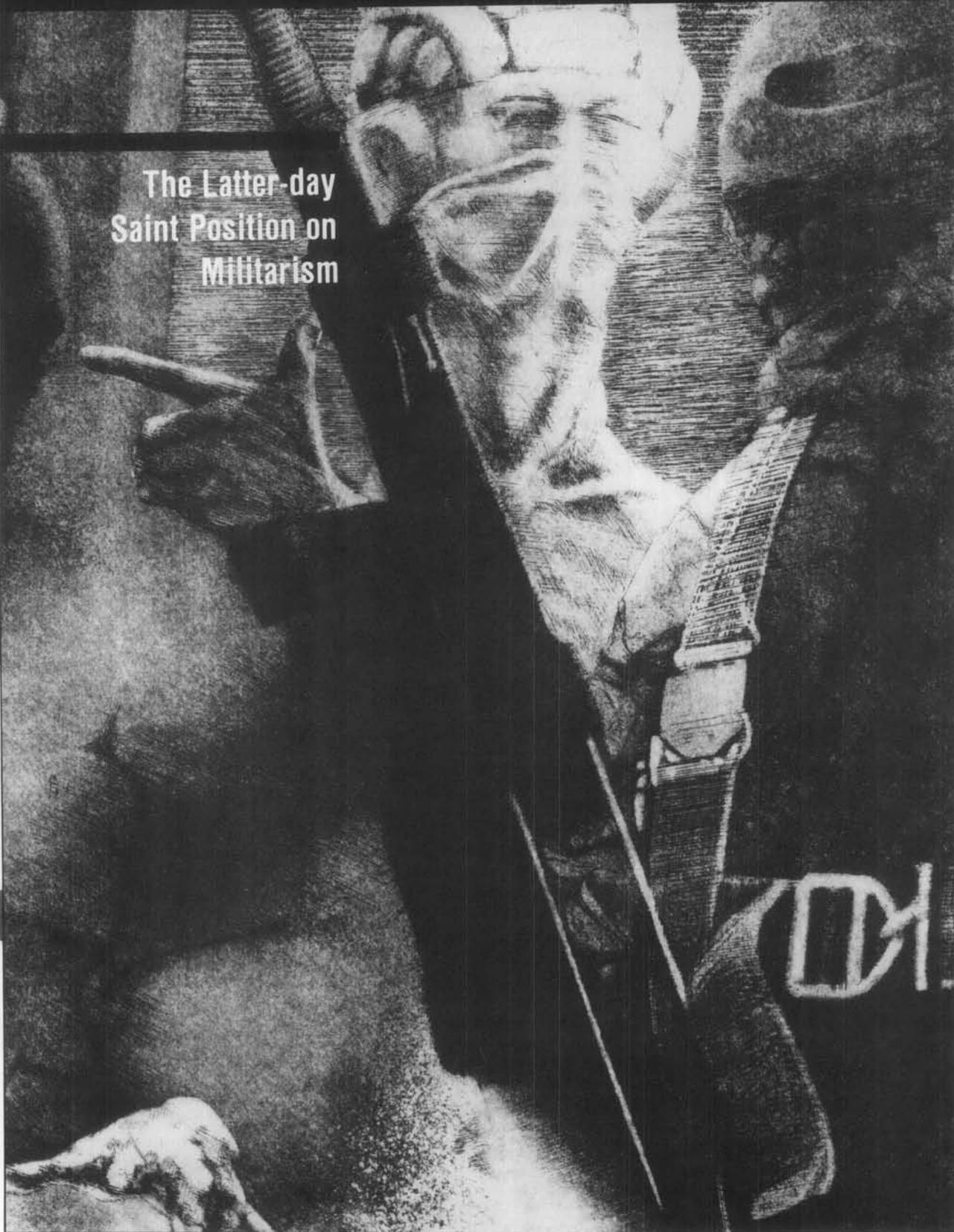


Conscientious Objectors on

The Latter-day
Saint Position on
Militarism



ON THE COVER: "Beat the Band, Boys (The Big Board)" by Michael Hulsman is 12/20 of a limited edition etching available at Sullivan Galleries, 55 West 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84101 (801-364-3900). Mr. Hulsman is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree at Utah State University.

Christian Soldiers?

By D. Michael Quinn

We often hear that war is evil, but where is the personal evil in young men and women leaving the securities of their society and possibly risking their lives to protect or advance causes in which they sincerely believe? We speak of the inhumanity of war, but where is the inhumanity in the intense personal relations of loyalty, devotion, and affection among comrades in arms who often give their lives to protect their buddies? We may condemn war in general or a specific war as futile, but how do we express that to veterans whose bodies or emotions have been damaged or to families who have only photographs to remind them of the young men and women they sent to battle? It is easy to mouth platitudes about peace during peacetime, but what sacrifices are we willing to make to proclaim peace after our country has declared war? These have been the challenges of the LDS position on militarism and conscientious objection since 1830.

The first book of LDS scripture is part of the shared Judeo-Christian heritage, and reflects a sharply divided view of war and peace. The Old Testament glorified both aggressive and defensive wars of God's people against their enemies, and it was a common occurrence for the heroes of these narratives not only to kill captured enemy soldiers, but also to slaughter every man, woman, and child in conquered cities and towns. These were not aberrations among the Hebrews, but usually occurred in fulfillment of commands by God or his prophets. In contrast, the New Testament precept and example of Jesus Christ and his Apostles were self-sacrificing and nonviolent even in the face of brutal death. To those who were unwilling to live such a life of pacifism, the first book of the New Testament proclaims, "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52) and the last book relegates all such to the grisly domain of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6).

Mormonism ignored a thousand years of theological commentary and justification for war in the Judeo-Christian tradition and began anew with the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon, which provided a synthesis of Old and New Testament approaches to war. In the Book of Mormon narrative, righteous generals "did not stop making preparations for war, or to defend [their] people" (Alma 50:1), pursued their enemies and "did slay them with much slaughter" (Alma 2:19), did not hesitate to use superior technology against primitively outfitted combatants (Alma 43:18-21, 37-38), freely used spies (Mosiah 10:7; Alma 2:21, 56:22), occasionally assassinated enemy leaders (Alma 51:32-36, 62:35-36), and threatened to overthrow and kill their own civil leaders who did not provide material support to the armies (Alma 60:25, 30). Nevertheless, militarism is dominant in the Book of Mormon without

Righteous Book of Mormon societies gave honor and protection to selective conscientious objectors.



reigning supreme as it does in the Old Testament: At no time in the Book of Mormon were the righteous armies the aggressors, nor did they make preemptive attacks against an enemy that was obviously about to launch a war. They never waged wars of "national interest" where any issue but immediate survival was at stake, and they never killed or mistreated prisoners. Moreover, the militantly defensive society of the righteous Book of Mormon people gave honor and protection to pacifists and to selective conscientious objectors: The people of Ammon for reasons of religion and conscience vowed never to kill and were protected militarily by those of the society who were willing to fight and die in war (Alma 47:21-24). The narrative also gives honor to the military leader named Mormon who refused to support or participate in a war that he regarded as unjustified in origin and evil in conduct (Morm. 3:8-16).

This Mormon synthesis of militarism and conscientious objection was further complicated by the 1833 revelation of Joseph Smith that is published as section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Aside from the requirement to wait until the fourth attack before retaliating against an enemy, the revelation stated: "And again, this is the law that I gave unto my ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, *save I, the Lord, command them*" (D&C 98:33; emphasis added). This is the only written revelation instructing the Latter-day Saints of their responsibilities concerning war, and in the document the authority of secular government is conspicuous by its absence. According to this revelation, the Latter-day Saints would go to war only by the specific command of God, which would be conveyed by the LDS prophet. Therefore, in matters of war and peace, the Mormon community was to follow the Church president, not any civil ruler. Two years earlier, section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants had already indicated that the Latter-day Saints would remain aloof from national wars: "And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war with another." (D&C 45:68-69.)

With the theological basis of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, Mormon leaders until the end of the nineteenth century pursued an ambivalent policy toward militarism, war, and peace, which might be called "selective pacifism." In this respect, the twelfth article of faith ("We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law") was meaningless, because a Latter-day Saint revelation had given the LDS church theocratic precedence over civil law and military authority.

In 1833, Mormons in Jackson County, Missouri, were mobbed by anti-Mormons and did not retaliate. In 1834, the Prophet organized a military company, Zion's Camp, which he led a thousand miles from Ohio to Missouri to win back Mormon losses by force if necessary. But when, upon reaching Missouri, he faced a suicidal confrontation with the anti-Mormons, he became conciliatory, and the company returned to Ohio without bloodshed. In 1836, the Church periodical argued in favor of defensive war by threatened communities, but a month later, Joseph Smith issued a letter that the Mormons "would suffer their rights to be taken from them before shedding blood" (*LDS Messenger and Advocate*, July 1836, pp. 337-40). And in 1836 the Mormons did exactly that, by allowing themselves to be peacefully expelled from Clay County, Missouri, where they had previously fled from mobs in Jackson County. In 1838, Joseph Smith authorized the Saints to become more militant, and they engaged in pitched battles with anti-Mormons. Missourians called this the "Mormon War," imprisoned Joseph Smith, and expelled the Mormons from the state. At Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph Smith led his Nauvoo Legion of three to five thousand men under arms (the entire U.S. Army in 1844 had 8,453 men). He surrendered voluntarily in June 1844 to civil officers he was sure would conspire to bring about his death. Nevertheless, in his last letter from Carthage Jail, Joseph Smith commanded the Nauvoo Legion to attack the town and rescue him before he could be killed. A mob murdered him before the orders could be carried out.

The first national war of Mormon experience occurred as the Saints were moving westward from Illinois in 1846. The participation of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War has traditionally been heralded as self-sacrificing patriotism responding to the demands of the federal government. In fact, however, Brigham Young had sent an ambassador to President James K. Polk volunteering two thousand Mormon men to enlist and be paid federal wages as an expeditionary force to precede the Mormon emigration into the Great Basin of Mexico, where he knew according to published reports of John C. Fremont there were no Mexican soldiers or settlers. Polk trimmed the number to five hundred and put the battalion on a journey along the present U.S.-Mexican border to California. President Young urged men to volunteer for the economic benefits that would come to the Saints and promised that they would not shed blood. Apostle Orson Hyde told reluctant recruits that the battalion would result in "the peaceable possession of a home." The battalion brought more than fifty thousand dollars to the common fund of the LDS church. (*Dialogue*, Winter 1984, pp. 11-30.)

Before the American Civil War, President Brigham Young condemned all war:

Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder; but suppose that one family should rise up against another and begin to slay them, would they not be taken up and tried for murder? Then why not nations that rise up and slay each other in a scientific way be equally guilty of murder. (Journal of Discourses, 7:137.)

At the beginning of the secession crisis, Brigham Young telegraphed Lincoln that Utah remained with the Union, and Mormons volunteered to protect the mail routes within Utah territory, but Brigham Young privately acknowledged that most of the Church leaders and members favored the Confederacy. Publicly, President Young at October conference, 1863, praised the soldiers of the Union and the Confederacy, as well as conscientious objectors from both sides:

Multitudes of good and honorable men become enrolled in the contending armies of the present American war, some to gratify a martial pride, and others through a conscientious love of their country; indeed, various are the motives and inducements that impel men to expose themselves upon the field of battle; but a portion of those who are peaceably disposed, and wish not to witness the shedding of the blood of their countrymen, make good their escape from the vicinity of trouble. It is chiefly this class of men who are now passing through this Territory to other parts, and I think they are probably as good a class of men as has ever passed through this country; they are persons who wish to live in peace, and to be far removed from contending factions. As far as I am concerned I have no fault to find with them. (JD, 10:248.)

Thus, the Mormons waited out the American Civil War from a position of near neutrality which was consistent with both their theocratic prerogatives and their millennial expectations.

By the next national war of America's experience, however, profound changes had occurred for the Church and for Utah. After years of defying federal laws, the LDS church president in 1890 announced the abandonment of the practice of plural marriage. Within six months, the First Presidency disbanded the Church's political party, the People's Party, and sought to conform Utah to the social, economic, and political expectations of the national government. These efforts succeeded in acquiring Utah's statehood in 1896, and two years later the nation went to war against Spain to liberate Cuba. There were a few Mormons like Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., who opposed supporting the war, counseled Latter-day Saints to go on missions rather than volunteer, and publicly urged the Latter-day Saints not to volunteer. But the First Presidency instructed Apostle Young to cease his antiwar activities and statements, because they felt that the newest state could not fail to vigorously support the call for volunteers and that Mormons as a minority now seeking accommodation with the larger society should not be perceived as opposing a popular war. The First Presidency issued the following



statement on 28 April 1898:

War has been declared, and we have it to meet. Our citizens are called upon to enlist, and Utah is asked to furnish cavalry and batteries of artillery approximating 500 men. We trust that the citizens of Utah who are Latter-day Saints will be found ready to respond with alacrity to this call which is made upon our State. (Messages of the First Presidency, 3:299.)

The War of 1898 was crucial in the history of the LDS church views on war because having surrendered communitarianism, theocracy, and plural marriage in order to survive as an institution within a coercive society, the LDS church leaders also abandoned the theocratic prerogatives of selective pacifism that were provided in section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants. From 1898 onward, the official position of the First Presidency would be to decry war, but to support any declaration of war by the government and to urge Church members to support the conduct of war by their government on the basis of the twelfth article of faith.

This official support of any national war also followed the U.S. government's change of direction in 1898 from an announced war to rid colonial peoples of Spanish imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines to the conversion of those colonies to American control. This posed a particular problem in the Philippines where many Filipinos expected the United States to help establish their independence after defeating Spain. Instead, the U.S. annexed the islands, only to find themselves fighting the Filipinos who did not accept the change of colonial overlords. The Church's *Deseret News* editorialized, "Are we going to abandon Hawaii and the Philippines to their fate? [independence] . . . [It was God's purpose to] have the influence of the United States felt in . . . those Asiatic countries." (Robert Jeffrey Stott, "Mormonism and War" [Master's thesis, BYU], p. 59.) Mormons who volunteered to fight the Spanish to free Cuba found themselves in the Pacific fighting Filipinos who wanted independence. In fact, Mormon West Point graduate Richard W. Young helped preside over the U.S. military government established during the first years of the "Philippine Insurrection" that continued as a guerrilla war until the eve of the First World War.

At the outset of World War I, President Joseph F. Smith denied the claims of the British and the Germans that God was on their side and would aid them in the war. Instead, Joseph F. Smith said, "The Lord has little if anything to do with this war" (*Improvement Era*, Sept. 1914, p. 1075). But when the United States entered the "Great War" in April 1917, the attitude of the Mormon leadership had to change, according to Church historian B. H. Roberts, who volunteered and served as the oldest U.S. chaplain:

Brigham Young privately acknowledged that most Church leaders favored the Confederacy.



Had Utah as a state acted reluctantly, or had she failed in any respect to proceed as the other states of the Union and as the whole nation did, the reluctance and failure would have been chargeable to the Latter-day Saints. Per contra, Utah's promptness in action and the spirit in which she did her part would reflect patriotism, the intensity of the Americanism of the same people." (Comprehensive History of the Church, 6:455.)

More than twenty thousand Latter-day Saints served in the U.S. and British forces, and about six hundred and fifty died in World War I. But contrary to the 1914 statement of Joseph F. Smith, the role of God had changed in the war, as indicated in the Church magazine, *Improvement Era*: "when our boys aim [their weapons] they will see as if they looked with the eye of God" and "when the United States army strikes, the blow will fall as if from the arm of God" (*IE*, Aug. 1918, p. 914; Joseph F. Boone, "The Role of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Relation to the United States Military, 1900-1975" [Ph.D. diss., BYU], pp. 219-20, 223-25).

Nevertheless, two months after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Selective Service Act, the *Deseret News* editorialized on 27 March 1918: "Governments of, for and by the people are wise when they try to meet [with noncombatant service], in a spirit of fairness, the scruples of those who by training or instinct are averse to the bearing of arms with which to slay their fellowmen." Although federal law provided for conscientious objection, the twenty thousand American conscientious objectors of World War I were turned over to the U.S. military, where they were indoctrinated, harassed, and sometimes physically beaten—with the result that eighty percent of the conscientious objectors later chose combatant service.

Aside from providing for the possibility of conscientious objection, Church leaders in World War I for the first time had to address the situation in which Latter-day Saints were fighting on both sides of a war. Joseph F. Smith told the general conference of April 1917:

In speaking of nationalities we all understand or should that in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there is neither Greek, nor Jew, nor Gentile; in other words, there is neither Scandinavian, nor Swiss, nor German, nor Russian, nor British, nor any other nationality. . . .

You must not condemn the people, however much you may judge and condemn their leaders, who place their people in jeopardy, and demand their life blood for their maintenance in position of prominence and power. Their leaders are to blame, not the people. The people that embrace the gospel are innocent of these things, and they ought to be respected by Latter-day Saints everywhere. (Conference Report, Apr. 1917, p. 11.)

When World War II began, First Counselor J. Reuben Clark condemned it in October 1939

general conference as an "unholy war . . . to make conquest or to keep conquest" (*CR*, Oct. 1939, pp. 11-14). The Selective Service Act of September 1940 had passed the U.S. House of Representatives by only one vote due to strong antiwar sentiment, and in October 1940 general conference, President Clark warned the Latter-day Saints that according to the rules of international law, the United States had committed so many hostile acts against Nazi Germany that the two nations were in a state of undeclared war (*CR*, Oct. 1940, p. 14).

At general conference six months later, Elder Richard L. Evans (then a President of the Council of Seventy) raised the possibility that Latter-day Saints might choose conscientious objection:

Some of our young men, and some of our mothers who are called upon to send them forth into service, wonder why they have to go. There have been some who have urged the Church and its members to declare themselves conscientious objectors. There may be some merits in this position. Perhaps we should reserve the right to so declare ourselves at some future time. I can think of possibilities and circumstances arising for which there could conceivably come some times and conditions for which we might want to reserve that right.

Then Elder Evans went on to acknowledge that strict conscientious objection had not previously been the position of the LDS church. (*CR*, Apr. 1941, p. 42.)

In the remainder of 1941, J. Reuben Clark continued to condemn the support of the United States for Great Britain against Nazi Germany. In August 1941 he joined former President Herbert Hoover and fourteen other Republican leaders in a national appeal against American war preparation, and in October 1941 President Clark and the rest of the First Presidency wrote the director of the U.S. Defense Bond program that "we do not believe that aggression should be carried on in the name and under the false cloak of defense" (D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years*, pp. 205, 207).

After the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II in December 1941, the First Presidency issued its longest and most comprehensive statement on war at the general conference four months later:

The members of the Church have always felt under obligation to come to the defense of their country when a call to arms was made. . . . In the World War, the Saints of America and of European countries served loyally their respective governments, on both sides of the conflict. Likewise in the present war, righteous men of the Church in both camps have died, some with great heroism, for their country's sake.

This Church is a worldwide Church. Its devoted members are in both camps. They are innocent war instrumentalities of their warring sovereignties. On each side they believe they are fighting for home, and country, and freedom. (MFP, 6:157, 159.)

In World War II, more than one hundred thousand Latter-day Saints served in the American and Allied armed forces, with about five thousand Allied deaths among the Latter-day Saints, and hundreds more deaths among German Latter-day Saints.

Yet the two counselors in the First Presidency differed markedly about World War II. In October 1942 general conference, President David O. McKay, the second counselor, sought to encourage American LDS servicemen by saying: "We all realize with you, that you are enlisted in a war against wickedness, and peace cannot come until the mad gangsters . . . are defeated and branded as murderers, and their false aims repudiated, let us hope forever." On the other hand, at the same conference, First Counselor Clark said, "Hate driven militarists and leaders, with murder in their hearts, will, if they go through to the end, bring only another peace that will be but the beginning of another war." (CR, Oct. 1942, pp. 68, 15-16.)

As a political conservative of national and international standing, J. Reuben Clark had also become a thoroughgoing pacifist by joining America's oldest pacifist organization in 1939, and becoming a member of its board of directors in 1944, which position he held to his death. During World War II President Clark privately encouraged young men who inquired his counsel not to volunteer for the armed services, to go on missions instead, and he carefully monitored the treatment of those Latter-day Saints who were placed in conscientious objector camps (similar to the relocation centers established for the Japanese-Americans during World War II). After World War II he persuaded the Church president to reimburse the Quakers for the expenses of maintaining these Latter-day Saint conscientious objectors, and he did what he could to intercede on behalf of a Latter-day Saint conscientious objector whose local draft board tried to prevent him from going on an LDS proselyting mission following his release from the CO camp.

Although J. Reuben Clark's activities for pacifism and conscientious objection had been unadvertised during World War II, almost immediately following the end of the war, the LDS church went public discreetly in favor of conscientious objection and stridently against militarism. In September 1945, the *Deseret News* editorialized:

The earnest, sincere, loyal conscientious objector, who, because of his religious convictions, asked to be relieved of military service which would necessitate his taking the life of a fellowman, is entitled to his opinion just as much as the man who felt that poison gas should be used and the enemy annihilated completely. And the chances are that the objector would prove to be the better citizen of the two. (DN, 11 Sept. 1945.)

In December 1945, the First Presidency also issued a statement against universal compulsory military training that was also a severe evaluation of the military itself:

We shall put them where they may be indoctrinated with a wholly un-American view of the aims and purposes of their individual lives, and of the life of the whole people and nation, which are founded on the ways of peace, whereas they will be taught to believe in the ways of the war. (MFP, 6:240-41.)

We shall give opportunity to teach our sons not only the way to kill but also, in too many cases, the desire to kill, thereby increasing lawlessness and disorder to the consequent upsetting of the stability of our national society. God said at Sinai, "Thou shalt not kill."

(Recently I was reminded of this First Presidency statement as I listened to one of the ROTC groups at Brigham Young University singing the following marching song: "I don't care what the Peace Corps says; I just want to kill some Reds!")

As the nation began moving into the Cold War with the USSR, the Church's most prominent spokesman against war continued to be J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency. He told a selective service chief that Utah veterans would go to jail rather than serve in another war, and at October 1946 general conference he also condemned the means by which the United States obtained victory in Europe and Asia during World War II.

In June 1950, the United States joined with other United Nations forces in a "police action" against North Korea, due to its invasion of non-Communist South Korea. Approximately eight thousand Latter-day Saints served in the Korean War, and Elder Bruce R. McConkie as a chaplain received a letter from a U.S. Army general: "I have the highest personal regard for Latter-day Saints soldiers, and appreciate so much the fine and patriotic service they daily render to their country" (Boone, "Role of the Church," pp. 438-39). But in the middle of the Korean War, the Church's *Deseret News* published the following editorial on "The Problem of Conscientious Objectors":

The pacifist ideal is a beautiful one—if everyone would subscribe to it and act accordingly. But if even half the world went pacifist, they would be at the mercy of the ruthless portion of the other half who could take what they would through violence and force.

The conscientious objector may have had the will to fight trained out of him; but if he still has the will to serve [in noncombatant duties], he can still render valiant service.

The craven draft-dodger, or conscience-less evader, is in a different category altogether. (DN, 25 June 1951.)

As the Korean War ended, America was gradually accelerating its commitment to what would become its longest war, the Vietnamese conflict. Before the United States sent its armed forces to Vietnam, the Church's elder statesman, President J. Reuben Clark, warned a U.S. senator

During World War II J. Reuben Clark encouraged pacifism and aided conscientious objectors.



against such a commitment to Vietnam (then a part of Indo-China):

I am impressed as to Indo-China, with this fact: That country is a colony of France. I am told that France has said she will not send some classes of her troops to Indo-China. If her colony is not worth her spending her blood for it, it is not worth our spending our blood for it. . . .

Finally, while unalterably opposed to Communism, I can imagine that an enlightened Communism may be a whole lot better than a decrepit, deficient, corrupt colonial government. I rather feel that that principle could be applied to very much of the situation in the whole Far East.

In my personal view, our greatest danger and greatest handicap is the concept, not yet more than half-expressed, sometimes, perhaps, not even fully recognized that we are destined to dictate to and rule the world, though we have not enough sense to rule ourselves wisely. That is the first step towards the ultimate decay that led to the downfall of Rome, that is carrying forward Britain, France, Italy, and of course, Russia. (J. Reuben Clark to U.S. Senator Henry Dworshak, 17 May 1954, BYU Special Collections.)

As many as a hundred thousand Mormons served in the U.S. military during America's longest war, about a fourth of them in Vietnam itself, with more than five hundred and fifty deaths.

Once the United States committed itself to war in Vietnam, the continuity of LDS policy since 1898 produced the expected endorsement of national war. The First Presidency stated: "We believe our young men should hold themselves in readiness to respond to the call of their government to serve in the armed forces when called upon, and again, we repeat, we believe in honoring, sustaining and upholding the law" (*Deseret News Church Section*, 24 May 1969, p. 12). Despite the fact that millions of Americans and about ten percent of Mormon youth opposed the Vietnam War, the LDS church could publicly take no other position or it might have jeopardized its already fragile and restricted arrangement with the U.S. government for deferments from the draft for LDS proselyting missionaries.

But the First Presidency instructed its secretary Joseph Anderson to reply to those who resisted the Vietnam War as conscientious objectors:

I am directed to tell you that membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not make one a conscientious objector. As you are aware, there are thousands of young men of the Church assigned to the various services in the military.

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 exemption provided by law. (Dialogue, Spring 1968, p. 8.)

The only public suggestion of a less than enthusiastic response to the Vietnam War (since J. Reuben Clark was now dead) came at the end of Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley's conference talk of

encouragement to Mormon servicemen and their families during the tumultuous year of 1968: "I make no defense of the war from this pulpit. There is no simple answer. The problems are complex almost beyond comprehension." (CR, Apr. 1968, p. 24.) Whatever comfort that brief statement gave to Mormon conscientious objectors and to opponents of the Vietnam War was diminished later that same day by Elder Boyd K. Packer, then an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Because Elder Packer's conference talk of April 1968 is the only repudiation of conscientious objection ever to be publicly expressed by an LDS General Authority, it deserves close attention. Elder Packer introduced the subject of conscientious objection by saying:

There have emerged in our society groups composed mostly of restless, unchallenged young people. In the name of peace and love and brotherhood, they criticize those who, obedient to the laws of the land, have answered the call to military duty. It is puzzling to see them renouncing their obligation, repudiating their citizenship responsibilities. They declare on moral grounds, as an act of virtue, that they will not serve. One can be sensitive, even sympathetic, to their feelings, for war is an ugly thing—a heinous, ugly thing!

He then described a Mormon college student who was confused about the war and about the counsel he was receiving from friends and university faculty to become a conscientious objector or draft evader. In answer to the question, "How can he know which way to turn?" Elder Packer said: "First, the scriptures are not silent on the subject," and he quoted the Book of Mormon in support of Nephites engaging in defensive war. After quoting the 1942 First Presidency statement on war, Elder Packer stated:

Though all the issues of the conflict are anything but clear, the matter of citizenship responsibility is perfectly clear. Our brethren, we know something of what you sense, something of what you feel.

I have worn the uniform of my native land in the time of total conflict. I have smelled the stench of human dead and wept tears for slaughtered comrades. I have climbed amid the rubble of ravaged cities and contemplated in horror the ashes of a civilization sacrificed to Moloch; yet knowing this, with the issues as they are, were I called again to military service, I could not conscientiously object!

And he concluded with a renewed plea for the young men of the nation to fulfill the obligations of their citizenship by responding to the call for military service. This was a time in the United States of strident radicalism against all authority and civil disobedience against the draft, and it is therefore understandable that in reaction to this social ferment, this talk on conscientious objection did not include any reference to the fact that the Book of Mormon and prior Church precedent allowed for conscientious objection, nor the fact that Congress had long regarded conscientious objection as consistent with the obli-

gations of citizenship. (CR, Apr. 1968, pp. 33-36.)

The complement to this unprecedented repudiation of conscientious objection during the unpopular Vietnam War was Apostle Mark E. Petersen's talk that was published by the Church's Military Relations Committee in 1970. To those serving in the Vietnam War, he said: "Now the Church wants to show as much honor to you brethren going into the military service as we show to men going on a mission. . . . But our good boys who do pass away will be handsomely rewarded by a grateful God whose cause they defend." (Mark E. Petersen, *The Church and America*, pp. 10, 11.)

In view of these officially published statements during the Vietnam War, it is not surprising that local leaders and members of the Church began to regard conscientious objectors and other opponents of the Vietnam conflict as disloyal citizens and unfaithful Latter-day Saints. This became a sufficiently important issue that the secretary to the First Presidency sent out the following clarification in 1971:

Conscientious objectors may teach in the Church (home teach, Sunday School, priesthood, etc.), provided they are worthy of these positions and with the understanding that they avoid teachings or discussions pertaining to war and their attitude toward it. The same would apply to the matter of their holding office in the Church.

There certainly could be no objection to their partaking of the sacrament if they are otherwise worthy. They could also be given recommends to the temple provided they are sincere in their beliefs and are maintaining the standards of the Church.

It would be contrary to Church policy to disfellowship men because they have conscientious objections regarding participating in military combat activities. (Joseph Anderson letter, 21 Oct. 1971.)

The Book of Mormon does not indicate that similar instructions had to be given for the pacifist people of Ammon, and this clarification is one measure of the traumatic divisiveness the Vietnam War brought to LDS church members. Also noteworthy is the fact that while First Presidency guidelines restricted conscientious objectors from using their Church position as a forum for discussing war and pacifism, other Church teachers were not restricted from advocating military service.

But America's use of the atomic bomb against Japan heralded a new development that eliminated the combat soldier: the possibility of arm-chair wars where men pushing buttons could vicariously destroy whole populations thousands of miles away. J. Reuben Clark was the first to give official condemnation of this during his October 1946 conference address:

Then as the crowning savagery of the war we Americans wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilian population with the atom bomb in Japan. . . .

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 for this.

... And, as one American citizen of one hundred thirty million, as one in one billion population of the world, I protest with all of the energy I possess against this fiendish activity, and as an American citizen, I call upon our government and its agencies to see that these unholy experimentations are stopped, and that somehow we get into the minds of our war-minded general staff and its satellites, and into the general staffs of all the world, a proper respect for human life. (CR, Oct. 1946, pp. 88-89.)

Thirty-five years later, three other American citizens issued a First Presidency statement condemning the U.S. government's plans for basing the MX nuclear missile in Utah, and added: "We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry" (DN, 5 May 1981).

But Church headquarters sent out mixed messages about war in 1981. Following on the heels of this statement by the First Presidency, their press spokesman Don LeFevre made the only public statement emanating from the First Presidency about conscientious objection: "There is no place in Mormon philosophy for the conscientious objector" (DN, 7 May 1981). In view of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, nineteenth-century Church practice, repeated *Deseret News* editorials and First Presidency correspondence in the twentieth century, such a statement is a curious example of Mormon ambivalence. But without a public and authoritative retraction, the statement stands in the public record as official.

Up to this point, I have emphasized the institutional approach of the LDS church toward war, but another meaning of *church* is the community of believers, those of us who share the Latter-day Saint faith. And we must acknowledge and give honor to the diversity of honorable responses to war among ourselves. I will give a personal example of my LDS missionary associates during the Vietnam War. One of the gentlest, most compassionate missionary elders I ever knew volunteered for the Army Rangers and died during the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. Another missionary came back to the United States, protested against the Vietnam War, resisted the draft, and became a permanent exile in Canada. A missionary companion joined the regular army the same day I did, and he served in Vietnam without physical or emotional injury, and later said he had no regrets about that service. We need to give honor to the conscientious soldiers and conscientious objectors among us, because they are both seeking to live the gospel the Latter-day Saints know to be true.

D. MICHAEL QUINN was in the U.S. regular army for three years during the Vietnam War, and is professor of American history at Brigham Young University.

Boyd K. Packer made the only public repudiation of conscientious objection by a General Authority.

