

# Guest Editor's Preface

Gary L. Browning

My colleagues as guest editors for this special issue of *BYU Studies* in the interest of peace are Garold N. Davis, professor of German; Ray C. Hillam, professor of political science; and S. Neil Rasband, professor of physics. Along with many others within the LDS community, we are deeply concerned about nuclear arms and their proliferation. We believe that citizens in a democracy have an obligation to share their best thinking, all the more so during periods of crisis. To remain willfully uninformed, complacent, timid, or aloof at such times is irresponsible. We believe that we on this planet are now in a severe and deepening crisis. As President Gordon B. Hinckley observed in a clarion call to follow the Savior: "We live in a world of pomp and muscle, of strutting that glorifies jet thrust and far-flying warheads. It is the same kind of strutting that produced the misery of the days of Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and Hitler."<sup>1</sup> We are particularly troubled because, for the first time, fallible governments possess the technology to destroy much of God's earthly creation.

For this special issue, we solicited material from nearly one hundred people, predominantly members of the BYU community, inviting them, as committed believers, to contribute their perspectives on war and peace. We indicated we were especially interested in balanced and well-expressed contributions that took into account the relatively new reality of the immense destructive potential of the superpowers' nuclear arsenals.

Although we contacted a broad spectrum of LDS thinkers, including scholars of various political persuasions, university administrators, and religious leaders, and assured each that we would carefully consider material "from any responsible position," the actual submissions did not reflect the broad range of views for which we had hoped. We believe, however, that the manuscripts selected for inclusion in the issue constitute a body of responsible thought that is worthy of publication. None of the

authors claims to possess enough, let alone all, of the answers, but we have tried to read broadly, to consider our own experiences and consciences critically and sincerely, and to think and write as carefully as our individual capacities permit. We emphasize that the authors are speaking for themselves and not for Brigham Young University or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It may be that the publication of this issue will stimulate others to express different views. If so, we would welcome continued discussion of this vitally important topic. For the present, we recommend that readers wishing to review alternative arguments consult the easily available articles, books, and statements by such writers as Richard Pipes, Caspar Weinberger, Richard Perle, Edward Teller, Kenneth Alderman, and Arkady Shevchenko.

Our treatment of the problem of nuclear arms is generally based on theological, scientific, sociological, and personal perspectives, although most of us are driven by moral considerations. The nuclear arms race *is* eminently a moral issue because the lives of most humans are imperiled and could be sacrificed without their consent; because most of those who would die in a nuclear holocaust are, at least on this level, innocent, including women, children, the elderly, and other noncombatants; because the range of opportunity for yet unborn spirits could be significantly abridged; because spreading the Savior's gospel might become nearly impossible; because much of civilization's cultural heritage could be destroyed; and because current pressing human needs are relegated to lower priorities in favor of an arms race.

Christians are familiar with the most effective principles for establishing and maintaining peace, although to implement these principles requires great faith. Further, Latter-day Saints are aware that the Savior *twice* taught the doctrines of peace that distinguish his disciples from the overwhelming majority of others who have ever lived on this earth. His Sermon on the Mount, preached on two continents, introduced his earthly ministry and concluded it. We may ignore, rationalize, or reject these words, but the fact remains that the Savior selected from the rich store available *these* eternal truths to instruct his children in ancient America. We of all people should ponder, embrace, and espouse the Savior's words, as the First Presidency once again urged in a 1985 Easter Message: "Only as we look to the Prince of Peace will we find true peace as individuals, as families, and as members of the world community."<sup>2</sup> *Living* the teachings of the Savior is not naive, even though many among us assert otherwise. And it is a most promising way for us to respond to a prophet's plea

to become "peacemakers even though we live in a world filled with wars and rumors of wars,"<sup>3</sup> for "when there is enough of a desire for peace and a will to bring it about, it is not beyond the possibility of attainment."<sup>4</sup>

To conclude this preface and to introduce the articles to follow, we quote the unequivocal words of Spencer W. Kimball found in his bicentennial address, "The False Gods We Worship":

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 Savior's teaching:

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 (Matt. 5:44-45).

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 Ne. 1:7)—or he will fight our battles for us (Exod. 14:14; D&C 98:37, to name only two references of many). . . .

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.<sup>5</sup>

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## NOTES

Gary L. Browning is a professor of Russian at Brigham Young University. He writes: "May I express deep appreciation to Edward A. Geary, Linda Hunter Adams, M. Shayne Bell, and Mary Astrid Tuminez for their competent and genial editorial assistance."

<sup>1</sup>Gordon B. Hinckley, "What Shall I Do Then with Jesus Which Is Called Christ," *Ensign* 13 (December 1983): 2.

<sup>2</sup>"First Presidency Easter Message," *Church News*, 31 March 1985, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Spencer W. Kimball, "Remember the Mission of the Church," *Ensign* 12 (May 1982): 5.

<sup>4</sup>"First Presidency Christmas Message," *Church News*, 20 December 1980, 2.

<sup>5</sup>Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 6.