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RENOUNCE WAR!

Editor:

Recently the doctrine has been propagated hereabouts, that there is No Substitute for Victory—military victory. May I call attention to a very strong statement on the subject in D.C. 93:16-17: "Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children; and again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me."

"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 disclaim it as a policy while proclaiming (that means not just announcing, but preaching) peace without reservation. But if we renounce war, how shall we defend and advance our interests? We are told that, too: after the clear statement of what we must renounce comes the equally clear statement of what we must put in its place—the substitute. Instead of playing with fireworks we are to "seek diligently" to advance the work of salvation for the living and the dead, and to make a serious effort to influence the Jews. That is a full-time job and our whole assignment. Next after the prohibition and the command comes the penalty: if we do not take this course "the whole earth will be cursed, and all flesh consumed..." The alternative is not just a substitute suggested for our consideration, but an out-and-out command, accompanied by a resounding ultimatum: either to renounce war or to be totally destroyed—there is no third choice.

Thus we have the mandate to renounce military action, the order to substitute something very different in its place, and the terrible penalty for failure to do both. A few years ago such an extreme proposition sounded quite fantastic; the consuming of all flesh belonged to the category of wild apocalyptic nightmares. Today however the best scientists all over the world are repeating the same alternatives with ominous urgency and insistence: it is to be either no more war or mutual annihilation. Those two verses of the D. and C., revealed almost 140 years ago, are standing alone enough to prove Joseph Smith a true prophet.

The Jaredites, thoroughly convinced that there was no substitute for victory, kept hacking away at each other until they demonstrated the truth of the maxim, "Destroy them and they will destroy you." When the Nephites after a series of brilliant military successes declared "that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land" as the only solution to the Lamanite problem (for there is no substitute for victory), their great general Mormon instantly resigned his command and "utterly refused" to fight with them, but "did stand... as an idle witness" to record what happened next for our benefit. His message to us is an impassioned plea "to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," substituting the work of salvation for the work of destruction. If we persist in misusing the words of the Savior, "Who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword," to end peacefully, "Who does not take up the sword shall perish by the sword," we shall deserve what happens to us. This is not a protest; just a timely reminder, that we may remember when it happens that we have been warned and forewarned.

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