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[Mormon War Survey](#)

[Perceptions of War in Mormon Culture](#)

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE Despite canonic admonition to “renounce war and proclaim peace,” widespread support for war persists among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The purpose of this research was to: 1) identify common attitudes among Mormons concerning war, and 2) identify the sources of those attitudes, whether cultural, scriptural, doctrinal, etc.

METHODS Interviews were conducted with Brian Birch (UVSC chair of Religious Studies), Michael Minch (UVSC professor of political philosophy), and Grant Skabelund (co-editor of *A Time to Kill: Reflections on War*). Thirty survey questions were formulated based on these interviews (not including statistical questions) and administered online. Questions focused on perceptions of leaders, perceptions of war, and the scriptural or doctrinal support of both.

RESULTS Common attitudes emerged regarding righteous, moral leadership, the tragic necessity of war, and cultural patriotism. The “likening” of scriptural narratives as allegories of contemporary events emerged as a strong subtextual factor.

CONCLUSIONS The Mormon cultural experience appears to play a larger role in the formulation of political worldviews than official policy or doctrinal precedent, ostensibly reducing religious canon, in the political realm, to something of a Rorschach test.

INTRODUCTION

“The moral certitude of the state in wartime is a kind of fundamentalism. And this dangerous messianic brand of religion, one where self-doubt is minimal, has come increasingly to color the modern world of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.” —Chris Hedges(1)

Despite canonic admonition to “renounce war and proclaim peace,”(2) widespread support for war persists among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints(3) (hereinafter “Mormons” or “LDS”). According to the Just War Theory,(4) six conditions must be met in order to justify a declaration of war:

1. Just Cause: Lethal force may only be used in self-defense, or to correct an unjustified aggression against populations;
2. Legitimate Authority: Lethal force may only be decreed by legitimate ruling authorities (i.e. the President of the United States);
3. Right Intention: Lethal force may only be used to re-establish a level of peace comparable to that which existed before the or aggression; there can be no national self-interest (i.e. oil, regional control);
4. Probability of Success: There is a reasonable chance of success;
5. Proportionality: The level of destruction must be outweighed by the good intended to be achieved;

6. Last Resort: All other attempts at peace must be exhausted.

In times of war, however, ‘the myth of war’⁽⁵⁾ perverts due process and theories of justice are abandoned. Language as a communication tool is reduced to codes and scripts manufactured by the state and weaponed about by the populace.⁽⁶⁾ Does the construct of religion provide transcendental clarity in the midst of these ‘winds of doctrine,’⁽⁷⁾ or does religion play a lesser role in the formulation of political worldviews?

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with Brian Birch (UVSC chair of Religious Studies), Michael Minch (UVSC professor of political philosophy), and Grant Skabelund (co-editor of *A Time to Kill: Reflections on War*, a ‘collection of personal accounts by more than fifty Mormon veterans in six wars’). The coded results of these interviews suggest Mormon support for war under three categories: 1) the American and Mormon culture of war, 2) cultural convention, and 3) theological patriotism.

The American and Mormon Culture of War

Skabelund: ‘The United States has this culture of war, that’s built into our government, and we feel like we have to go to war. Part of that grows out of the idea that the United States always has to have an enemy. We have this complex. And it started out being the British. Throughout our history, we’ve always felt like there had to be an enemy.’⁽⁸⁾

Birch: ‘The history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints includes some of the most dramatic violence and persecution in the history of the United States. From its earliest beginnings, Mormonism has faced important theological questions regarding the appropriated use of, and response to, violence.’⁽⁹⁾

Minch: ‘It seems deeply rooted in the human condition to outgroup others, to turn on them, use violence, and find ourselves superior to them. Margaret Meade, the great anthropologist was asked, ‘Why do people form groups?’ She said, ‘So they can outgroup each other.’ I think she was right.’⁽¹⁰⁾

Cultural Convention

Skabelund: ‘Even those who would argue against the war, there is still so much support for war in our society that we can’t really protest. I can talk about things and I can argue against it in the classroom, and I can have discussions, but to go out and protest, here, in Utah County—I can’t.’⁽¹¹⁾

Birch: ‘The difference between religious and political ideals is often unclear. Though they often disagree doctrinally, there are several social issues on which Mormons and conservative Christians are united, such as war, euthanasia, capital punishment, the family, and homosexuality.’⁽¹²⁾

Minch: ‘Those who see themselves as ‘religious people,’ generally—with the exception of a very small minority—are entirely conventional, meaning that they conform to their cultural conventions. People profess to be Buddhist, Mormon, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, and so on, and yet are largely a product of their cultural environment rather than their canon.’⁽¹³⁾

Theological Nationalism

Skabelund: ‘There is a general feeling that this nation was created by God, and all other nations are secondary—that God is behind America and all other nations need to be brought up to speed. But then there are those who say that if you argue that the U.S. was founded by a higher power, then that means you *shouldn’t* go to war.’⁽¹⁴⁾

Birch: ‘The attitudes of religious people, especially Christians, toward war is complicated. On one hand, you’ve got Christians committed to peace, but on the other hand you’ve got a whole lot of political tradition trying to reconcile government with Christian ideals. So you have Luther, Calvin—all the great thinkers in the western theological tradition—who have written on justifying violence in some sense.’⁽¹⁵⁾

Minch: ‘There is this mentality that America is God’s arm. That happens to be one of the particularities that leads to unquestioning obedience to qualified authority. The entire history of the U.S. is permeated by the concept of American exceptionalism—a city set on a hill,’ a ‘New Jerusalem,’ the idea that the U.S. is a chosen and select nation—that’s pervasive. But Mormons have a kind of history and faith that intensifies and buttresses and elaborates that claim in a way that I think is unique to their doctrine. The typical Christian might concede that America is a special nation under God’s providence, but not to the extent that Mormon’s take it—that God is the *de facto* author of the constitution, or that Jesus visited the land or has eventual eschatological purposes here.’⁽¹⁶⁾

SURVEYS

Demographics

Approximately 250 people, most of them directed from online discussion groups, responded to a survey entitled ‘Mormon War Survey.’⁽¹⁷⁾ Participants were asked questions in three categories: leaders, war, and scripture. Responses were statistically categorized: 97% of respondents answered, ‘Yes’ when asked if they were LDS; 17.6% were from Utah County (the largest geographic group represented, followed by the Pacific states at 14.7%); 35% had bachelor’s degrees, 12% had a master’s, and 12% had a Ph.D.; 30% had some college experience; 42% described themselves as Republican, 30% as politically neutral, 27% as Democrat (70%, however, described themselves as conservative, versus 30% for liberal); 58% voted for Bush in 2000, and 50% voted for Bush in 2004.

Leaders

One major pattern that emerged from the responses was the concept of strong devotion to righteous, moral leaders. Asked to describe their ideal leader, respondents wrote: ‘Someone who makes moral decisions that lead his people to peace, prosperity, security, and freedom.’ ‘Someone who has the spirit of God with him.’ ‘Looks to God for advice.’ ‘Spiritual, decisive, Republican.’ ‘Principled, faithful.’ ‘Someone who has deep religious faith.’

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan ranked among ‘the best’; perceptions of Bill Clinton were ‘unfavorable’; perceptions of George H. W. Bush, Jimmy Carter, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Harry S. Truman were ‘neutral.’ Presidents most often named among ‘the worst’ were Nixon, Clinton, and Carter. For ‘good’ non-American leaders, Mohandas Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair were most named. ‘Bad’ non-American leaders were Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Saddam Hussein, Fidel Castro, and Jacques Chirac.

When asked who were ‘good leaders’ from scripture and why, respondents wrote: ‘Pahoran because he fought for what was right.’ ‘Captain Moroni because he successfully led the Nephites in moral warfare to victory and exemplifies the concept of a ‘just war’ today.’ ‘Pahoran, because he supported Moroni.’ ‘Captain Moroni (Title of Liberty) was a great leader because he fought in defense of those things which are truly valuable.’ ‘Captain Moroni – unwavering belief in God and freedom. King Benjamin – no taxes.’ The most anomalous answer was: ‘Nebuchadnezzar – willing to re-evaluate his position when confronted with new information. King Lamoni – same reason, and exhibited a desire for the best for his people. King Benjamin – unwilling to ask anything of his people that he couldn’t do himself.’

As for ‘bad’ political leaders found in scripture: ‘David, because of his inability to live righteously.’ ‘David, because he had sex with that woman.’ ‘Gadianton, because he followed his carnal instincts.’ ‘King Noah, total self-indulgence.’ ‘Pilate, because he was morally weak.’ ‘The Sanhedrin, because they killed Jesus.’

From these responses a general pattern emerges of the types of leaders Mormons prefer to follow. In a recent *New York Times* article on Provo, Utah, Delia Randall, from Provo, summed it up, ‘I like George Bush because he is God fearing, and that’s how a lot of people in this area feel.’⁽¹⁸⁾

War

Of those surveyed, 70% supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The primary reasons for support (according to 11 categorized choices) were: ‘I felt Saddam Hussein needed to be stopped’ (89%); ‘I felt the people of Iraq needed to be liberated’ (70%); ‘I felt there were weapons of mass destruction’ (63%); ‘I felt the government had more information than me, and that I could trust them’ (44%); ‘I felt a feeling of patriotism’ (41%); and ‘I wanted to support the President’ (38.5%).

When asked if they felt LDS leaders supported the war, 67% said no (versus 11% yes). When asked if LDS scripture supported the war, 52% said no (versus 15% yes). When asked if they felt the war would lead to missionary work in the Middle East, 52% said no (versus 18.5% yes). These responses indicate that participants do not believe their opinions came directly from scriptural sources or from LDS leadership.

Open-ended responses for the support of war in 2003 revealed: ‘An opportunity for democracy in the region.’ ‘The world needs righteous leadership.’ ‘Basically you had people that I trusted like Powell telling me I’m going to get bombed—I trusted them and thus cautiously supported the war.’ ‘The whole Middle East is corrupted. Iraq was a good start for bringing lasting peace.’ ‘Mainly the fact that the government wouldn’t have possibly led us into a war that wasn’t correct.’ ‘It was the right thing to do. If the British and French had stood up to Hitler in the 1930’s with the Rheingebiet and Sudetenland millions of lives would have been saved.’ When asked ‘How would you characterize your support of the

war in Iraq now?" 55% reported "stronger than" or the "same as" in 2003 (versus 45% less than).

Those who opposed the war in 2003 said: "I felt that we were taken to war under false pretenses. First it was the implications that connected Saddam to 9/11. Then the reason shifted to WMDs. Then the reason shifted to Regime Change. Then it shifted to the establishment of Democracy. It was like we were all strung along. It seemed like war was this administration's intention all along, and the reasons for the war were malleable." "I didn't feel it was justified. It appeared to place too many lives in jeopardy primarily for economic reasons." "It is wrong to 'go on the offensive' as we see with the experience of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon."

As for support of other U.S. wars, 85% supported efforts in Afghanistan; 40% supported both the Kosovo and Bosnia conflicts (though most were indifferent); 72% supported the Persian Gulf war; 37% supported the Vietnam war (versus 19% neutral, 42% opposed); 56% supported the Korean war; 94% supported WWII; 70% supported WWI and the U.S. Civil War, respectively; 91% supported the U.S. Revolutionary War.

When asked, "Based simply on your opinion, how will future generations regard the war in Iraq?" 60% said "similar to Vietnam," 10% said "similar to Afghanistan," 10% said "similar to WWII."

The war responses in general suggest that Mormons believe war is necessary under certain conditions, and that God-fearing leaders are best able to determine whether those conditions have been met. It therefore becomes incumbent to support both the war and its leader. This is mostly consistent with LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley's recent General Conference address:

Many have been speaking out and doing so emphatically. That is their privilege. That is their right, so long as they do so legally. However, we all must also be mindful of another overriding responsibility, which I may add, governs my personal feelings and dictates my personal loyalties in the present situation.

When war raged between the Nephites and the Lamanites, the record states that "the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for . . . 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..."

It is clear from these and other writings that there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty, and against tyranny, threat, and oppression...(19)

Scripture

The most common scriptures that came to the mind of respondents regarding war were: "Stripling warriors." "The entire last half of the book of Alma." "Captain Moroni's title of liberty." "Fighting in defense of our families." "If everyone was like Captain Moroni, the world would be a better place." "There will be wars and rumors of wars as a sign of the last days." "Lamanites vs. Nephites." "Nephi killing Laban, so a whole nation wouldn't dwindle in unbelief." "The Gadianton robbers."

When asked for conference addresses on war, most cited LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley's conference talk "after 9/11 or 'about Afghanistan getting bombed'" (referenced above). Other specific references were: David O. McKay, April 1942 p 72; and Dallin H. Oaks, "World Peace," May 1990. The most anomalous answer was: "Benson gave one that was pro-war, and J. Reuben Clark gave a great one that was against war. Other than that, I can't think of any. I generally try not to think too much about it because I feel like cultural LDS beliefs conflict with Christ's teachings. However, I feel like modern church leaders aren't consistent with the cultural LDS beliefs."

When asked what specific church authorities come to mind on the subject of war, the most common answers were: Gordon B. Hinckley, Boyd K. Packer, Paul H. Dunn, Ezra Taft Benson, Thomas Monson, James E. Faust, and David O. McKay. The most anomalous answer was, "Elder Oaks. I've met him and he seems like the kind of person who would be eager to jump into war."

When asked open-endedly, "In your opinion, under what conditions is war justified?" the most common answer was defense of land, family, religion and way of life. When asked, "In your opinion, did Jesus come to send peace or a sword?" 65% said peace, 35% said a sword. When asked, "In your opinion, is Jesus's message one of peace or one of war?" 89% said peace, 11% said war.

The responses indicate a preference for and sentimentalization of pro-war-related scriptures, such as the stripling warriors, Captain Moroni, Pahoran and his support of Captain Moroni, the necessity of Amalickiah-Amoron wars in the book of Alma, etc. Though anti-war verses in LDS scripture exist, they were

not given major priority.

Statements

Respondents were shown the following three statements:

1. "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, 'Thou shalt not kill'; at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.'"
2. "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: 'Love your enemies.'"
3. "It was all so scientific, so systematic, so planned, so ingenious. General Eisenhower used to weep about it, that all these brains, all this intelligence, all this ingenuity and dedication was only devoted to killing each other. It was utter waste. The utter wastefulness of the thing, the wrongness of what we were doing was so strong that people would cry, they would weep, tears would stream down their faces. It was so utterly, unspeakably sad."

About 40% of respondents correctly identified the author of the first statement as Joseph Smith Jr., founder of Mormonism. (Other common guesses were Gordon B. Hinckley and Spencer W. Kimball.)

Some 28% correctly identified the author of the second statement as Spencer W. Kimball. (The most common guess was Gordon B. Hinckley.)

Only 14% correctly identified the author of the third statement as Hugh Nibley (LDS scholar). (Other common guesses were Ezra Taft Benson and Gordon B. Hinckley.)

In response to Joseph Smith's statement, common responses were, "Agree." "True." "Very true." "A true statement." "Absolutely correct." "Essentially, God demands only one thing: strict obedience to his commands." "Absolutely correct: God's dictates can conflict and force us to face paradox." "Exceptions to commandments should hardly ever be made, but it's up to God. He's the one that can contradict himself if he feels like it." The most anomalous response was, "I believe this gives in to people justifying all kinds of behaviors. I don't agree with it."

In response to Spencer W. Kimball's statement, common responses were, "Not realistic." "Misses the bigger picture." "Sounds like a liberal pacifist." "Loving your enemies to the exclusion of preparation leads only to destruction of the righteous." "We must do whatever it takes to defend our country, freedom and religion." "This country was founded on the winning of a war." "While he has a point, SWK might be going overboard on this one." The most anomalous response was, "The Mormon notion of having all the truth lends itself easily to condescension. These conditions breed Nationalism, Racism, and a natural falling-away from the kindness and generosity championed by Christ. 'Love your enemies.' Was anything more beautiful ever said?"

In response to Hugh Nibley's statement, common responses were, "War is a waste. But it is possible to be on the right side of a just war." "War is a horrible, tragic, but sometimes necessary thing." "I don't think it's speaking against the U.S. involvement in the war, just saying it's sad that there was a war at all." "You can weep about its wastefulness and its stupidity while maintaining a mature attitude about the necessity of defense of self and others." "Speaker doesn't seem to appreciate freedom. Freedom is worth fighting for or else we will become slaves." "I don't think it's speaking against the US involvement in the war, just saying it's sad that there was a war at all." The most anomalous response was, "This is exactly how we should feel about going to war. It is horrible and gruesome and everything about it is wrong."

The majority of these responses show a general inclination, even fascination towards war. Peace pronouncements made by leaders or scholars of the LDS church are dismissed as "liberal" or "unrealistic," representing a mounting problem within the LDS church—the inability for LDS leadership to control widespread pervasive or political attitudes among its members. "In order to make a change among Mormons," says Birch, "the leaders have to make repeated efforts, not just one talk in conference. So it's like anything else. It takes sustained, repeated efforts." (20) Popular LDS novelist, Orson Scott Card, observed: "Those who have actually lived in a Mormon ward—and especially those who have tried to lead a group of Mormons in any kind of activity—can all affirm one truth: Mormons may well be the most stubborn, independent-minded group of people ever assembled in a religious community." (21)

Respondents were asked two questions of a polarized nature, unrelated to war, as a control. When asked, "Are Mormons Christian?" 100% responded, "Yes." When asked, "Are RLDS, FLDS, and other 'fringe' or non-mainline LDS groups 'Mormon'?" 70% responded, "No," which is interesting. Even after sustained, repeated efforts by LDS leadership to discard the term "Mormon," members of the LDS church not only seem to want to keep it, but also want the word to apply only to themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

That there is a conservative Republican majority(22) among Mormons, particularly in Utah, is no secret. Liberal views among Mormons outside of Utah, however, are not seen as a type of heresy. (When asked, "Can one hold a majority of liberal views and still be considered a good Mormon?" 86% said yes. Of the 14% who said no, 91% were from Utah County.) The research calls into question the source of the formulation of political beliefs. Most respondents fall somewhere under the three categories outlined by Skabelund, Birch, and Minch (the culture of war, cultural conventions, and/or patriotism).

Also present in the responses is the inherent fundamentalism in both the Mormon (and conservative Christian) worldview(23) and the Bush administration's justifications for war. In times of uncertainty, it is natural for people to turn to their religious canon for answers. The Book of Mormon narrative contains episode after episode of melodramatic chapters on war and violence, good versus evil, Nephites and Lamanites, God and Satan. A contemporary war against an "axis of evil" where one is either "with" the cause or "against" the cause (as exhibited in the rhetoric of the Bush administration) resonates well within biblical, "last days," "apocalyptic," and Mormon worldviews. As one respondent wrote, "The Nephites and Lamanites are like the Republicans and Democrats. When America is living worthy of God's blessings, Republicans are elected and the nation is protected. When America is wicked, the liberals and the Clintons are elected and America is vulnerable." It is apparent that Mormons tend to apply, or "liken"(24) the war narratives of their canon toward modern events, but only insofar as the stories support cultural convention and patriotism.

According to Birch, "The Book of Mormon ends...with a prophetic plea to modern readers to apply the lessons of the book to their own experience. Because Mormons believe the Book of Mormon was preserved in order to come forth in the 'latter-days,' their approach to issues in contemporary society is deeply affected by the central themes of the book."(25)

The view that Book of Mormon events are an echo of the last days seems to be supported by Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth president of the LDS church: "The record of the Nephite history just prior to the Savior's visit reveals many parallels to our own day as we anticipate the Savior's second coming."(26)

According to Minch, Mormons are among the "dispensationalist" groups which highly anticipate the second coming of Jesus Christ and look for clues, signs, and symbols that the event is soon to come.(27) A major war in the Middle East is one of those signs that must come to pass. One of the most fundamental reasons, therefore, for widespread support of the war among Mormons and conservative Christians—whose views toward scripture swing toward the literalist—is because "the bible says" there's going to be a war in the Middle East before Jesus's return. Those who oppose Bush and protest the war are categorized by default as being opposed to God's purposes.

Additionally, a curious "safety net" within the Mormon worldview exists in the dual doctrines of "life after death"(28) and "baptism for the dead,"(29) in which death anxiety(30) over rising war casualties—be they Americans, insurgents, or innocent civilians—is relieved. To Mormons, death is not the end, but a passage from one state of existence to another where those who did not receive the Mormon message while in mortality will have the opportunity to do so during the-great-sorting-out-of-things—a 1,000-year period on earth in which all wrongs will be rectified, including the tragic but necessary injustices of war, but not until the return of Jesus, and only after a great war in the Middle East.

Based on the answers of respondents, however, these religious concepts, though central to their spiritual lives, apparently play a lesser role in the formulation of political worldviews. Scripture appears to be applied inconsistently, and only in a manner which supports conventional beliefs, reducing religious canon, in the political realm, to something of a Rorschach test where one sees what supports one's previously held views. The single greatest correlation between support for George W. Bush and the war in Iraq, for example, is little more than geography (participants residing within Utah county were four times more likely to support both). As one respondent wrote, "I was born and raised in Chicago. I'm Democrat. My parents are Democrats. I voted for Gore in 2000. While attending BYU, I voted for Bush. I really don't know why, and I don't even support the war."

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8 Responses to 'Perceptions of War in Mormon Culture'

1. *Jason* Says:
[June 30th, 2006 at 10:16 pm](#)

What an interesting study!

2. *Matt Elggren* Says:
[July 1st, 2006 at 3:56 am](#)

Someone finally said it! Mormons see through a glass darkly too..and in Utah Valley that glass is dark and bloody red. But why?

3. *Mark Butler Says:*

[July 1st, 2006 at 7:44 am](#)

Skabelund: "The United States has this culture of war, that's built into our government, and we feel like we have to go to war. Part of that grows out of the idea that the United States always has to have an enemy. We have this complex. And it started out being the British. Throughout our history, we've always felt like there had to be an enemy."

That has got to be one of the most naive statements I have ever heard. Certainly an enemy focuses the national attention, but the idea that we have culture of war where we go out looking for enemies to attack is downright ridiculous.

Here is George Washington:

Contemplating the internal situation as well as the external relations of the United States, we discover equal cause for contentment and satisfaction. While many of the nations of Europe, with their American dependencies, have been involved in a contest unusually bloody, exhausting, and calamitous, in which the evils of foreign war have been aggravated by domestic convulsion and insurrection; in which many of the arts most useful to society have been exposed to discouragement and decay; in which scarcity of subsistence has imbibited other sufferings; while even the anticipations of a return of the blessings of peace and repose are alloyed by the sense of heavy and accumulating burthens, which press upon all the departments of industry and threaten to clog the future springs of government, our favored country, happy in a striking contrast, has enjoyed tranquillity - a tranquillity the more satisfactory because maintained at the expense of no duty.

(George Washington, Seventh annual message, Dec 8, 1795)

Or how about Abraham Lincoln:

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural [sic] address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissole [sic] the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

...

If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him?

Fondly do we hope—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

(Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865)

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation”—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself. (John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961)

As for the peace that we would preserve, I wonder who among us would like to approach the wife or mother whose husband or son has died in South Vietnam and ask them if they think this is a peace that should be maintained indefinitely. Do they mean peace, or do they mean we just want to be left in peace?

There can be no real peace while one American is dying some place in the world for the rest of us. We’re at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it’s been said if we lose that war, and in so doing lose this way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening. Well I think it’s time we ask ourselves if we still know the freedoms that were intended for us by the Founding Fathers.

Not too long ago, two friends of mine were talking to a Cuban refugee, a businessman who had escaped from Castro, and in the midst of his story one of my friends turned to the other and said, “We don’t know how lucky we are.” And the Cuban stopped and said, “How lucky you are? I had someplace to escape to.” And in that sentence he told us the entire story. If we lose freedom here, there’s no place to escape to. This is the last stand on earth.

(Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing”, 27 October 1964)

Hardly sounds like a culture of war to me.

4. *To Mark Says:*

[July 1st, 2006 at 8:46 am](#)

Mark Butler, I find your comments to be the epitome of naive. Quoting two people you worship proves nothing. It appears you have your head in the sand and don’t know what is meant by “culture of war,” nor that the three men interviewed aren’t the originators of the theory.

Come on, man.

5. *To Mark Says:*

[July 3rd, 2006 at 3:08 am](#)

As the study suggests, I bet people will read it as a Rorschach test. I think those Mormons who are conservative and war supporting will not like this review, and those who are liberal will find it interesting.

6. *Mike Says:*

[July 3rd, 2006 at 11:57 am](#)

Interesting, but why have you made it so hard to find out who you are? I don’t see any author info at all. 😞 It would seem more credible to me if you told us who you are and where you’re from (any university affiliation?) I hope that you continue to study this important issue.

7. *Richard Says:*

[August 12th, 2006 at 11:37 pm](#)

I consider myself conservative (at least not liberal), and a thinking person, and I find it very interesting. It stimulates a curiosity to try and understand what the scriptures and statements of the General Authorities mean and what the will of God really is. It creates a spiritual and intellectual conundrum in which I must evaluate my beliefs and feelings and possibly re-align them to what The Lord really wants.

Personally, I think that if Christ lived in the United States today, he would not associate himself with any political party or ideology and would vote but weep every time.

8. *Lew Jeppson Says:*

[September 5th, 2006 at 9:12 pm](#)

The Church's position on the Iraq war is unintelligible so how can the views of the membership on same be anything other than a mish-mash. Mormons' views of the middle east are based on myth, and such views are likely to end up getting my kids killed there.

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