

# A CHRISTIAN PEACE

In recent weeks the hopes of many have brightened with the prospects of peace in Southeast Asia; but others have lived with the war so long that they seem strangely indifferent to its terror and abysmally ignorant of its reality. When Presidential Advisor Henry Kissinger was reporting the results of our negotiations with North Vietnam on national television, many viewers called local stations to complain about the usurpation of their regular programs. Still others, weary of the war and of the conflicting rhetoric about it, have become cynical about the possibility of peace.

The war has taken its toll in many ways, not the least of which is a division and a despair among our people. Because we were so late in coming to terms with the moral implications of the war, some virtue seems to have gone out of us. We have been all too willing to defend ourselves, all too eager to cover up or explain away our national sins. The mystery of iniquity has ceased to be mysterious to us as we have acclimated and accommodated ourselves to the business of war.

With such dulling of our moral conscience is peace possible? Peace as the world knows it is essentially an illusion. Even if the war in that land which has been scarred by the "fury of aerial bombardment" were to end today, peace would not come. As Apostle Hyrum Smith said toward the end of World War I, "After this war is over will there be peace? No, there will be no peace. It will take generations to outlive the impressions of hatred and animosity that are now being made upon the hearts of the children against their fellow-men. . . . Peace to be permanent must come from within as well as to be seen externally."

Such internally-directed peace does not come by treaty and compromise; it comes painstakingly as people of good will truly sue for peace by being peaceable themselves and by seeking to share their peace with others. In reemphasizing the Lord's commandment to the Saints over a century ago, President Harold B. Lee said recently, "In our generation the true Christian's position on war is clearly set forth by a declaration in which the Lord says, 'Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace. . . .' (D. & C. 98:16)." In commenting on

this scripture Hugh Nibley said, “‘Renounce’ is a strong word: we are not to try to win peace by war, or merely to call a truce, but to renounce war itself, to disdain it as a policy while proclaiming . . . peace without reservation.”

This is another instance in which the Lord has given a higher commandment to those who have received more light and knowledge. There is always a difference between the way of the Children of God and the way of the world. As Christ said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: *not as the world giveth*, give I unto you.” The peace the world gives is precarious and partial because, to use Thomas Chatterton’s phrase, it is a “peace put in impossible things.”

Only the peace that Christ gives endures for those of us who have taken upon ourselves His name. He came into the world to bring that peace, as the angels announced at His birth, and He left the world proclaiming that same peace. When He appeared to His disciples prior to His ascension, His common salutation was, “Peace be unto you.” His peace is a gift of grace, which comes to those who have sought to eliminate the causes of war — hatred and selfishness and pride — from their own lives and from the world, who have been willing to absorb evil through love, whose hearts are touched by injustice and sorrow. As Joseph Pintauro has said, however,

Peace will not work  
If just one man alive  
Is unjust  
If one man alive  
Is ignorant or hungry or crazy or ashamed.

Christ’s peace is not a guarantee of a carefree life. It is only a guarantee that one can endure the horror and hatred of the world, and through Him ultimately to prevail over it. As Christ taught His followers, “These things I have spoken that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

The Christian does not withdraw into the security of a private peace, but risks sharing it with others, suing for peace, working for peace, even in a world in which, as the Psalmist said, “I labor for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle.” This is reflected in what President Joseph F. Smith said in 1914, “For years it has been held that peace comes by preparation for war; the present conflict should prove that peace comes only by preparing for peace, through training the people in righteousness and justice, and selecting rulers who respect the righteous will of the people.”

Latter-day Saints, above all others, should take the leadership in proclaiming peace. It is especially incumbent upon those of us who are disciples of the Prince of Peace to promote peace in every righteous way.

In remembering Christ’s birth at this season may we strive to be reborn and renewed through Him. Such renewal brings personal peace, and that peace can be ours permanently as we seek to retain a remembrance of Him from day to day. But it can also be a shared peace as we seek to make Christ known to those who are without hope. As others come to know that peace, which truly passes understanding, mankind’s hope for a true peace will be immeasurably enlarged.