

Christ's World Government: An End of Nationalism and War

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THE TENTH ARTICLE OF FAITH states the Mormon belief that "Christ will reign personally upon the earth." This is usually taken to mean that Christ will literally return to the earth at the Second Coming and that he will govern the whole earth for a thousand years of peace (McConkie 1982, 597-98). What are the political and economic implications of this doctrine? This essay, a preliminary examination, explores how the present global political system has created some of its own virtually insoluble political and economic problems and how these may be solved by the world government of Christ's millennial reign. However, the millennial reign will require, besides the powerful kingship of Christ, profound changes of attitude among all peoples, including active Latter-day Saints.

It seems apparent from the scriptures that the nations, governments, and kingdoms presently existing must be eliminated as part of the millennial reign. One description of the calamities of the last days notes that the Lord will make "a full end of all nations" (D&C 87:6). A further description of the millennium is: "Ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you. . . . and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay my hand?" (D&C 38:21-22) A third scripture, also speaking of the millennial reign, makes the important point that *all* people on earth will be under the jurisdiction of Christ's world government: "And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh" (D&C 133:25).

The gradual development throughout history of broader systems of government — from the family and clan, to the tribe, to the city-state, to principalities, to kingdoms, and recently to the modern nation-state has made a one-world system seem logical, even inevitable. Although we now seem to be stalled

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on the plateau of the nation-state, we do see the development of numerous international organizations. Perhaps such regional associations of states as the European Economic Community, Organization of American States, Organization of African Unity, Association of South East Asian Nations, and especially the almost universal United Nations, are precursors of the next stage. Even if this is the case, I believe we will not complete this evolution to world government until the Second Coming of the Lord at the beginning of the millennium. In fact, it is clear from the scriptures that the world government of Christ will be established with irresistible power, by the Lord, and not by man. Human beings will not voluntarily develop a world government in the foreseeable future. One organization which promotes the idea of a world government, World Federation, U.S.A., concedes that a single government "is inconceivable in the next 200 years" (Beres 1981, 107).

The scriptures further indicate a general disarmament at the beginning of the millennial reign by the power and authority of Christ. How the Lord will do this is not known. Perhaps after an awesome display of his almighty power, the rulers of this world will simply lay down their arms. At any rate, when the kingdom of heaven is established:

Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2:3-4).

There is a widespread distrust of the idea of world government, because it might mean an oppressive dictatorship. This natural aversion to any worldwide human empire will not apply to the Lord's world government. The establishment of his benevolent kingdom will be a "beautiful, bright, millennial day" (Townsend 1985, 52-53), welcomed with rejoicing by all but the most wicked of earth's inhabitants. The Savior of the world, we may be confident, will reign with love, kindness, justice, and mercy.

Evidently the wicked, being unworthy, will be destroyed at the beginning of the millennium: "For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand" (D&C 29:11).

The miraculous destruction of the wicked is, of course, a very important precondition to the establishment of a righteous and peaceful world. But, in my opinion, it is insufficient to guarantee peace among diverse people for a thousand years. Even though we understand that Satan is bound throughout the period (D&C 43:30-31), millennial parents will still have to be amazingly successful in the moral and spiritual education of their youth if they are to bring up children "without sin unto salvation" (D&C 45:58). If this scripture is taken at face value, it seems to say that for a thousand years, generation after generation, every child born during the period will live in perfect righteousness, completely free from any error, wrong, or sin. I think there are some good reasons for believing that, although righteousness will prevail, sin and human weakness will still exist.

First, we understand that anyone worthy of a terrestrial salvation will be able to “abide the day” of Christ’s coming. Many inactive members and non-members of the Church will qualify and will continue to believe and practice their several ways of life. Only gradually will global conversion to the kingdom of God be completed (McConkie 1966, 498–501). While terrestrial people, both in and out of the Church, are “honorable men of the earth,” they are also those who “were blinded by the craftiness of men” and “are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:71–79). In short, good but still very human people will be mingled with true saints during the millennium. Millennial society should not be mistaken for celestial society. The earth does not become a celestial kingdom until after the end of the millennium (D&C 29:22–25 and 88:25–26).

Second, I think human beings will still be capable of sin even when Satan is bound. Men and women are capable of doing many things of their free will and are “agents unto themselves” (D&C 58:27–28). Free agents are free to do both right and wrong. As we understand God’s nature, he would not deprive us of our free agency at any time. With Satan bound, we will not be tempted and led into total depravity and evil, but I believe we will still have selfish desires and other human weaknesses. We will probably more quickly recognize our sins and errors and more easily repent of them, but we still will need to live the gospel of repentance, forgive one another, and overcome our weaknesses. Both Isaiah and Joseph Smith refer to sinners during the millennium (Isa. 65:20 and Smith 1978, 313).

Perhaps the principle of relativity is useful here. Relative to the present world, which is full of evil, the millennial world is righteous and paradisiacal. But relative to the celestial kingdom, it is still imperfect.

Therefore, the destruction of the very wicked and the binding of Satan are insufficient of themselves to maintain peace among diverse people over the more than thirty generations of the millennium. There still will be a great need for the world-wide unity, harmony of law, and absence of national jealousies and animosities provided by the Lord’s world government. Even “good” people may be led into conflict if they are kept divided into separate sovereign nations, each one highly protective of its territory, independence, and national self-interest.

There are now some 170 sovereign, independent states or countries in the world. Each claims “sovereignty,” or full independence, which includes the right to arm itself and to declare war in its own national interest. The existence of sovereignty at the national level also means that the independent state recognizes no higher political power or authority. The United Nations is not a world government; member countries have not surrendered their sovereignty to it. The United Nations has performed some useful peacekeeping functions but is practically powerless to prevent war when independent countries are determined to pursue it.

The current world system of independent states has been called the “war system” because it practically guarantees that war will occur at times between the sovereign states (Brown 1987, 76). When one thinks of the millions who

have suffered and died, and are still dying, in the many wars of this century, it is tragic on a global scale that any state can arm itself and declare war on another.

Some political thinkers have suggested the following connection between sovereignty and war: *Wars between political units cease when sovereignty is transferred to a larger unit* (Beres 1981, 87). While it is theoretically possible for another civil war to occur between a group of separatist American states and the United States, it is practically impossible for war to occur between any two American states within the U.S. federal system. If the whole world were organized as one political unit, it would be highly unlikely for war to occur between any of its provinces or regions. I suggest that this may be the geopolitical reason why the Lord has chosen a world government for his millennial reign.

We call Idaho or California states, but they are not sovereign nation-states in the sense that the United States or the Soviet Union are sovereign states. American states govern themselves locally but have given up some of their sovereignty to the United States federal government. Idaho is not allowed to declare war on California or to arm itself for such a purpose. Any disputes between Idaho and California, over water, for example, must be worked out through negotiation and compromise, or in the courts of the land. Within the United States federal system, we do not feel any loss of freedom because we have given up the right to declare war on each other.

Apparently, in the Lord's world government, *all* countries and kingdoms will give up some of their sovereignty. They will surrender their "right" to declare war and their massive armaments to the kingdom of God, and disputes will be settled peacefully, perhaps by appeal to a world court which has the power to enforce its decisions. Billions of dollars and uncalculable human energy will be available for peaceful development projects when no part of the world has a military or defense budget. In 1986 alone the world spent nearly \$900 billion on arms (*The Post Register*, [Idaho Falls] 24 Nov. 1986, p. 1).

It appears, then, that the principle reason peace will last for a thousand years during the millennium is that with one world government the sovereign power of states to make war will no longer exist. War will simply not be an option in the millennial system, just as Idaho is not allowed to make war on California or Wyoming in the United States federal system. Some believers in world government have suggested that it would probably work most effectively as a World Federation, a sort of United States of the World (Beres 1981, 63–109). If Christ's millennial world government is a type of federation, then obviously the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Iran, Nicaragua, and all other countries will no longer exist as sovereign, armed nations. Perhaps in the Lord's world government they will either be subdivided in different configurations or will remain as provinces, managing local affairs but without full sovereignty. Various regional and ethnic groups that currently have no sovereignty but which desire it, such as Lithuanians, Kurds, Tamils, and others, will probably be able to maintain their identity, but apparently, neither they, nor any other national group, will have full sovereignty. I believe

this institutional change, perhaps more than any other development, will bring peace to the world.

The importance of this institutional reorganization is suggested by Joseph Smith: "Christ and the resurrected saints will reign over the earth during the thousand years. They will not probably dwell upon the earth, but will visit it when they please, or when it is necessary to govern it" (Smith 1976, 268). The constant and continuous application of Christ's charisma and power to keep peace will not be necessary. His world government, the disarmed nations without sovereignty, and Satan bound, will serve well enough in his absence.

If the institution of one-world government were not of great importance in securing peace and equity, then why does Christ select this world-wide system for his millennial reign? With the wicked destroyed and Satan bound, he might just as well have chosen to allow nations to keep their sovereignty and independence, relying on the gentleness and brotherly love of men and women of good-will to keep the peace. It seems logical to conclude that the reason he does not is because the actual institution of world government is vital to maintaining peace and equity for a thousand years.

Under the present nation-state system, humanity seems unlikely to fully resolve such problems as international terrorism, the threat of both conventional and nuclear war, or famine in parts of the Third World. If we have not found solutions to these problems by the time of the millennium, then it strikes me that as the Lord establishes his world government upon the earth, many will rejoice and breathe a sigh of relief. It will be an idea whose time has come. The Lord's Prayer will have been finally answered: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-13).

Certainly one of the greatest changes of the millennium will be a resolution to many grievous economic problems which cannot be solved in the piecemeal fashion to which we are limited. Vast and growing differences in levels of economic development between the modern, developed world and the many struggling countries of the underdeveloped Third World now exist. Surely, peace for a thousand years would be impossible if such poverty and inequality continued to exist. One of the chief characteristics of the "Zion" of Enoch was that "there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18-19). The Church today teaches that the Zion of Enoch, or the New Jerusalem, will return with the Lord at the time of the second coming and will become one people with modern Zion during the millennium (Talmage 1981, 352). Enoch's solution to poverty, which is probably identical to the Lord's (discussed below), will then no doubt be extended to cover the whole earth.

We do not have much detailed information on the millennial economy, but a picture of peaceful family productivity emerges from Isaiah:

And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; . . . mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain (Isa. 65:21-23).

In stark contrast with that idyllic scene is the tragic spectacle of famine on today's earth, which is unlikely to be permanently solved under the present system. We hold fasts and donate money. Many countries and private organizations send food, clothing, and blankets to help the unfortunate victims. All of this is commendable humanitarian aid but certainly does not solve the underlying economic problems.

Poverty, uneven economic development, or other economic problems will no doubt still exist at the time of Christ's second coming. Probably many assume that all such inequities will be taken care of by Christ overnight, as if by magic, without any work by human beings themselves. Some Latter-day Saints, as previously indicated, believe there will be peace and plenty only because the wicked will be destroyed and Satan will be bound by God and cannot tempt us to sin. Disease will then have no power to attack our bodies, and there will be economic plenty because the earth will be returned to its paradisiacal state and will no longer have barren places or noxious weeds (McConkie 1966, 492-501). Scriptural support abounds for all of these miraculous changes, but this vision of instant change may be a little unrealistic. More likely, such incredible changes will require human effort and good will as well as the power of God.

Apostle James E. Talmage expressed a similar view:

Throughout the Millennium, the process of regeneration will continue. Society shall be purified; nations shall exist in peace; wars shall cease; the ferocity of beasts shall be subdued; the earth, relieved in great measure from the curse of the fall, shall yield bounteously to the husbandman; and the planet shall be redeemed. The final stages of this regeneration of nature will not be reached until the Millennium has run its blessed course (1981, 377).

That human righteousness, as well as the Lord's power, is required in the binding of Satan can be seen from the scriptures. Nephi said of the millennium:

And because of the righteousness of his [God's] people, Satan has no power; wherefore he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth.

And now behold, I, Nephi, say unto you that all these things must come according to the flesh (1 Ne. 22:26-27).

This last sentence is an intriguing one. Apparently Nephi wanted to add emphasis to the idea that human effort must be involved in the binding of Satan. The millennium itself will be established by the power of the Lord at the second coming; but once his world government is in place, it seems reasonable that human beings will be very much involved in maintaining the peaceful conditions, transforming the world economy, and regenerating the earth.

Many of the changes, apparently, will be gradual as the world economic system is transformed. The present selfish system, fragmented into national or regional economies, with many aid and trade barriers, will no doubt be

changed into the unified system of worldwide sharing characteristic of the Lord's system. Under those generous and enlightened circumstances, the problem of economic development becomes the relatively simple one of allocating presently available resources, technology, expertise, training, and other needs to a problem region.

Then, if what I am suggesting is true, and Ethiopia or other regions are suffering from famine at the beginning of the millennium, the hydroelectric dams, irrigation systems, farming methods, hybrid seeds, storage facilities, roads and other transport, trade relationships, appropriate industry, sanitation facilities, housing, clean water, training and education programs, and *any other need*, can be transferred from the developed regions to Ethiopia or any other afflicted areas. All of this, no doubt, would be done with the philosophy of "helping them to help themselves," and training them to become self-reliant rather than to remain dependent on the developed regions.

Latter-day Saints' involvement, under the Lord's direction, in such economic and social development activities during the millennium would add another exciting dimension of meaning to our religious life. Temple, genealogy, and missionary work would, of course, also flourish.

Such a scenario, obviously, requires a greater willingness to share the world's wealth and technology. The unprecedented sacrifices from people in developed countries will, I believe, be difficult for many Americans, including American Mormons. Even now, many feel that we have already given far too much economic aid to ungrateful foreigners and that we are the most generous of all governments in our aid to developing nations. These feelings, as it turns out, are not supported by foreign aid facts.

All of American economic aid since 1952, a period of over thirty years, is less than the U.S. military budget for 1986 alone. Furthermore, it represents annually only about 1 percent of the federal budget and only about 0.25 percent of the GNP, which is a smaller portion of our national wealth than several other developed countries devote to economic aid (International 1986, 42-43). In 1980, Americans spent about \$70 billion on alcohol and tobacco, which was ten times the foreign aid allotment (Agency, 1981, 50).

The Lord's way, and presumably Enoch's way, of having "no poor among us," was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith during the early days of the Church, while the Saints were trying to live by the Law of Consecration economy:

I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, . . . and all things therein are mine.

And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare (D&C 104:14-17).

Obviously, as the present vast inequality in the world shows, there will never be "enough and to spare" if the rich continue to have more than their

fair share. Rather than a piddling 1 percent of our federal budget as at present, we may be requested to share 10, 20, 30 percent, or more, of our national wealth with the developing regions during at least the beginning years of the millennial reign. Will we make such sacrifices joyfully?

It may be a good idea to read again the sermon of King Benjamin from the Book of Mormon.

And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; . . .

Perhaps thou shalt say: the man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just —

But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God (Mosiah 4: 16–18).

In addition to a more generous attitude, it seems obvious that we must also cultivate a more global consciousness. Not only are we currently divided by national affiliations but by racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences. Many of us are, in fact, tribal in our orientation, unconscious of the extent to which we suffer from cultural blindness, ethnocentrism, prejudice, and intolerance.

A millennial world will require a planetary view. We should begin now to think of ourselves, not exclusively as Americans or Mormons or whites or blacks, but as human beings — citizens of the world, brothers and sisters. Our “circles of concern” must expand to include not only me and mine, and my own race, religion, and nationality, but to include all men and women everywhere. A disquieting thought is that perhaps if we are not able to develop such a broad and all-inclusive love and concern for the whole of humanity, we may be among those who are not worthy to “abide the day” of the Lord’s coming (D&C 45:56–57).

Perhaps one may object that these attitudes of brother- and sisterhood, sharing, and globalism are fine for some vague, far-off millennium but would not work in today’s heavily armed world of suspicion, jealousy, conflicting ideologies, and super-power confrontation. And, of course, it is true that total pacifism, unilateral disarmament, and weakness in the present world would only invite destruction and despotism.

Even so, I am persuaded that the mature empathy necessary for the Millennium would be helpful now. If we as a people, including our government leaders, had the habit of looking at issues not only from our own short-term national interest, but from the point of view of the other countries involved and considered *their* legitimate needs and desires, we would go far toward solving many problems and resolving many conflicts.

A specific example close to home is the case of millions of illegal aliens from Mexico working in the United States. The obvious causes of this undocumented migration are the push-pull factors. Pushed out of Mexico by poverty and joblessness in a deeply troubled economy and pulled toward the United

States by available jobs and relatively high wages, many Mexicans experience an irresistible temptation to cross the porous border illegally.

Instead of looking at this situation only from our point of view and wasting time and money tracking down and deporting the illegals or periodically legalizing some of them, we should consider that it is in our long-term interests to strengthen Mexico's economy. Without a stronger economy, the political stability of our nearest neighbor is threatened. Unrest and revolution in Mexico are certainly outcomes we want to avoid. Therefore, we should make it a top priority to improve trade relations, to increase economic aid, to increase investment under appropriate safeguards against exploitation, to encourage needed reforms, and to take other reasonable steps, which will strengthen Mexico's economy.

As more jobs are created, then the threat of political instability decreases and the illegal alien problem declines. In the long run, the rapid population growth throughout the country, which strains the economy and causes overcrowding in Mexico City, would also be helped by economic development. To put it in its simplest terms: helping them solve their problems solves our problems at the same time. Their problems are really our problems if we take a global view.

In our relations with the Soviet Union we must be more wary. Obviously, we cannot afford to stop defending ourselves and our allies. But I believe much could be accomplished toward peace and stability if we toned down our anti-Soviet rhetoric and behaved with more understanding of their legitimate concerns.

In conclusion, many Latter-day Saints have assumed that the peace and prosperity of the millennium will come about only because the wicked are destroyed and Satan is bound. While these are obviously important conditions to peace, I believe that peace on earth will last for a thousand years primarily because independent states will surrender their arms and sovereignty, including the right to declare war, to the Lord's world government. Besides political realignment, revolutionary economic adjustments will also occur. The basic difference will be that wealth, resources, technology, expertise, and other needs of development will be shared freely. Massive transfers from the developed parts of the world to the underdeveloped will no doubt occur.

While some changes will probably be sudden and dramatic at the time of the second coming, others will more likely come about as gradual adjustments. The dawning of the millennial day will not only require, but doubtless will draw forth, new and more enlightened attitudes among all peoples, including Latter-day Saints. Such a world-wide system of love, sharing, and peace, could never work if people continued to cherish their tribal loyalties, rabid nationalism, prejudices, and intolerance for cultural diversity. New attitudes of globalism, brotherhood, and a planetary view will then prevail. If these loftier, more generous attitudes are true and even necessary for the millennium, we ought to try harder now to emulate them. To identify with all people everywhere, and to think of ourselves as human beings, brothers and sisters, and children of God will free us from the bondage of tribalism. We will then think

and feel that what is good for the whole earth, and for humanity, is good for ourselves.

There are, of course, many questions about the millennium which this essay does not address. Why, for example, does the period of peace only last for one thousand years? What causes it to break down? Does tribalism reassert itself again and the unrighteousness of the people allow Satan to tempt them?

What about the resources of the sea floor or of Antarctica? Will they be allocated to resource-poor underdeveloped areas? Will special trade advantages be granted to landlocked or other geographically disadvantaged regions? Will greater effort be put into recycling products, conserving nonrenewable resources, developing clean and renewable sources of energy, developing a better balance between the birthrate and deathrate, and adjusting other balances of a "steady-state" world society living indefinitely in harmony with the earth? (Meadows 1972, 173-96)

What physical changes will result as the earth "is renewed and receives its paradisiacal glory"? Does continental drift reverse itself to recreate the supercontinent of Pangaea? Or does the present process and direction of plate tectonics simply continue until the continents meet in another configuration? How long will it take? (See D&C 133:20-25) What about learning to manage and make improvements in the world's climates and embark on major projects such as rechannelling rivers into dry regions? Although these are questions for another discussion, I commend them to our attention.

Finally, the eventual establishment of the Lord's new world order will usher in a brighter day of peace, harmony, love, and sharing on an unprecedented scale. For the first time, the entire planet, the whole human species, will be governed in equity and justice by the benevolent kingship of Jesus Christ. The suffering, war, violence, and selfishness of the present world order will be eliminated. All those souls throughout human history who have worked, struggled, and prayed for world peace will breathe a sigh of relief at the demise of nationalism and war.

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