

Can Nations Love Their Enemies?: An LDS Theology of Peace

By Eugene England

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THE CALL OF Christ is clear: “Love your enemies.” But it is so difficult to do that, even in our own families and communities, that many have supposed that such a command could not possibly apply to *nations*—and few national leaders, Christian or not, have seriously tried to persuade their people to obey it. But Mormon leaders have insisted that the command fits every situation, that it is the only way to peace in any context. In their 1981 Christmas message the LDS First Presidency wrote:

To all who seek a resolution to conflict, be it a misunderstanding between individuals or an international difficulty among nations, we commend the counsel of the Prince of Peace, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44–45). This principle of loving one another as Jesus Christ loves us will bring peace to the individual, to the home and beyond, even to the nations and to the world.¹

That statement is part of a long LDS scriptural and prophetic tradition of response to the perennial human problem of war. Does that tradition provide a theology of peace, clear and consistent in theory and tested in practice, that could be useful to us in this violent time? I think so.

Much of the Book of Mormon deals with violence, and at first glance the various accounts may seem contradictory. There are the “people of Ammon,” who provide the most impressive example of rigorous group pacifism I can find in history or literature: They make a covenant to die rather than shed blood, bury their weapons in the ground, and then allow themselves to be massacred rather than break their pledge. However, only 25 years later these same pacifists send 2000 of their sons to war, with a church leader turned military man at their head. The great prophet Mormon, the editor of the book which bears his name, was a military leader from a very young age. Mormon even named his son, who also became a soldier, after

Moroni, a general who had lived 400 years before. And Mormon includes, as the last 21 chapters of Alma (over 10 percent of the Book of Mormon), an extensively detailed and appreciative account of General Moroni's conduct of divinely approved warfare.

It is possible to make a list of LDS scriptures in which God allows war—and match it with another where conflict is forbidden. This may be confusing, but as Hugh Nibley has written:

The contradiction is only apparent, for if one examines the passages on both sides throughout the scriptures, they fall clearly into two categories: general principles and special instances. The verses forbidding conflict are of a general and universal nature, while those which countenance it all refer to exceptional cases.²

Still, the example of the people of Ammon seems like a special case, precisely because it is so unparalleled, and it is clear elsewhere that in LDS theology what they do is not an automatic result or unqualified expectation for everyone after conversion. But an *ideal principle* is established, what I would term “effective pacifism”: we are called to do whatever we can that will genuinely create peace, even sacrifice our lives. Mormon clearly views those conscientiously capable of the pacifist decision with great admiration, even as models. He writes, in his characteristic manner of teaching a lesson to his readers, “Thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to know the truth they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin” {Alma 24:19}. And he reports the judgment of Ammon, the Nephite missionary who had converted these people, that they had reached an ethical level superior to his own Nephites:

For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of an enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren.

And now behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. (Alma 25:32,33.)

Without ignoring the high costs (over 1000 slain), the account also provides unique evidence that the pacifist ethic, which to most of us seems merely idealistic, actually works. When the attackers see that these former warlike associates “would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside . . . but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword,” they are moved to forbear and indeed many are themselves converted, “for they were stung for the murders which they had committed” (Alma 24:25).

The Nephites, who do not have “so great love,” take these pacifists under their protection and are later directed by God to take up arms against the Lamanites. The theological position developed is that known in Christian tradition as the doctrine of a “just war,” which maintains that shedding the blood of an enemy can be justified by the rightness of one's cause and the moral restraint of one's methods. Early in the series of battles, Mormon reviews the specific conditions which justified the Nephites in going to war:

They were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church . . . the Lord said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies. (Alma 43:45–46).

The emphasis is on purely defensive war, carried to the point of consistent refusal to annihilate defeated Lamanite armies or even to insist on unconditional surrender. Again and again as soon as Moroni obtains some advantage in a battle he refuses to press it but sends the message, “We do not desire to slay you” (Alma 44:1 or “We will forbear shedding your blood” (Alma 52:34) and asks for surrender—but only the surrender involved in the Lamanites returning to their own lands and promising not to attack again.

The major constraint is against bloodthirstiness. From a divine perspective, certain of resurrection and immortality for all and thus most concerned for the state of the *soul*, it seems that shedding blood can be justified under certain conditions—but delighting in it never. Mormon’s great admiration for Moroni is based in good part on the latter’s ability to resist, amid all the passions of war that Mormon knew well, the bloodlust that seems to naturally afflict those who train for war and attack other human beings.

Mormon knew how quickly a whole people could be afflicted with the appetite for violence. He saw his own nation decline from being a “civil and delightsome people” until they became “without principle and past feeling; . . . [T]hey have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually” (Moroni 9:12,20,18,5) At one point Mormon leads his people to a great victory following many defeats. But when they then want to take the offensive and “avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies, Mormon refuses to participate and stands instead, under the Lord’s direction, as “an idle witness” to his people’s deserved destruction (Mormon 3:19).

This sounds like an entirely situational ethic. Do the examples cancel each other out? Is the one example of pacifism an aberration? I think not. The especially unified and religiously motivated people of Ammon were moved by their former experiences with violence to covenant upon conversion that under no circumstances, however just, would they shed blood again, and they were capable of enduring the price by allowing themselves to be slaughtered. But a generation later the whole Nephite nation was in danger of extermination—and with them the sacred records and spark of righteousness on the American continent that the Lord needed to save not only the Nephites but eventually their enemies the Lamanites and even modern people who would read their record. In this situation, and with a people not as unified and capable of disciplined pacifism as the people of Ammon, the Lord directed waging a just war, with severe constraints on methods and spirit.

But whatever specific response to the varied circumstances and the contrasting values—or the inspired direction of a prophet—may require in a particular situation, the underlying principles do not change: Ultimate concern must be for the character

and salvation of those involved rather than apparent right or wrong or justice; revenge is never right, however “justified”; vengeance and bloodthirstiness, very natural dangers, even in a just war, must be vigorously resisted, even at great risk, by fighting purely defensively and not insisting on unconditional surrender. As Nibley summarizes the principle, “In the end the most desperate military situation imaginable is still to be met with the spirit of peace and love.”

The prophet Joseph Smith, translator of the Book of Mormon, which was explicitly intended to provide essential lessons for modern man, understood this general principle well. In 1833, as recorded in D&C 98, the Lord taught Joseph a distinction between what is justified and what is best: Even in circumstances which would support waging a just war against our enemies, if we have sufficient courage and love to stay with general principles, there are special rewards, including the promise that the Lord will intervene on our behalf:

And again, if your enemy shall smite you the third time, and you bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold. . . . And then, if he shall come upon you or your children ... I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands. And *then* if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children’s children (D&C 98:16–17; emphasis added.)

Such a vision has been held to consistently by LDS prophets for the subsequent 150 years: This is Brigham Young in 1859, speaking in a passionate satire of nationalistic propaganda that could be applied directly to *both sides* in the recent Falklands debacle and also in the Lebanon disaster:

Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder; but suppose that one family should rise up against another and begin to slay them, would they not be taken up and tried for murder: And why not nations that rise up and slay each other in a scientific way be equally guilty of murder? “But observe the martial array—how splendid! See the furious war horses with the glittering trappings. Then the honour and the glory and pride of the reigning king must be sustained, and the strength and power and wealth of the nation displayed in some way; and what better way than to make war upon neighbouring nations under some slight pretext?” Does it justify the slaying of men, women, and children that otherwise would have remained at home in peace, because a great army is doing the work? No! The guilty will be damned for it.³

In the twentieth century the LDS version of a just war has been articulated in direct response to the two World Wars. In April 1917, right after the U.S. officially declared war on Germany, President Joseph F. Smith spoke in General Conference against the tendency of Americans to allow patriotism to lead them to madness in time of war, exhorting the Saints to retain their full sense of brotherhood with the Germans living in this country and admonishing those called to fight in the war to “do it with an eye single to the accomplishment of the good that is aimed to be accomplished, and not with a bloodthirsty desire to kill and to destroy.”⁴

Twenty-five years later, at the General Conference following Pearl Harbor,

David O. McKay, of the First Presidency, outlined the conditions under which defensive war is justified, emphasizing carefully the limitations:

Such a condition, however, is not a real or fancied insult given by one nation to another. When this occurs proper reparation may be made by mutual understanding, apology, or by arbitration . . . *nor is war justified in an attempt to enforce a new order of government*, or even to impel others to a particular form of worship, *however better the government* or eternally true the principles of the enforced religion may be.⁵

J. Reuben Clark read a statement of the First Presidency at that same conference which explored at great length the dilemma of those on various sides of a conflict who are called by their governments to fight and possibly shed blood. I sense the anguish the leaders felt as they tried to assuage the anguish of Mormon soldiers serving opposing governments, even fighting each other. Yet they seem determined to make no compromise with the general principles we have been examining in the scriptures and to make clear that moral responsibility cannot be avoided:

The Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes. . . .

But the Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord Himself has told us to befriend “that law which is the constitutional law of the land” (D&C 98:6).

. . . When, therefore, *constitutional law, obedient to these principles*, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. . . . It would be a cruel God that would punish His children as moral sinners for acts done by them as the *innocent instrumentalities* of a sovereign whom He had told them to obey and *whose will they were powerless to resist*.⁶

Those “powerless to resist” are innocent, but the First Presidency recognizes that to whatever degree any participant *is* able to be responsible—either as a leader who brings on the conflict or a soldier who can resist an unjust government or who indulges in hatred even in a just cause—he is accountable as a sinner:

There is an eternal law that rules war and those who engage in it. It was given when, Peter having struck off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, Jesus reprovved him, saying: “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52). The Savior thus laid down a *general principle upon which He placed no limitations as to time, place, cause, or people involved*. . . . This is a universal law, for force always begets force . . . it is the law of the unrighteous and wicked, but it operates against the righteous who may be involved. . . . That in their work of destruction [innocent participants in war] will be striking at their brethren will not be held against them. That sin, as Moroni

of old said, is to the condemnation of those who sit in their places of power in a state of thoughtless stupor, those rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, have put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control.⁷

Mormon leaders did not hesitate to severely criticize leaders of the United States as well as those of other countries for ignoring such general principles and perpetrating the brutalities of the Second World War. This is J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency speaking in General Conference just after the war:

As the crowning savagery of the 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. . . . Military men are now saying that the atom bomb was a mistake. It was more than that; it was a world tragedy. . . . And the worst of this atomic bomb tragedy is not that not only did the people of the United States not rise up in protest against this savagery, not only did it not shock us to read of this wholesale destruction of men, women, and children, and cripples, but that it actually drew from the nation at large a general approval of this fiendish butchery.⁸

In much the same spirit, the First Presidency in December 1945 issued a letter to each member of the Utah Congressional delegation, outlining 17 reasons for opposing the “compulsory universal military training” being proposed by the Truman administration. Such a law, they wrote, would “teach our sons not only the way to kill but also, in too many cases, the desire to kill, thereby increasing lawlessness and disorder.” The ways of war, they argued, are “wholly un-American.” The creation of a military caste would be a threat to the “equality and unity which always characterize the citizenry of a republic.” An immense standing army, the “creation of a great war machine” would be a temptation to ambitious dictators intent on the destruction of freedom: “The possession of great military power always breeds thirst for domination, for empire, and for a rule by might not right.” The First Presidency warned, in terms exactly prophetic of what has happened in the ensuing 40 years, that the building of “a huge armed establishment” would contradict any protestations of peace and in fact encourage other nations to follow a similar militaristic course,

so placing upon the peoples of the earth crushing burdens of taxation that with their present tax load will hardly be bearable, and that will gravely threaten our social, economic, and governmental systems. . . . We shall make of the whole earth one great military camp whose separate armies, headed by war-minded officers, will never rest till they are at one another’s throats in what will be the most terrible contest the world has ever seen. . . . What this country needs and what the world needs, is a will for peace, not war.⁹

LDS leaders have not been content to rest on the doctrine of a just war and patriotic submission to authority that the World Wars seemed to require. There is

clearly in their minds a higher law, which stands in judgment even on the most justifiable efforts of men to defend themselves with weapons. In 1948 Joseph Fielding Smith reviewed for Church members the “law of forgiveness and retribution” presented in D&C 98 and also the radical example of perfect pacifism of the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon. Elder Smith insisted on direct applicability of those standards to present day nations. “This may to the ordinary human being be a hard law to follow,” he wrote, “but nevertheless it is the word of the Lord. . . . Because [the people of Ammon] refused to take up arms to defend themselves, but would rather lay down their lives than shed blood in their own defense, they brought many of their enemies to repentance and to the kingdom of God. This is the doctrine of Jesus as taught in his Sermon on the Mount. If ail peoples would accept this doctrine there could be no war.”¹⁰

Of course, *all* people *do not* accept that doctrine, but LDS scriptures and prophets have insisted that the individual retains responsibility to live the doctrine, even unilaterally. The Declaration of Belief Regarding Governments and Laws (D&C 134), adopted by the Church in 1835, states that “governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man” and that God “holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them.” Men are obliged to “sustain and uphold” their governments “*while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights,*” first among those being “free exercise of conscience.”

The commitment of LDS leaders to such principles of individual responsibility was underscored during the Vietnam War. Some young Latter-day Saints, convinced that their government was asking them to participate in an unjust war, applied for exemption as conscientious objectors. These young men generally faced draft boards that assumed the Mormon emphasis on national loyalty precluded Mormons from conscientious objection. When these LDS men wrote to President McKay about their standing, they received this reply:

As the brethren understand, the existing law provides that men who have conscientious objection may be excused from combat service.

There would seem to be no objection, therefore, to a man availing himself on a personal basis of the exemptions provided by law.¹¹

Though this certainly did not assume pacifism as *the Mormon position*, the First Presidency clearly placed individual agency to live by the general principle over specific national loyalty. And the letter successfully supported applications of Mormon conscientious objectors.

But the most specific and powerful call to Americans and Mormons to live by conscience and higher law was made in a remarkable prophetic address by President Spencer W. Kimball in 1976. The address was timed to coincide with the American Bicentennial celebrations, when patriotic fervor and national self-satisfaction were at a height. President Kimball accused Americans, specifically pointing to his own Mormon people, of worshiping the false gods of material possessions and pleasures and of relying on the arm of flesh, the carnal security of military armaments, rather than trusting the God of Israel and living his law:

We are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord. We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our

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

We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (see 2 Nephi 1–7)—or he will fight our battles for us.¹²

President Kimball then articulated precisely the central pragmatic concept of the LDS theology of peace—that enemies cannot be defeated, they can only be changed into other than enemies by true principles of love, and God will provide the power to do that if we will trust him and pay the price of trying things his way:

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative; to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.¹³

President Kimball has, of course, continued to preach this doctrine, notably in the message last Christmas which insists that nations as well as individuals can learn to love their enemies and also in the earlier statement opposing basing of the MX missile system in the western United States.

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic and *a denial of the very essence of that gospel*, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.¹⁴

Let me now briefly apply this theology in judgment on some recent wars and suggest how it might guide us in the future decisions of our country and our individual consciences. In general, the extraordinary prevalence and horror of wars since 1914 seems to be a result of the combination of modern technology with mediocre or actually sinful leaders, those David O. McKay identified in 1942 as “rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, have put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control.” Certainly in the first World War, “the war no one wanted,” mutual hate and miscalculation by inept leaders initiated the conflict, and lack of rational ability to adjust prolonged the horror: The Austrian, German, and Russian leaders, seeing themselves as honorable and superior and their opponents as inferior and diabolical, escalated their hostile behavior, ignored the reactions of those around them, and led their nations to destruction. French and English leaders reviled the “Huns,” persisted in committing such follies as cavalry charges against machine guns, and destroyed a whole generation of their young manhood. Even

after victory the peace settlement imposed at Versailles was a “victor’s peace.” Its vengeful humiliations rankled in the German spirit and added fuel to the post war economic disasters that helped bring Hitler to power (and which we—merrily dancing the Charleston—did nothing to prevent as we had the good sense to do after the Second World War).

The main lesson of the “Great War” of the forties is that even a just war can be conducted immorally or ineffectively when judged by larger ends or higher principles than merely winning the war. The United States won the peace to some extent with the Marshall Plan, one of the few acts between belligerent nations in this century that (despite its inception in pragmatic anti-Communism) seems entirely consistent with Christ’s teachings. This effort brought an economic recovery to our former enemies that continues to have lasting benefits as they have now become our friends and helpful competitors—certainly one example of President Kimball’s injunction and promise “to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.” But we also brought great and prolonged suffering and created the specter of nuclear destruction that continues to haunt us, because we let the end justify the means and gradually accepted bombing of *civilian* populations as a weapon. Lewis Mumford has documented¹⁵ how we slowly surrendered to our own military leaders and turned from abhorrence of the German practice of such bombing at the beginning of the war to retaliation in kind, and finally to acceptance without a qualm of the obliteration of Dresden and Berlin and Hiroshima—a moral blindness President J. Reuben Clark so graphically denounced. And I am convinced that by our vengeful insistence on “unconditional surrender” we prolonged the war, created a situation that seemed to justify the atomic bomb, and helped ensure Russian dominance in Eastern Europe.

That same blindness to the costs and impermanence of a humiliatingly imposed victor’s peace or a devastating total defeat led to serious mistakes in Korea. I find John G. Stoessinger’s analysis in *Why Nations Go to War* convincing.¹⁶ The decision to repel aggression was justifiable and conducted with initial restraint. But when victory seemed assured, General MacArthur and then President Truman were tempted to offensive action—first the crossing of the 38th parallel into North Korea and then a drive toward the Yalu River border with China. Proceeding without respect for either the United Nations or Communist China, MacArthur provoked Chinese intervention that probably prolonged the war another 18 months and turned it into one of the bloodiest wars of this century: 34,000 Americans dead, perhaps 1.5 million Korean and another 1.5 million Chinese casualties. And the war that might have, with continued restraint, stopped an aggression without lasting bitterness and enhanced the United Nations, ended indecisively. Two Koreas emerged—both fully armed, hostile dictatorships—and the United Nations was seriously weakened as a neutral arbitrator by being drawn onto the side of the victim of aggression who in turn became the aggressor.

A similar temptation seems to be afflicting Israel: It has long been the *victim* of irrational hatred, terrorism, and aggression but now seems to lack the humility and courage to resist inflicting on others what has been inflicted on itself. All its heroic resistance and rolling back of its enemies has not bought Israel the security it craves.

In fact the one clear lesson seems to be that the victor's peace imposed on Egypt in 1967, when Egypt lost the Sinai, continued to fester until a near *defeat* of Israel and then a more equitable ceasefire finally helped lead to negotiations and a peace treaty. And *that* required a unilateral act of courageous love to break the impasse, when Anwar Sadat risked everything to reach out to his enemies.

But the lesson seems lost, and Israel, in the name of avenging a few hundred of its people killed by Palestinian rockets and terrorism, has killed thousands of Lebanese as well as Palestinians and probably incurred the lasting enmity of entire new groups and a whole new generation. Even if it had completely destroyed the Palestinians in Beirut, hundreds of thousands of enemies will continue elsewhere until there is someone with the largeness of mind and heart to sacrifice Israeli-occupied land and temporarily risk Israeli security enough to provide a permanent solution to Palestinian homelessness and consequent resentment—to turn enemies into something else and thus bring the only real security and peace.

But we Americans cannot be proud of our own record, especially in Vietnam. That war is still too close to us perhaps to analyze sensibly, but let me risk a few judgments in the light of the theology I have described. On the basis of the evidence available,¹⁷ I believe that in Vietnam we not only failed to act in Christian love so as to turn enemies into friends but we turned potential friends into bitter enemies. Ho Chi Minh led his people as our ally against the Japanese and looked to us as an example and champion in his legitimate quest for independence from French colonialism—but in vain. And after he defeated the French, if we had sustained his efforts under the Geneva accords of 1954 to hold national elections that our own leaders admitted would have brought him legitimately to power, Vietnam could still have emerged as a united, certainly Communist, country, but probably as friendly to us and progressive as China is now. But our anti-Communist panic led us twice to betray Ho Chi Minh in favor of colonial or minority governments that we preferred. We became increasingly involved in the ensuing civil war and finally, directly contrary to the principles for a just war outlined by David O. McKay, waged an offensive war, far from our borders, “in an attempt to enforce a new order of government,” against the majority will, on the Vietnamese.

I feel certain that Communism is on balance a disaster for most of those brought under its sway, especially because of the massive curtailment of individual freedom (continuing defections from Vietnam indicate that even former Viet Cong are learning this), and it may well be that for many individuals it is better to be dead than to be Red. But the very principle of agency so endangered by Communism as to make that true requires that *we not make such a decision for other people*, as it seems we tried to do in Vietnam.

What, finally, of our failure in the long cold war with Russia, with its corollary nuclear escalation, that now costs hundreds of billions of dollars a year and seems to lead towards an abyss. The history of efforts to control atomic weapons and then to disarm is one of irrational mistrust between the superpowers—continued unwillingness of each to exhibit the faith in the other that it demands the other to have in it. Even the farsighted Baruch plan, designed for international control in 1946 when the U.S. still had an atomic monopoly, insensitively placed Russia in an inferior

position by denying it the right to continue its own research and by requiring its economic submission—to an international body it did not trust. There followed a long struggle between the U.S. and Russia over which would come first, disarmament or mechanisms for inspection and control. Stoessinger describes the dilemma:

Though both powers accepted the principle of simultaneous disarmament and control, they were unable to translate it into practice.

*Each side continued to postpone making the greater sacrifice, and instead encouraged the opponent to take the first step.*¹⁸

The story is almost amusing, like one of little boys with fragile egos quarreling—except that this failure of imagination and courage not only now costs many times what it would take to solve world hunger and bring adequate medical care and education to all in the world who need it, but it has produced a world of potential nuclear accidents, of proliferation to nations (even terrorist groups) capable of nuclear blackmail, and of weapon building that gathers momentum in a way that points only to catastrophe.

Beyond a radical critique of most of the conduct during conflict of most contemporary governments, including our own, LDS theology offers a guide to better conduct. I believe its fundamental message is that “effective pacifism,” even unilateral disarmament if accompanied by massive efforts to extend intelligent, creative, tough-minded but loving help to other nations, particularly our chief “enemy” the Soviet Union, is the *ideal* solution—the only one that could make our enemies no longer enemies and that would make us fully worthy of God’s assistance and protection. But since we are not, with our allies or even as a single nation, capable of such unified love of our enemies and faith in God rather than the arm of flesh, a compromise solution, based on the restraints of a purely defensive, just war must be worked out. That solution must be guided, however, by the principles inherent in the ideal solution, which stands in judgment on anything less.

A first step would be to work toward loving our enemies by knowing them as humans like ourselves, by resisting the usual mindless stereotyping of Russians as universally crude, deceitful monsters intent on our enslavement and ourselves as noble, generous saviors fit to release them from their enslavement. This means resisting the demagoguery of press and politicians. It means studying Russian and Chinese and Eastern European cultures and languages, visiting behind the Iron Curtain—but getting to know individual people in depth rather than superficially. If only five percent of our monstrous military budgets were spent on exchange of peoples between our nations for such study we could send a million persons each year (and as a result be motivated to find ways to reduce those budgets much more than five percent). It is likely that we can only gradually be weaned away from placing our faith in weapons and in an escalating balance of terror based only in paranoid actions and reactions. But we must try.

Loving our enemies means, I believe, that we would resist at every point the idea increasingly promoted by our present government that we should attempt to collapse the Russian (or Polish) economy as a means to bringing about revolution and a government more to our liking. In the first place, it is highly unlikely we could succeed, given the resilience of the peoples involved and the military power of their

governments, and it is even more unlikely on the evidence of history that the chaos resulting from such a collapse would bring to power a less repressive government. We would be much better advised to look to our own economy, which may be in as great danger as the Russian—and to our basic principles, which call us to *help* not hurt our enemies, so they will no longer be our enemies.

Perhaps, given the realities of the cold war, we must work mainly through private people to people agencies to love our enemies. Some of us, mainly in Utah, conducted a campaign this past year called Food for Poland, cooperating closely with the Polish American Congress and Catholic Relief Services. Our success seems small compared to the need. But we did help send perhaps \$1 million in food and medicine (\$100,000 worth given by the LDS church and much of the rest by Mormons), and in visits to the Polish community in Chicago and to Poland itself we felt the power of love changing people's hearts and saw that our efforts brought hope and courage to people far out of proportion to the physical help.

President Reagan cut off \$800 million in aid to Poland for 1982. Perhaps twice that much (less than one percent of our military budget), invested in 1981 in an imaginative, well-designed Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Poland—and implemented through Solidarity and the Catholic Church—might well have obviated the need for martial law, bound us in friendship to that country, and provided the crucial resources for their remarkable ‘renewal’ to continue. We may soon have another chance to do something like that, as the suffering this winter worsens and the Polish government seeks help, but I wonder if our leaders are planning for such positive measures. If we could be willing to help build *a genuinely neutral, still-socialist* but experimental and developing Poland, it might well be as acceptable to Russia as Finland is, and it would be a great example to other countries who might see how to develop greater freedoms without antagonizing Russia by seeming to threaten her national security—and thus could help to diversify the world from its present dangerous division.

To touch the heart of an enemy and heal division is difficult—among the most difficult and important of human duties. It requires risk, imaginative effort to overcome suspicion, hard-headed negotiation and calling to repentance at the right moment—followed by an increase of mercy and generosity. But each of us has had enough experience at the personal level to sense that it can be done and something of how it could be done between nations. For instance, it is impossible to judge precisely relative U.S.-Soviet strength: Which is better, our advantage in flexibility of delivery systems or their advantage in “throw weight”? In any event we each have sufficient power to destroy the other totally, many times over. And if the Soviets really have the nuclear superiority and the ambition to rule the world that some of our political leaders are claiming (as an excuse to escalate our own arms buildup), Russia would already have used that power to destroy or at least blackmail us. We should resist therefore the current obsession of our government to become exactly “equal” with Russia before we can seek a bilateral nuclear freeze or arms reduction. Both sides will *always* be able to use that argument—until doomsday. One side must have the courage to accept rough parity (such as I believe we now have), stop threatening and “catching up,” then trust in the basic principles of reducing enmity we

have reviewed, and act so as to entice the other side to do the same. Since we claim to be a Christian or at least morally superior nation, why shouldn't we be first? At the very least, we must resist any ambitions to "roll back" Communism through regaining nuclear superiority and threatening to launch a "winnable" nuclear war if the Soviets do not retreat. There is growing evidence that some in our government are pushing arms build-up because they have precisely those ambitions—a clear violation of President McKay's warning against offensive war.

If we are individually to assist in finding solutions, we must replace thoughtless fear of Communism with faith in Christ's commandments—in President Kimball's phrase, leave being "anti-enemy" and become "pro-kingdom of God." President McKay helped us look beyond systems to people and to principles of peace:

No matter how excellent [Nazism, Fascism, Communism, or Capitalism] may seem in the minds of their advocates, none will ameliorate the ills of mankind unless its operation in government be impregnated with the basic principles promulgated by the Savior of Men. On the contrary, even a defective economic system will produce good results if the men who direct it will be guided by the spirit of Christ.

Actuated by that spirit, leaders will think more of men than of the success of a system. Kindness, mercy, and justice will be substituted for hatred, suspicion, and greed. There is no road to universal peace, which does not lead to the heart of humanity.¹⁹

All our experience shows that in the course of arguments about equality, former injuries and injustices, who *deserves* what, none of us will see peace between nations. LDS teachings witness that it is only in treating our enemies with the respect and justice we want for ourselves—and then in mercy rather than retribution, in "perfect love" that "casteth out fear"—that the forces of peace can be released.

NOTES

1. *The Church News*, 19 December 1981, p. 2.
2. Hugh Nibley, "If There Must Needs Be Offense," *The Ensign* (July 1971):54.
3. *Journal of Discourses*, 16 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot. 1854–86), 7:137.
4. Joseph F. Smith, *Eighty-seventh Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City, 1917), p. 4.
5. David O. McKay, *One Hundred and Twelfth Annual Conference . . .* (Salt Lake City, 1942), p. 72; emphasis added.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
8. J. Reuben Clark, *One Hundred and Sixteenth Semi-Annual Conference. . .* (Salt Lake City, 1946), p.
9. *The Improvement Era* (February 1946):76–77.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, Second Series (Salt Lake City, 1947), p. 193.
11. Letter signed by Joseph Anderson for the First Presidency, January 1968, reprinted in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Spring 1968):8.

12. Spencer W. Kimball, "First Presidency Message: The False Gods We Worship," *The Ensign* (June 1976):6.
13. Ibid.
14. "LDS Church Leaders Oppose MX," *The Daily Universe*, May 1981. p. 1; emphasis added.
15. Lewis Mumford, "The Morals of Extermination," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 1959):38–44.
16. John C. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go To War* (New York, 1982), pp. 55–80.
17. Analysis and bibliography is available in Ray C. Hillam, Eugene England, and John Sorenson, "Vietnam: A Roundtable," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Winter 1967):69–100 (reading suggestions on p. 80).
18. Stoessinger, p. 219–220; emphasis added.
19. David O. McKay, *One Hundred and Fourteenth Semi-Annual Conference . . .* (Salt Lake City. 1944), p.

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