17). Alma’s people gathered their flocks and grain and departed when the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanite guards. When Alma’s people had hidden in the wilderness, they gathered together and gave thanks to God for delivering them from bondage, for “none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God” (Mosiah 24:18–21).

Limhi’s people had become subjected to the Lamanites. The Lamanites had exacted heavy burdens, causing Limhi’s people to “cry

mightily to God; yea, even all the day long did they cry unto their God that he would deliver them out of their afflictions'' (Mosiah 21:14). Limhi caused his people to gather together at the temple at what appears to be a covenant renewal ceremony.²¹ He told his people that ''the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies'' (Mosiah 7:18). He promised that if they would trust in God, they would be delivered:

Therefore, lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God, in that God who was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and also, that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and caused that they should walk through the Red Sea on dry ground, and fed them with manna that they might not perish in the wilderness. . . . That same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now; and behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage.

(Mosiah 7:19–20)

Limhi's people ''could find no way to deliver themselves out of bondage, except it were to take their women and children, and their flocks, and their herds, and their tents, and depart into the wilderness'' (Mosiah 22:2). Thus, Limhi's people escaped bondage without bloodshed by trusting in God. The exodus as Yahweh's paradigm of deliverance is apparent in these Book of Mormon accounts. As historian Richard Bushman notes, ''Book of Mormon prophets saw the major events of their own past as comprising a series of deliverances beginning with the archetypal flight of the Israelites from Egypt.''²² This paradigm emphasizes that war is not necessary, vast arsenals are superfluous, for Yahweh's covenant with Israel was sufficient to defend his people if they would be faithful to the covenant. But the paradigm also teaches that armaments are not merely unnecessary, they may be obstructions to peace and welfare because God *alone* can deliver.

Israel was not justified in war unless the prophet consulted Yahweh and received affirmation through revelation.²³ Old Testament tradition proclaims that Yahweh delivered Israel's enemies into her hands rather than Israel from the hands of her enemies as in the exodus typology. This tradition is reflected in Captain Moroni's defense of Nephite freedoms. Further, Moroni is the focus of Mormon's message to our own day. When battle was imminent, Moroni sent two men to the prophet Alma ''desiring him that he should inquire of the Lord whither the armies of the Nephites should go to defend themselves against the Lamanites'' (Alma 43:23). Alma received the divine

approval required under Holy War tradition and instructed Moroni where to deploy his armies. The Lord justified the Nephites in engaging the Lamanites in battle because it was the “only desire of the Nephites to preserve their lands, and their liberty, and their church” and the purpose was clearly defense against an unjust aggressor (Alma 43:30; see also 43:46). Mormon was adamant that “the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children” (Alma 43:45). Thus captain Moroni “thought it no sin that he should defend them by stratagem” provided by the Lord (Alma 43:30).

The stratagem given from the Lord was effective to rout the more numerous Lamanites without excessive shedding of blood (see Alma 43:51–44:2). When the Nephites had surrounded the Lamanites and victory was ensured, Moroni commanded the shedding of blood to cease. The restoration of peace was the only purpose sought by Moroni (see Alma 44:3–10). As wise as Moroni was, he was willing to allow the Lamanites to return to their lands unharmed if they would only enter into a covenant of peace (see Alma 44:15–20). He gained no ultimate victory, no absolute assurance that the enemy would keep his word and not invade again, but only righteous trust in the Lord and hope that the enemy would repent and value peace. The people rejoiced “because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God” (Alma 45:1). Thereafter, Alma consecrated the land to those who would keep the commandments of God. Alma also prophesied and “blessed the earth for the righteous’ sake” and cursed the land to all those that do wickedly. Alma thus pronounced the “cursing and the blessing of God upon the land” as a completion of the covenant ceremony acknowledging God’s holy war (Alma 45:8–16).²⁴

Moroni was compelled to military action once again when a political insurrection attempted to establish a monarchy that threatened the freedom of his people. Amalickiah attempted to establish himself as king over the Nephites by promising power and position to “lower judges” (Alma 46:4). Moroni sensed a danger from this insurgent political group and opposed Amalickiah’s efforts. Seeking political support, Moroni rent his coat and wrote upon it “in memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children,” and fastened it to a pole (Alma 46:12). These words, ritualized in Nephite society and often quoted by Mormon,²⁵ became a rallying point as Mormon went among his people seeking support and reminding

the people that God alone could defend them (compare Alma 46:7–8). Even Moroni may have momentarily lapsed into a crueler ethic when he used his position as chief captain over the armies to threaten death to all “Amalickiahites that would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom” (Alma 46:35).

After having been rejected by the Nephites, Amalickiah succeeded, through murder and intrigue, in establishing himself as a king over the Lamanites (see Alma 47). Amalickiah later incited the Lamanites to come to battle against Moroni’s people. Moroni thus prepared his people for protracted warfare by building defensive measures against the more numerous Lamanites (see Alma 48:8–10). Mormon was careful to note that Moroni now taught his people “never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives.” He taught them that if they would be faithful God would prosper them in the land. Further, they were taught that God “would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and by so doing, the Lord would deliver them” (Alma 48:14, 16). The Nephites would enter battle only to preserve freedom and peace, for they were “sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood” (Alma 48:23). Mormon thus goes to lengths to inform us about a proper attitude toward war. The Holy War paradigms of Moroni’s covenant, which in effect guaranteed his people the land through victory, and the consultation with the prophet to receive Yahweh’s assurance of victory are well enough known not to need repeating.

Pacifism and Covenant

The Book of Mormon presents the only instance in scripture of a society committed by covenant to pacifism, the rejection of war in all forms through passive nonresistance to violence. Though Jesus taught nonviolence and the early Christian communities were committed to pacifism²⁶ until about A.D. 170, only in Alma 24 do we find an entire community embracing pacifism as a moral obligation realized in response to the gospel. The narrative divulges more than a profound commitment to nonviolence; it also reveals that evil is not found primarily in one society among combatants. The tacit but powerful message is that the externalization of evil, the distorted view that finds the solution to the world’s problems in a common enemy, is a misunderstanding of the gospel. The structure of the Book of Mormon narrative reveals repeatedly that enemies mirror one another in their

mutual commitment to military and economic superiority. Evil is found by looking within and is conquered through personal conversion.

The Book of Mormon narrative demonstrates a persistent sense of brotherhood, even with enemies. This sense of brotherhood had a profound influence on the way the Book of Mormon prophets considered the use of force. It was also the catalyst behind repeated missionary activities of the sons of Mosiah among the Lamanites, a people the Nephites in general feared as an enemy. The Lamanites often demonstrated an amazing receptivity to the gospel and a commitment to live it fully once they had accepted it (see Alma 23:6). A certain group of Lamanites, having accepted the gospel, changed their names to Anti-Nephi-Lehi. The new name symbolized the necessity of a new way of life and social structure demanded by conversion, the turning from a way of life and re-turning to God (see Alma 23:16–18).

The Anti-Nephi-Lehis felt that accepting the gospel also required them to repent of their warlike life. They gathered to hear their king and to enter into a covenant with God that was a testimony of their new faith (see Alma 24:17–18). Their king spoke eloquently of the implications of their new faith for force and war:

Since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren. Behold, I say unto you, Nay, let us retain our swords that they be not stained with the blood of our brethren; for perhaps, if we should stain our swords again they can no more be washed bright through the blood of the Son of our great God, which shall be shed for the atonement of our sins.

. . . since it has been as much as we could do to get our stains taken away from us, and our swords are made bright, let us hide them away that they may be kept bright, as a testimony to our God at the last day . . . that we have not stained our swords in the blood of our brethren. . . .

And now, my brethren, if our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords, yea, even we will bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them.

(Alma 24:12–13, 15–16; compare Isa. 2:4)

The Anti-Nephi-Lehis thus buried their swords as a sign of the covenant and a testimony before God that “rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness they would labor abundantly with their hands” (Alma 24:18). This covenant was the result of a sense of familial

relationship even with their enemies, emphasized by the repeated reference to their enemies as “brothers.” The Anti-Nephi-Lehis had a profound respect for their common Father and their shared humanity that transcended national and even religious sectarian boundaries. They could not turn against their own people, especially because of their new religion, which required them to love humans, no matter to what side of a particular conflict they may belong. All are brothers and sisters. Particular conflicts pale in significance to that simple fact.

The strength of their commitment to the covenant and their sense of brotherhood was put to the ultimate challenge. Those among the Lamanites who had refused to embrace the new religion sought to replace the king over the Anti-Nephi-Lehis through force and war. When the Anti-Nephi-Lehis saw that the Lamanites were about to attack, they actually went to greet them and prostrated themselves before their enemies (see Alma 24:21). The Lamanites, surprised and confused, simply began to kill them. When the Lamanite warriors finally perceived that they were slaughtering a nonresistant and passive people, they were horrified by their acts. The Lamanites threw down their swords in disgust and remorse (see Alma 24:25). Indeed, many of the attacking Lamanites were so astonished and touched that they too were converted (see Alma 24:27).

Just War Paradigms

Mormon has a purpose in showing us this civil strife, in the middle of his history of the Nephite and Lamanite wars, because his narrative is not chiefly concerned with the issue of Lamanite versus Nephite, but rather with its place within his documentary of the self-destruction of his own people because of their wickedness. Mormon’s attitude toward war, revealed in the structure of his account as much as in what it says, has remarkable parallels to classical just war theory. Just war theory, elucidated primarily by Augustine and later developed by scholastics,²⁷ holds that some wars are necessary to prevent greater evils and Christians are therefore justified before God in participating in them. A just war is characterized by: (1) just cause of defense against an unprovoked aggressor; (2) just intent of restoring peace; (3) just means or use of force only necessary to restore the peace; and (4) war as a last resort engaged only when negotiation, arbitration, compromise, and all other peaceable paths fail. Slaughter and destruction of an enemy’s civilization are forbidden.

Mormon’s very civilization was threatened by the Lamanites, but the real threat in Mormon’s view was the iniquity of his own people.

Mormon was preoccupied with the intent of his people in engaging the Lamanites in war. Mormon hoped that the previous slaughter of his people would cause them to rely on the Lord, but he lost all hope when he saw that the sorrow of his people was “the sorrowing of the damned.” Mormon sorrowed for the fallen of his people, but his sorrow was inconsolable because he saw “that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually” (Morm. 2:13–15). Nevertheless, Mormon was willing to lead his people as long as they were justified in their cause. He urged them to enter battle with just intent, to “fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes” when they were attacked by the Lamanites (Morm. 2:23). He was willing to prepare his people for defense of their lands (see Morm. 3:4–6). As long as the Nephite posture was defensive and for the purpose of restoring peace to their land, Mormon was willing to lead them in battle and they were successful against the Lamanites (see Morm. 3:8; compare 2:9, 25–26).

Mormon refused to participate in war with his people when they sought revenge and adopted an aggressive posture. When the Nephites had successfully waged war against the Lamanites, they began to boast of their own strength and to seek revenge for their numerous casualties (see Morm. 3:9, 14). They had completely abandoned trust in God and sought to ensure their position through weapons of war. Even when the Nephites gained temporary victory, Mormon was without hope because “the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves” (Morm. 2:26). Notwithstanding Mormon’s love for his people, he would not join them “because of their wickedness and abominations” when they swore to take the offensive against their enemies (Morm. 3:10–11). This war was not between just and unjust nations; it was a struggle between two depraved nations seeking mutual destruction. Mormon thus became a conscientious objector because his people had forgotten God and because they were not justified when they sought revenge and military power.

Mormon was persuaded to lead his people once again, however, when he saw his people “driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols” (Morm. 4:21; see also 5:1). Mormon expressed his predicament in terms of hopelessness throughout his account:

I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions.

But behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.
(Morm. 5:1–2)

Mormon witnessed the destruction of his people. He saw the slain of his people, their flesh and bones and blood left to rot on the face of the earth. His pains for this people are evident in his record, and his words of warning echo in our ears because they are all too familiar—we can relate only too well. His lonely and terrible soliloquy spoken to his slaughtered people is a terrible warning to us:

O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord!
O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!
Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.
O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen!
But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.
(Morm. 6:17–20)

Mormon's record, then, is a warning for us. It treats wars because we can learn from them and, perhaps, just maybe, escape their fate. We come to appreciate the Book of Mormon because we are shown ourselves in what has been and in what we have become—a warlike people trusting in our own military might rather than God and preoccupied with our economic well-being. Like that of Jeremiah and even Thucydides, Mormon's concern is fundamentally moral; the issue of who wins is secondary to the reasons for the loss. The decisive question is not which side of the human conflict you belong to, but whether you keep your covenants with God. The issue is not between good and evil societies. There can be no political or social correlation of absolutely good or bad, since both sides have a share of low and high moments; both face the same fate. Neither the Lamanites nor the Nephites were identified with consistently good behavior. Quite the contrary, Mormon's theme is how quick *both* sides are to forget God (see Alma 46:8; Morm. 3:9), to allow themselves to be caught up in pleasing ideologies—the ideologies of kingship, Lamanite revisionist history, Nephite self-righteousness, sophistry, materialism, legalism, self-seeking gain, and chauvinistic politics—all frauds. The externalization of evil is self-delusion.

We often forget, too, that both sides are indebted to the same God for their well-being. Though the Book of Mormon is written from

the perspective of God's dealings with one nation, like the Old Testament, there is nevertheless the unmistakable message that God seeks to persuade all nations to return to him. Thus, Mormon is also at pains to chronicle the Nephite missions to convert the Lamanites and to include the message also of Lamanite prophets. God must be the God of all.

Mormon's message is that the crux of life is whether people are continuing to repent, whether they can hear the voice of the Lord calling them. One of the tests of that repentance, however, is whether we are willing to trust in God rather than armaments, whether we believe he will preserve us in a nuclear age, whether we will value God over material goods, and whether we will value the welfare of persons more than belonging to the upper class. In contrast to the spiritual decadence often portrayed in Nephite society is the marvelous well-being, though not necessarily ease, of those who keep their covenants with God. In contrast to Mormon's slaughtered people are those who witnessed and lived following Christ's visit: "There could not be a happier people" (4 Ne. 1:16). One of the ironies of the Book of Mormon is that the Lamanites, whose lives we see, incidentally, only through Nephite eyes, when given the chance, show a remarkable willingness to repent. Many of them joined the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, the pacifists, as evidence of their total conversion (see Alma 62:27–29). The choice given under the covenant, then, is clear even if who is good and evil is not: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life" (2 Ne. 10:23).

NOTES

Edwin Brown Firmage is a professor of law, University of Utah College of Law. He writes: "Thanks to Stephen Clark and Blake Ostler, my colleagues, friends, and research assistants for their help in the research that went into this article; to my son, Ed, for his help with Old Testament sources and insights; and to my secretary and friend, Lora Lee Petersen, for her help in preparing the manuscript."

¹Group of Experts, Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations, "Effects of the Use of Nuclear Weapons," in *Toward Nuclear Disarmament and Global Security: A Search for Alternatives*, ed. B. H. Weston (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), 29–56.

²Detailing these and other effects of nuclear weapons, see United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946); Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Office of Technology Assessment, Congress of the United States, *The Effects of Nuclear War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 1979).

Physicians are becoming increasingly concerned about the devastating effects of nuclear war. The seminal and still key research in the area of the medical consequences of nuclear war is Frank R. Ervin et al., "The Medical Consequences of Thermonuclear War," *New England Journal of Medicine* 266 (1962): 1127-37; see also, Howard H. Hiatt, "The Final Epidemic: Prescriptions for Prevention," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 252 (3 August 1984): 635-44.

³Carl Sagan, "Nuclear Winter: Global Consequences of Multiple Nuclear Explosions," *Science* 222 (23 December 1983): 128; Paul R. Ehrlich et al., "Long-Term Biological Consequences of Nuclear War," *Science* 222 (23 December 1983): 1293-1300. According to these studies, even a relatively limited nuclear exchange would ignite tremendous fires whose toxic plumes of black smoke would shroud the Northern Hemisphere in a pall of darkness for weeks or months. The physical environment of the earth would instantly become inhospitable to virtually all life forms; freezing, starvation, sickness, irradiation, death—and perhaps extinction—would follow.

⁴J. Reuben Clark, Jr., was a counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But prior to that time he had served as solicitor to the Department of State and eventually as under-secretary. In those roles he negotiated a number of arms control and disarmament agreements for the United States. He reproached those who attacked such agreements as unenforceable and ineffective in eliminating some of the causes of war:

It will not do for us to think these treaties may be dismissed with a contemptuous smirk that being merely treaties, they mean nothing, are made only to be broken, that they are valueless. This is the doctrine of despair and must not be propagated. For what, I ask you, is the alternative? If nations may not establish by mutual undertaking the rules and principles by which they are to be governed; if the sovereign plighted faith of mighty peoples is hereafter to be freely and without censure flaunted; if in short nations may not trust one another, then I say to you the world is lost. (Edwin Brown Firmage and Christopher L. Blakesley, "J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: Law and International Order," in *J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: Diplomat and Statesman*, ed. Ray Hillam [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973], 112-13)

⁵Edwin Brown Firmage, "Allegiance and Stewardship: Holy War, Just War and the Mormon Tradition in the Nuclear Age," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Spring 1983): 47-62. As was his custom, Brigham Young minced no words on the subject when he said:

Much of the skill, ingenuity, and ability of the Christian nations are now devoted to manufacturing instruments of death. May we be saved from the effects of them! As I often tell you, if we are faithful, the Lord will fight our battles much better than we can ourselves. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 10 February 1861, 26 vols. [Liverpool: William Budge, 1854-86], 8:325)

Lest one hypocritically believe that the prophets condemned only other countries, and that America's participation in the arms race is justified, it is well to recall the following words of President J. Reuben Clark:

Thus we in America are now deliberately searching out and developing the most savage, murderous means of exterminating peoples that Satan can plant in our minds. We do it not only shamelessly, but with a boast. God will not forgive us of this. If we are to avoid extermination, if the world is not to be wiped out, we must find some way to curb the fiendish ingenuity of men who have apparently no fear of God, man or the devil, and who are willing to plot and plan and invent instrumentalities that will wipe out all the flesh of the earth. . . . [We] Americans wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilian population with the atom bomb in Japan. . . . [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, . . . it actually drew from the nation at large a general approval of this fiendish butchery. (J. Reuben Clark, Conference Report, 5 October 1946, 89)

The modern LDS First Presidency has not retreated in substance or in tone from those earlier prophetic exhortations:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Lord's teaching. (Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 [June 1976]: 6)

The 1980 Christmas and 1981 Easter messages from the First Presidency sounded similar warnings, and the emphasis on this topic three times within six months through this formal means of pronouncement represents an extraordinary concern. Finally, in the heat of the MX missile controversy, the First Presidency spoke unequivocally against the nuclear arms race:

We repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear

weaponry. (The First Presidency, "Statement of the First Presidency on Basing of the MX Missile," *Church News*, 9 May 1981, 2)

⁶Frank Moore Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. A. Altmann, *Studies and Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 3:11–30.

⁷Discussed in Patrick D. Miller, "Faith and Ideology in the Old Testament," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 464–76, especially 470–71.

⁸See B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1967).

⁹See M. Weippert, "Heiliger Krieg in Israel u. Assyrien," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1972): 460–93.

¹⁰See D. J. McCarthy, "The Inauguration of Monarchy in Israel," *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 401–12.

¹¹Much of the treatment of Isaiah's mission is dependent on John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 291–93.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Terence Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 108ff.

¹⁴See Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1926). Perhaps the closest English connotation of *hesed* is "mercy." (See Josh. 2:12; Hosea 4:1, 6:4, 10:12, 12:6; Micah 6:8, 7:18; Zech. 7:19. "With an everlasting love have I loved you / therefore I have prolonged loyalty [*hesed*] to you" [Jer. 31:36]).

¹⁵See Joachim Jeremias, Abba. *Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen, West Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966); R. Beanvery, "Mon Père et votre Père, Refus du père et paternité de Dieu," *Le Vie* 104 (1974): 75–88; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 170–71.

¹⁶See W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, eds. and trans., commenting on Matthew 21–28, the Passion narrative, 61–63. *Matthew*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971).

¹⁷"One soul cannot be due to two *masters*—God and Caesar. And yet Moses carried a rod, and Aaron wore a buckle, and John (Baptist) is girt with leather, and Joshua the son of Nun leads a line of march; and the People warred: if it pleases you to sport with the subject. But how will a *Christian man* war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? (Matt. 26:52; John 18:36). For albeit soldiers had come unto John, and had received the formula of their rule; albeit, likewise, a centurion had abelieved; *still* the Lord afterward, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier. No dress is lawful among us, if assigned to any unlawful action." ("On Idolatry," *The Apology of Tertullian* XIX, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writers of the Fathers down to 325 A.D.* [American ed., Buffalo, 1886; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969])

¹⁸General Conference 1963, as quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 414.

¹⁹See Richard L. Bushman, "The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution," in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, ed. Noel Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Monograph, 1982), 189–211; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), 169–80; George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Monograph, 1981), 246–62.

²⁰J. Wingaards, "The Dramatization of Salvific History in the Deuteronomic Schools," in *Oudtestamentische Studien* (Leiden, West Germany: E. J. Brill, 1969), 52; Bernard W. Anderson, "Exodus and Covenant in Second Isaiah and Prophetic Tradition," in *Magnalia Dei*, 339–60.

²¹See Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 254–55.

²²Bushman, "The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution," 196.

²³1 Sam. 28:6, 30–37ff; 2 Sam. 5:19, 23.

²⁴Compare Deut. 11:25–28; 23:5–6; 30:5–9, 19.

²⁵These words recur in the same formulaic language when the Nephites are compelled to war (see Alma 43:9, 26, 30, 45; 46:12, 20; 48:14; 58:10; Morm. 2:24).

²⁶See Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 85–100.

²⁷*Ibid.*