The Peaceful Citizen: Eisenhower's Warning in the Age of Thinking Machines

Nov 19, 2026

Before you begin

This book takes about two hours to read. It asks one question: what did a five-star general see in 1961 that made him warn his own country about its own defenses, and what does that warning mean now that machines are learning to think?

The book is anchored in the teachings on peacemaking found in the Book of Mormon and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That record is, among other things, the story of two civilizations destroyed by war, compiled by a general and addressed to readers in a later age. It has a great deal to say about arms, power, gain and the hearts of a people.

A note on the religious frame. Scripture is quoted from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, with references so you can read each passage in context. Statements by Church leaders are cited by name and date. This book is not a Church publication and speaks for no one but itself. The Church does not endorse parties, candidates or the proposals in Chapters 14 and 15. Applying scripture to public policy is each reader's own stewardship, and faithful people reach different conclusions.

It grew out of a fact-check of a single interview: weapons maker Palmer Luckey at the New York Times DealBook Summit on November 18, 2026. That claim-by-claim analysis is the evidence file behind Chapters 5 and 6.

How to read it.

- **Facts** are stated plainly and linked where a source was checked for this book.
- **Quotations** from presidents, founders and public-domain literature appear in full. Quotations from works still under copyright are kept to a short phrase, and the works are described in my own words.
- **Forecasts** about artificial intelligence are labeled as forecasts. Nobody knows when or whether superintelligence will arrive. This book reports the range of informed views and who holds them.
- **Proposals** in Chapters 14 and 15 come with their rationale and their strongest objection. You are meant to weigh them, and to disagree where the evidence leads you.

A disclosure. This book was drafted by Claude, an AI system made by Anthropic. Anthropic is a party to events described in Chapter 5. I report the public record on those events and take no side.

A note on tone. Eisenhower did not despise the military or the industry that arms it. He had commanded the first and helped build the second. His warning was that of a man who loved an institution enough to say what could go wrong with it. This book tries to keep that spirit.

Prologue. Two Generals, Two Farewells

Two military commanders, sixteen centuries apart by the Book of Mormon's own chronology, ended their careers the same way. Each set down a warning for people he would never meet.

The first was Mormon. He took command of the Nephite armies in his sixteenth year (Mormon 2:1-2) and led them for most of his life. He was no pacifist. He fortified cities and fought to protect his people's homes. Then came a victory that changed them. They began to boast in their own strength and swore to carry the war to their enemies in revenge. Mormon's response is one of the most striking acts in the record.

> *And it came to pass that I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people, because of their wickedness and abomination. (Mormon 3:11)*

He would lead a defense and refused to lead vengeance. He recorded what followed in a single sentence of military analysis.

> *And it was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten; for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them. (Mormon 4:4)*

His people were destroyed. Before the end he wrote to their future survivors and to us.

> *Know ye that ye must lay down your weapons of war, and delight no more in the shedding of blood, and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you. (Mormon 7:4)*

His son Moroni, the last of the Nephites, finished the record and made its audience explicit.

> *Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. (Mormon 8:35)*

The second commander was Dwight Eisenhower. He led the largest invasion in history and then governed the most heavily armed nation on earth. In January 1961 he too used his last address to warn a future people about what their own strength could do to them. Chapter 1 tells that story.

The two farewells differ in authority. For Latter-day Saints, one is scripture and the other is a statesman's counsel. They agree on a great deal all the same. Both men accepted the need for defense. Both feared what happens when a people

comes to trust in arms, profit from them, or delight in using them. Both placed the remedy in the people themselves.

A Latter-day Saint sat in the room for much of Eisenhower's presidency. Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, served as Secretary of Agriculture for all eight years. He held strong views of his own in favor of firm defense against communism, which is a reminder that members of the Church have long weighed these questions differently.

The symbol they share

Eisenhower reached for an old image when he described the America that was passing away: "American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well."

The image comes from Isaiah, and the Book of Mormon preserves it.

> *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (2 Nephi 12:4)*

Isaiah's promise runs from swords to plowshares. Eisenhower was describing a nation that had learned to run the other way, and had built an industry that never turned back. The rest of this book is about that reversal and what a peacemaking people can do about it.

The peacemaker's test

The Book of Mormon teaches about war through a pattern, shown by example and by collapse. Five principles from that pattern serve as the measuring stick for every chapter that follows.

Principle	Source	Plain meaning
1. Defense, never offense	"never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives" (Alma 48:14)	Force is for protecting life and liberty, as a last resort
2. No delight in bloodshed	Captain Moroni was "a man that did not delight in bloodshed" (Alma 48:11)	Reluctance and sorrow are the right posture toward force
3. No power and gain from conflict	Secret combinations exist "to get power and gain" (Ether 8:22)	Watch who profits, and whether profit is steering decisions
4. The voice	"do your business by the voice of the	The people govern, and

Principle	Source	Plain meaning
of the people, awake	people" (Mosiah 29:26)	they answer for what they choose
5. Persuasion over contention	"he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me" (3 Nephi 11:29)	How we argue matters as much as what we conclude

The first two principles describe Captain Moroni, the commander Mormon admired so much that he named his son for him. The record says of him that "if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever" (Alma 48:17). He is the model of a defender whose heart stayed whole.

The test also has an honored exception that points higher. The people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, converted from lives of violence, buried their weapons in the earth and chose to die rather than take them up again. The record calls what they buried "weapons of war, for peace" (Alma 24:19). The Book of Mormon holds up both the reluctant defender and the people who laid weapons down, and it condemns only those who came to love the fight.

The comparison between Mormon and Eisenhower is this book's own framing. Scripture references follow the current edition published by the Church.

Chapter 1. The General's Last Warning

At 8:30 on the evening of January 17, 1961, Dwight Eisenhower sat at his desk in the Oval Office and looked into a television camera. He had three days left as president. He was 70 years old. He had spent half a century in uniform or in office, and he had commanded the largest invasion in history.

The country expected a soldier's goodbye, and he used the hour for a warning.

He began with a fact most Americans had not stopped to notice. For its whole history, the United States had armed itself only when war came, and disarmed when it ended.

> *Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well.*

That era was over. The Cold War, he said, left no time to improvise. The country had been "compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions." Three and a half million Americans worked directly in the defense establishment. Military spending exceeded the net income of every corporation in the nation combined.

He called this buildup necessary. Then he said the sentence that outlived him.

> *In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.*

Three phrases in that passage reward a slow reading.

"Whether sought or unsought." Eisenhower was describing a structure. He accused no one of conspiracy. A contractor who wants the next order, a general who wants the best equipment, a member of Congress who wants jobs in the district: each acts reasonably. The danger lies in the sum.

"Misplaced power." His concern was where decisions get made. Power that belongs to voters and their representatives can drift toward those with the money, the expertise and the permanent interest.

"Exists and will persist." He offered no cure. He described a permanent condition that each generation would have to manage.

He went on to name what was at stake and who would have to protect it.

> *We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.*

Notice the remedy. He placed it with citizens, ahead of any law, agency or watchdog. The word he chose was "compel." Balance would not happen by itself. People who paid attention and knew the facts would have to force it.

The speech held a second warning that almost no one quotes, about science and those who direct it. Chapter 3 takes it up, because it describes the world of artificial intelligence with eerie accuracy.

He closed the section with a caution about time itself.

> *We must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow.*

What the speech was and was not. It was a planned statement, in preparation since 1959, according to records at the Eisenhower Library. His aides Malcolm Moos and Ralph Williams drafted it, and Eisenhower edited it heavily. It was modeled on George Washington's farewell of 1796, which carried its own warning about military power.

A popular story holds that an early draft said "military-industrial-congressional complex" and that Eisenhower cut the last word to spare his colleagues. The surviving drafts do not clearly support that story, and historians treat it with caution. The idea behind it is sound all the same. Congress funds the system and benefits from it, and Eisenhower knew that.

The full text is short and worth reading whole. The Eisenhower Library publishes it, and the National Archives holds the reading copy.

Through the peacemaker's lens

Eisenhower's remedy matches the fourth principle of the test almost word for word. King Mosiah, giving up his throne so that his people could govern themselves, told them where responsibility would now rest.

> *Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people. (Mosiah 29:26)*

Mosiah added a warning in the next verse: if the voice of the people ever chooses iniquity, judgment follows. Self-government transfers accountability from the king to the citizen. Eisenhower's "alert and knowledgeable citizenry" is the civic form of the same idea. Moroni's word for it was shorter. Seeing our day, he wrote that the Lord commands us to "awake to a sense of your awful situation" (Ether 8:24).

One caution keeps the comparison honest. Moroni was describing secret combinations, which are deliberate conspiracies. Eisenhower said influence could arise "sought or unsought." He was describing ordinary incentives, in the open, among people who mostly mean well. The scripture warns of the worst case. Eisenhower warned that the everyday case is dangerous enough.

The question for the next chapter is why this man, of all people, said this.

Chapter 2. Why a Soldier Feared the Arsenal

Eisenhower's warning had five roots. Each one reaches into American history, and each has a counterpart today.

Reason one: the founders' fear of a standing army

The men who wrote the Constitution distrusted permanent military power. They had lived under a king's troops. James Madison put the fear in one sentence at the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

> *A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. The means of defence against foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home.*

George Washington, a general turned president like Eisenhower, used his own farewell address to urge Americans to "avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty."

The Constitution wrote the fear into law. Congress may fund an army for no more than two years at a time. War must be declared by the legislature. Eisenhower's staff studied Washington's farewell while drafting his own, and the echo is deliberate.

Reason two: he had seen the profit motive in war

Between the world wars, Americans grew bitter about arms makers who had prospered in 1917 and 1918. A Senate inquiry led by Gerald Nye spent two years, from 1934 to 1936, investigating the munitions trade. The press called its subjects "merchants of death." Retired Marine general Smedley Butler toured the country with a speech he titled "War Is a Racket."

Eisenhower knew this debate from the inside. As a young major from 1929 to 1933, he worked in the office of the Assistant Secretary of War on plans for mobilizing industry in a future conflict. He understood earlier than most officers how deeply a modern war depends on factories, and how much money moves when it does.

Reason three: he helped build the thing he warned about

World War II turned American industry into what Franklin Roosevelt called the "arsenal of democracy." Auto plants built bombers. The effort won the war.

After victory, Eisenhower, then Army Chief of Staff, wrote a 1946 memorandum urging that the wartime partnership among the military, industry and university scientists be made permanent. He wanted civilian talent kept close to defense planning. Fifteen years later he was warning about the consequences of that partnership's success. He knew its value and its risk because he had argued for it.

Reason four: he counted the cost

Three months into his presidency, in April 1953, he gave a speech known as "The Chance for Peace." Stalin had just died. Eisenhower used the moment to put a price on the arms race in terms any family could grasp.

> *Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.*

He did the arithmetic aloud. One heavy bomber cost as much as a modern brick school in more than thirty cities. One fighter plane cost half a million bushels of wheat. He ended with an image borrowed from scripture and from William Jennings Bryan.

> *This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.*

The full speech is mostly a hard-nosed challenge to Soviet leaders. The passage on cost is a small part of it. That proportion is itself instructive. He believed in strength and grieved its price in the same breath.

In 1961, defense consumed roughly half the federal budget and about nine percent of the whole economy. Every dollar was a choice against something else.

Reason five: he watched fear being manufactured

In October 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, and American confidence cracked. A secret panel known as the Gaither Committee urged a vast increase in missile and shelter spending. Its conclusions leaked. Politicians of both parties, including Senator John Kennedy, charged that Eisenhower had allowed a "missile gap" to open.

Eisenhower knew the gap was a fiction. Photographs from the secret U-2 spy plane showed the Soviet missile force was small. He could not reveal the source. So he spent his last three years in office resisting demands for weapons he knew the country did not need, pushed by services, contractors, columnists and congressmen who each had something to gain from alarm.

That experience sits underneath the farewell address. He had learned that a president with perfect information and five stars on his shoulder could barely hold the line against the combined pressure. He wondered aloud to aides what would happen under a successor who lacked his military standing.

What the five reasons share

None of them rests on bad people. The standing army, the profit motive, the permanent partnership, the hidden cost and the manufactured fear all arise from ordinary incentives inside a system built for a good purpose.

That is why he said the danger "will persist." It is also why the arrival of a new and far more powerful technology, built by private firms and sold to the same buyer, deserves the same alert attention he asked for.

Through the peacemaker's lens

Each of the five reasons has a counterpart in the record Mormon compiled.

Eisenhower's reason	Book of Mormon counterpart
Fear of concentrated military power	Mosiah ends the monarchy because "all men are not just" and one man's power can ruin a people (Mosiah 29:16-17)
Profit in war	The Gadianton bands and the secret combinations sought "power and gain" (Ether 8:22; Helaman 6)
He built the defenses himself	Captain Moroni fortified cities and armed his people, and is praised for it (Alma 48:8-9; Alma 50)

Eisenhower's reason	Book of Mormon counterpart
The cost to the poor	Moroni rebukes a later people who love money and substance "more than ye love the poor and the needy" (Mormon 8:37)
Manufactured fear	Amalickiah appointed men "to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers, against the Nephites" to stir them to war (Alma 48:1)

The third row matters as much as the others. The Book of Mormon honors preparation for defense. Its warning begins where preparation turns into trust in weapons, profit from them, or appetite for their use.

Latter-day Saint leaders have applied that warning to modern arms. In a 1976 First Presidency message, "The False Gods We Worship," President Spencer W. Kimball described a people who commit vast resources to what he called "gods of stone and steel" and depend on them for deliverance. He counted that dependence as a form of idolatry.

Five years later the question came home to Utah. The Air Force proposed basing 200 MX nuclear missiles among 4,600 shelters across the deserts of Utah and Nevada. On May 5, 1981, the First Presidency issued a statement deploring the nuclear arms race and expressing grave concern about the plan. The administration chose another basing mode that fall. Historians debate how much the statement influenced that decision. It remains a rare case of the Church speaking directly on a weapons program.

Historical details in this chapter beyond the linked speeches come from standard biographies and histories and were not re-verified for this edition.

Chapter 3. The Second Warning

The farewell address contains a passage that school textbooks skip. It comes right after the famous one, and it concerns research.

Eisenhower observed that invention had changed. The lone tinkerer had given way to large, costly, organized teams.

> *Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields.*

Research at that scale needs money that only the largest institutions can supply. In 1961 that meant the federal government. He saw two dangers running in opposite directions, and he named both.

> *The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded.*
>
> *Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.*

The first danger is that money bends inquiry. Scholars who depend on one funder learn which questions are welcome.

The second danger is subtler. When a technology becomes too complex for elected officials to judge, they must rely on the experts who build it. Those experts then shape the policy that governs their own work. Power shifts to them without a vote.

Herbert York, a physicist who served Eisenhower, later recalled asking the president whom he had in mind. By York's account, Eisenhower named two men: Edward Teller, champion of the hydrogen bomb, and Wernher von Braun, the rocket builder. Both were brilliant. Both were tireless advocates for programs they led. Both spoke to Congress and the public with an authority no layman could challenge.

How the second warning reads in 2026

Replace "Federal employment" with "a handful of technology companies" and the passage describes frontier artificial intelligence closely.

Eisenhower's 1961 observation	The AI field today
Research needs resources beyond any individual	Training a leading model requires data centers costing billions of dollars
A single funder dominates scholars	A few firms employ a large share of top researchers and supply the computing power universities lack
Policy may be captured by a technical elite	Governments rely on the same companies for the expertise needed to oversee them
The elite advocates for its own projects	Company leaders are the most quoted voices on both the promise and the peril of their products

The direction of dependence has reversed since 1961. Then, government paid and scientists followed. Now private firms hold the capability, and government comes to them as a customer. The Pentagon's 2026 dispute with one AI company over terms of use, described in Chapter 5, was an argument over which side sets the rules. A general in 1961 never had to ask a contractor's permission to use a bomber.

Neither arrangement answers Eisenhower's concern. He feared scholars captured by the state, and he feared the state captured by experts. A world where a few companies hold the knowledge, the machines and the public megaphone raises the second fear in a new form.

The forecasting problem

The second warning also explains why public debate about AI is so hard to follow. The people best placed to know how fast the technology is moving are the people with the most to gain from what the public believes.

A company leader who says superintelligence is two years away may be right. That leader also benefits when investors, recruits and governments believe it. A skeptic who says the whole thing is overblown may be right too, and may have a rival approach to promote. Chapter 9 sets out the range of forecasts with this in mind.

Eisenhower's instruction for this situation was balance. He asked the statesman "to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old, within the principles of our democratic system." Expertise is to be respected and used. It is also to be weighed by people who answer to voters.

Two warnings, one principle

The military-industrial warning concerns who profits from decisions about force. The scientific-technological warning concerns who understands them well enough to decide.

Artificial intelligence built for war joins the two. The same firms profit from the systems and hold nearly all the knowledge about how they work. Eisenhower gave separate warnings because in his day the arms maker and the scientist were different people. Today they often sign the same paycheck.

Through the peacemaker's lens

Eisenhower held science in respect and feared an elite that answers to no one. The prophet Jacob drew the same two-sided line.

> *O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves... But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. (2 Nephi 9:28-29)*

Learning is good. Learning that sets aside every counsel but its own is the danger. The Doctrine and Covenants explains why the danger is constant.

> *We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. (Doctrine and Covenants 121:39)*

That verse was written about priesthood leaders. It describes human nature in any institution, including a laboratory, a company and a government. The remedy in the same section is that influence should be maintained "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41). That is a demanding standard for anyone who holds knowledge that others lack.

The revelations also tell ordinary members what to do about a knowledge gap. They are to "seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). A knowledgeable citizenry is a scriptural duty before it is a civic one.

Chapter 4. Sixty-Five Years of Evidence

A warning should be judged by what followed. The record since 1961 gives Eisenhower's critics and his admirers each something to hold.

What the skeptics of the warning can point to

The republic endured. Elections continued. Power changed hands peacefully for six decades. No general seized the government. The liberties he feared for survived the Cold War.

The arsenal did its job. The United States and the Soviet Union never fought directly. The Cold War ended without a nuclear exchange. Many historians credit deterrence, which required exactly the permanent readiness Eisenhower called necessary.

The burden shrank. Defense took about nine percent of the economy in 1961. It takes roughly three percent now. The share of the federal budget fell from about half to under a sixth.

The partnership produced public goods. Military research funding gave the world the internet, satellite navigation, and much of modern computing and aviation. Eisenhower himself created the agency, now called DARPA, that seeded several of them.

These points are real. Anyone who invokes the farewell address should be able to state them.

What supports the warning

Consolidation. At a 1993 dinner later nicknamed the "Last Supper," Pentagon leaders told defense executives the post-Cold War budget could not sustain them all and urged mergers. Dozens of major suppliers became five. Fewer sellers mean less competition and more leverage over the buyer.

The revolving door. Senior officers and officials routinely move to jobs with the firms they once supervised. A 2021 Government Accountability Office review

counted roughly 1,700 recent senior officials and acquisition officers employed by 14 large contractors. The practice is legal, with cooling-off limits. It shapes incentives all the same.

Political engineering. Large weapons programs spread subcontracts across as many states and districts as possible. A program with jobs in forty-five states is very hard for Congress to cancel, whatever its performance.

The books do not close. The Pentagon has failed nine consecutive financial audits. It is the only major federal agency never to pass one. The administration has meanwhile requested $1.5 trillion for fiscal 2027, a 44 percent increase. A failed audit does not mean the money was stolen. It means auditors cannot verify where all of it went.

Wars begun on bad information. In August 1964 Congress authorized force in Vietnam after reports of a second North Vietnamese attack in the Gulf of Tonkin. That attack did not occur. In 2003 the United States invaded Iraq on claims of weapons of mass destruction that were not found. In both cases officials presented uncertain intelligence as settled, and the public and Congress could not check it in time.

The warning's own author would recognize 2026. The Iran war that began in February 2026 depleted more than half of some missile-defense interceptor stocks, according to a Pentagon assessment relayed by the Congressional Research Service. The president described supplies as virtually unlimited. Congress did not declare the war.

A fair scorecard

Eisenhower's fear	Outcome so far
Loss of liberty to military power	Not realized
Unwarranted influence in the councils of government	Substantially realized, through lobbying, hiring and district-level jobs
Policy captured by a technical elite	Partly realized, and growing with AI
Spending that plunders tomorrow	Mixed: lower share of the economy, record dollars, unauditable accounts
A public too inattentive to compel balance	The open question in every generation

The pattern underneath

The gravest failures share a feature. They happened when three things lined up: a claim of urgent threat, information held by those who benefited from action, and too little time for anyone else to check.

George Orwell compressed the information problem into a party slogan in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "Who controls the past controls the future." Whoever controls what the public knows about a threat controls the response to it.

The successes share a feature too. They came when competition, an inquisitive press, congressional hearings or an honest insider forced the facts into the open. The Pentagon Papers in 1971 and the Church Committee in 1975 are the classic cases.

Eisenhower's phrase for this was an "alert and knowledgeable citizenry." The record suggests he had the mechanism right. Where citizens and their representatives could see, the system corrected. Where they could not, it drifted.

Keep that pattern in mind. The next chapters describe a technology that raises the speed of decisions, concentrates knowledge in fewer hands and makes checking harder.

Through the peacemaker's lens

The Book of Mormon would call the pattern in this chapter the cycle of pride. Mormon paused his history to state it.

> *And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men... at the very time when he doth prosper his people... then is the time that they do harden their hearts. (Helaman 12:1-2)*

Prosperity and victory bred confidence in the people's own strength. Confidence bred offense. Mormon's verdict on the last Nephite wars, quoted in the Prologue, is that they began to lose when they went up against their enemies. The wars in this chapter that began on unverified claims fit his description uncomfortably well.

The record also models accountability done right, and done wrong. In the middle of a desperate war, Captain Moroni wrote a furious letter to the chief judge Pahoran, accusing the government of neglecting its armies.

> *Can you think to sit upon your thrones in a state of thoughtless stupor, while your enemies are spreading the work of death around you? (Alma 60:7)*

A commander demanding answers from civilian leaders about supplies and readiness is exactly the oversight this chapter describes. Moroni also had his facts wrong. Pahoran had been driven from the capital by a rebellion. His reply is a model for anyone accused unfairly.

> *And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart. (Alma 61:9)*

Two lessons follow for citizens. Demand an accounting, as Moroni did. Check the facts before assigning blame, and answer anger without returning it, as Pahoran did.

Figures on historical budget shares, the 1993 consolidation and the 2021 GAO review are cited from memory of standard sources and were not re-verified for this edition.

Chapter 5. The New Arsenal

In 2018 several thousand Google employees signed a letter objecting to Project Maven, a Pentagon program that used the company's artificial intelligence to analyze drone footage. Google let the contract lapse. For a moment it seemed Silicon Valley would keep its distance from war.

Eight years later the distance has closed. The most valuable new defense companies were founded by technology entrepreneurs. The largest AI firms compete for military contracts. The change brings real benefits and a new version of every concern Eisenhower raised.

What has changed since 1961

New entrants. Anduril, founded in 2017, builds autonomous aircraft, drones and sensors. Its latest share sale valued it near $90 billion. Palantir supplies the Pentagon's main targeting software. SpaceX launches most American military satellites and operates the communications network that Ukraine's army depends on.

Competition has returned. After the mergers of the 1990s, five giant contractors dominated. Newer firms now challenge them on price and speed. Eisenhower, who distrusted concentrated suppliers, would have welcomed that part.

The customer no longer owns the capability. A bomber belongs to the Air Force once delivered. A satellite network, a cloud platform or an AI model stays in the company's hands and can be changed, throttled or withdrawn.

Decisions move at machine speed. In the first day of the 2026 Iran campaign, AI-assisted targeting software helped American forces strike more than 1,000 targets. No staff of human planners has ever worked at that pace.

The builders are also the public voices. Founders of defense technology firms own media platforms, command huge followings and speak directly to voters. In 1961 an arms executive needed a lobbyist to be heard. Today some of them are among the most followed people in the country.

Four events from 2026

Each of these is drawn from the fact-check that began this book. Each shows an old warning in a new form.

A company and the Pentagon fought over the rules. In February, the Defense Secretary designated the AI company Anthropic a supply chain risk after it declined to permit certain military uses of its models. A rival signed a deal within hours. One federal court has since called the designation unlawful and another has upheld it. Whatever one thinks of either side, the episode showed that the limits on military AI are currently set by contract negotiations between an agency and its vendors. The Congressional Research Service noted that Congress has not legislated on the reliability or use of such models. (Anthropic makes the AI that drafted this book. This paragraph states the public record only.)

A school was struck. On the first day of the Iran campaign a missile hit a primary school in Minab, killing more than 150 people, most of them children. Former officials blamed outdated human-curated data. No official finding has been published. The targeting system and the speed it enabled are part of the unanswered question.

One executive held a switch over an ally's front line. In October, Ukraine's military lost high-speed satellite service for more than a week. The Wall Street Journal reported that SpaceX's chief executive ordered the slowdown. American officials and the company each pointed elsewhere on who was responsible. The contract terms are not public.

Contractors were asked to chart the future. In September the Pentagon launched Project Meridian, a 120-day study of future warfare co-led by the heads of SpaceX and Anduril with a former House Speaker. Watchdog groups sued, arguing that companies with billions in contracts should not advise on what the department buys next. Defenders reply that such panels are decades old and that the people who build advanced systems know them best.

The case for the new arsenal

The people building these systems make arguments that deserve a hearing.

- Rivals are building the same technology, and a democracy that falls behind invites the wars it hopes to avoid.
- Precise, autonomous systems can spare soldiers and, used well, civilians.
- Startups are cheaper and faster than the old giants, which saves public money.
- Engineers who refuse defense work leave it to those with fewer scruples.

Captain Moroni would recognize the first argument. He spent years building walls, towers and armor before the enemy arrived, and the record praises him for it (Alma 48:8-9). Preparation for defense passes the peacemaker's test.

Through the peacemaker's lens

The test asks its questions of the new arsenal as it would of the old.

Defense, never offense. A weapon that makes striking first cheap, fast and free of risk to one's own soldiers lowers the cost of offense. That is a new temptation for an old principle.

No delight in bloodshed. The Nephites under Moroni "were sorry to take up arms… because they did not delight in the shedding of blood" (Alma 48:23). Sorrow needs time and nearness. A thousand targets in a day, chosen on screens, leaves little room for either.

Power and gain. Valuations that double in a year create pressure to find uses for the product. No conspiracy is required. Eisenhower's "sought or unsought" covers it.

The voice of the people. When rules for lethal technology are set in private contracts, and when contract terms governing an ally's communications are secret, the people have no voice to exercise.

Persuasion and its counterfeit. Amalickiah won a war of opinion before he fought one, by placing speakers on towers (Alma 48:1). The towers of this age are platforms with hundreds of millions of users, and some belong to the men selling the weapons. The next chapter looks closely at what is said from one of them.

Chapter 6. One Interview, Thirty-Two Claims

On November 18, 2026, Palmer Luckey sat for a fifty-minute public interview at the New York Times DealBook Summit. Luckey founded Anduril. He co-leads the Pentagon's Project Meridian. He is a long-time supporter of the president, and his bank received the first new national charter of this administration.

He is also candid, funny and well informed, and he told the audience more than once to discount him for bias. That makes the interview a useful specimen. It shows how a capable advocate for the new arsenal actually argues, and it lets a citizen practice telling the sound from the unsound.

A separate report checks all thirty-two of his substantive claims against the public record. This chapter draws out what that exercise teaches.

What held up

- His advice that every household keep several days of water, food and medicine matches long-standing emergency guidance. Latter-day Saints will recognize the counsel.
- His account of the law on striking systems that serve both civilians and armies was accurate, including his point that it turns on degree and proportion.
- His argument that a government should openly order and defend any wartime risk it wants a private company to carry is strong on its merits.
- His distinction between narrow, purpose-built military software and general chatbots is technically real.

- His statement that corporate executives should not control military policy is one Eisenhower would have signed.

What did not

What he said	What the record shows
The Defense Department lost every war and the old War Department won every war	The 1991 Gulf War was won under the Defense Department. The War of 1812 ended in a draw. The War Department only ever ran the Army.
No one questioned a prior technology executive who chaired a Pentagon advisory board	A senator formally pressed the Pentagon over that executive's conflicts, and ethics groups objected publicly
Germany has sent more money to Russia than to Ukraine	Supportable for the European Union as a whole. For Germany the totals are close at best and depend on what is counted.
Public executions are what ended the death penalty in many states	States mostly moved executions out of sight to quiet opposition
Open coverage of the 1991 Gulf War confirmed public support	That war's coverage was among the most tightly managed in modern American history
No Pentagon office champions weather control	A 1977 treaty the United States ratified bans hostile weather modification

The most important thing he said

Asked about munitions, he did not dispute that stockpiles had run low. The president had said supplies were virtually unlimited. Luckey called that the right thing for a president to say, and went further. Some people, he argued, prize truth too highly, and prosperity has depended on leaders taking liberties with it.

This is an old argument. Plato called it the noble lie. Strategists defend it as a tool of deterrence. Its difficulty is practical. A statement meant to deceive an adversary also deceives the citizens and the Congress who must decide what to fund and whether to fight. Chapter 4 described two wars that began that way.

It also tells the listener how to weigh everything else the speaker says about allies and enemies. A man who endorses strategic untruth by officials, and who holds an official advisory post, has explained his own rules.

Ten techniques worth learning to hear

Technique	How it sounded
History as slogan	One-line verdicts on two centuries of war
"What about the other side?"	Answering a conflict-of-interest charge by naming someone else's
The false choice	An executive must either throttle an ally or lose everything
The vivid hypothetical	Detailed scenarios of attacks that have not happened
The insider's hint	"You are going to find out soon enough"
The uncheckable detail	Private conversations, proprietary data, a remembered performance review
Labeling the objector	Critics are "partisan" or hold the "midwit take"
The humble pose	"I'm a dog on a chain" from a man who helped rename a department
Charm	Jokes that carry weak claims along with strong ones
Endorsed deception	Praise for saying untrue things on purpose

None of these proves bad faith. Skilled speakers of every party use them. They are worth knowing because each one asks you to accept something without evidence.

Through the peacemaker's lens

The scriptures set a plain standard for truth. "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 93:24). Jacob taught that the Spirit "speaketh of things as they really are" (Jacob 4:13). A peacemaker cannot build on a foundation of convenient falsehood, however well meant.

The scriptures also direct how to treat the speaker. Mormon taught that the way to judge is given to every person, "that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night," and in the next breath warned, "see that ye do not judge wrongfully" (Moroni 7:15, 18). Testing a man's claims is a duty. Condemning the man is another matter.

That is the posture this chapter has tried to hold. Luckey's sound points are credited. His errors are documented. His motives are left to him. The Doctrine and Covenants asks citizens to seek out leaders who are "honest" and "wise" (Doctrine and Covenants 98:10). Checking what public figures say against the record is how that seeking is done.

Chapter 7. Life Imitates Art

Nephi explained how he read the old prophets: "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). When King Mosiah translated the record of the destroyed Jaredites and read it to his people, they "did mourn exceedingly" (Mosiah 28:18). A story of someone else's ruin taught them what an argument could not.

Storytellers have been likening the future unto us for two centuries. Their warnings about thinking machines are uneven as prediction and valuable as rehearsal. Engineers have read these stories too. Some were inspired by them and built the thing the author feared.

The creator who walked away (1818)

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the founding text. Victor Frankenstein builds a living being, recoils from it, and abandons it. The creature's crimes follow from that abandonment. Victor's dying counsel is aimed at ambitious inventors.

> *Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge.*

The creature states the reversal of power in a sentence that reads differently in the age of AI.

> *You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!*

The echo. The novel's subject is responsibility after creation. The current debate over who answers for what an AI system does, its maker or its user, is Shelley's question.

Machines that evolve (1863 and 1872)

Four years after Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the English writer Samuel Butler published a letter titled "Darwin among the Machines." He extended evolution to technology and reached a conclusion that sounded absurd at the time: "we are ourselves creating our own successors." He added that "day by day we are becoming more subservient to them."

In his novel *Erewhon*, an imagined people has destroyed its machines as a precaution. Their philosopher answers the objection that machines are not conscious.

> *There is no security against the ultimate development of mechanical consciousness, in the fact of machines possessing little consciousness now.*

The echo. This is the argument now made about AI capability. Present limits do not settle future ones. Butler made it when the most advanced machine was a steam engine.

The world that forgot how to live (1909)

E. M. Forster's story "The Machine Stops" imagines humanity living in private cells, served by a global Machine that delivers food, music and conversation through screens. People seldom meet. They come to revere the system. One character protests.

> *You talk as if a god had made the Machine... Men made it, do not forget that.*

When the Machine fails, no one remembers how to repair it or how to live without it.

The echo. Forster anticipated video calls and isolation a century early. His deeper subject is dependence: skills that atrophy once a system does the work, and reverence for a tool. The outage wave of November 2026 was a small demonstration.

The word "robot" (1920)

The Czech playwright Karel Čapek coined the word in his play *R.U.R.* It comes from a Czech word for forced labor. In the play a company mass-produces artificial workers. Governments then buy them as soldiers. The robots, built for obedience and armed for war, turn on humanity.

The echo. The first story to use the word already contains the full sequence: commercial product, military adoption, loss of control.

The bomb imagined before it was built (1914)

H. G. Wells's novel *The World Set Free* described "atomic bombs" that devastate cities, three decades before Hiroshima. The physicist Leo Szilard read it in 1932. The following year he conceived the nuclear chain reaction, and he later said the novel had shown him what such a discovery would mean.

The echo. This is the clearest case of life imitating art. A warning written as fiction entered the mind of the scientist who made it real.

Later warnings, still under copyright

These works are described here and quoted only by a phrase.

Work	The warning	The echo today
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)	Permanent war and total surveillance sustain a ruling class	Mass data collection and war without declared end
Kurt Vonnegut, *Player Piano*	Automation leaves most people	Anxiety over work in an

Work	The warning	The echo today
(1952)	comfortable and without purpose	age of capable AI
Philip K. Dick, "Second Variety" (1953)	Self-improving killer machines outlast the war they were built for	Autonomous weapons that select their own targets
Dr. Strangelove (film, 1964)	An automatic "doomsday machine" removes human choice from nuclear retaliation	Proposals to speed nuclear decisions with automation
Colossus: The Forbin Project (film, 1970)	A defense supercomputer given control of the arsenal decides it knows best	Calls to keep humans in command of nuclear weapons
WarGames (film, 1983)	A military computer cannot tell a simulation from a real attack, and learns that "the only winning move is not to play"	Real false alarms described in the next chapter
The Terminator (film, 1984)	A defense network becomes self-aware and strikes first	The image most people reach for, fairly or not

WarGames had a documented effect. President Reagan watched it and asked his advisers whether such a break-in could happen. The answer led to the first presidential directive on computer security.

How to use these stories

Fiction is not evidence. No one should set policy by a film. Stories do three useful things. They let a society rehearse a danger before it arrives. They give ordinary people words for technical risks. They record what earlier generations already saw coming.

They also mislead. The machine uprising is the least likely danger and the most filmed. The quieter warnings in Forster, Vonnegut and Orwell, about dependence, purposelessness and concentrated control, describe risks that are already measurable.

Through the peacemaker's lens

Nearly every one of these stories turns on a people who come to trust what their own hands have made. Isaiah named that error long before Shelley, and Nephi copied his words onto the plates.

> *Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. (2 Nephi 12:8)*

Forster's line, "Men made it, do not forget that," is the same rebuke in modern dress. President Kimball applied it to weapons in 1976. The peacemaker's question

for any powerful system is whether it remains a tool in accountable hands or has become an object of trust in itself.

Chapter 8. Warnings from the Record

The stories in the last chapter were invented. The ones in this chapter happened. They share a single lesson: more than once, the world was saved by a human being who stopped to think.

The man who doubted the machine

Shortly after midnight on September 26, 1983, alarms sounded in a Soviet early-warning bunker. The satellite system reported an American missile launch, then four more. Tensions were at their worst in twenty years. Protocol required the duty officer, Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov, to report an attack to his superiors, who would have minutes to decide on retaliation.

Petrov hesitated. Five missiles made no sense for a first strike. The system was new, and he did not fully trust it. Ground radar showed nothing. He reported a malfunction. He was right. The satellites had mistaken sunlight on high clouds for rocket plumes.

A machine following its rules would have reported the attack. A man with doubts, a few minutes and the authority to use his judgment did otherwise.

The officer who said no

On October 27, 1962, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, American destroyers dropped practice depth charges to force a Soviet submarine to surface. The submarine had been out of contact with Moscow for days. Its captain, believing war might have begun, prepared to fire a nuclear torpedo.

Soviet procedure on that boat required three senior officers to agree. Two did. The third, Vasili Arkhipov, refused. The submarine surfaced. The American ships never knew what they had been near.

When the computers were wrong

- **November 9, 1979.** A training tape simulating a full Soviet attack was loaded into a live computer at American air defense headquarters. For several minutes commanders believed it. Bomber crews started their engines.
- **June 3, 1980.** A failed computer chip worth less than a dollar caused displays to show thousands of incoming missiles. The president's national security adviser was woken and told. The alarm was canceled before he made the call.
- **May 6, 2010.** Automated trading programs reacting to one another erased about a thousand points from the Dow Jones average in minutes, then

> restored most of it. No human decided any of it. It remains the standard example of machines interacting faster than people can follow.

Each false alarm ended well because there was time, and because a person could say "wait." The trend in military technology is to shrink that time. Faster missiles and faster software both press toward the automatic response that *Dr. Strangelove* satirized.

The scientists who spoke

The people who built the modern world's most dangerous tools often warned about them in plain words.

Alan Turing, the founder of computer science, said in a 1951 lecture that once thinking machines surpassed us, "we should have to expect the machines to take control."

Norbert Wiener, the mathematician who founded the study of automated control, wrote in 1960 that when we hand a goal to a machine we cannot interrupt, we must be sure that "the purpose put into the machine is the purpose which we really desire." This is the problem AI researchers now call alignment, stated sixty-six years ago.

I. J. Good, a wartime codebreaker and colleague of Turing, reasoned in 1965 that a machine able to improve its own design would trigger an "intelligence explosion." He concluded that "the first ultraintelligent machine is the last invention that man need ever make," provided it stayed under control.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, who led the building of the atomic bomb, explained to a 1954 security hearing how scientists come to build such things: "when you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it." The argument about consequences, he said, comes after.

General Omar Bradley, Eisenhower's wartime colleague, put the gap between power and wisdom in one line in 1948: "Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants."

Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, in a 1955 manifesto signed by leading physicists, asked governments to renounce war in the nuclear age and ended with an appeal: "Remember your humanity, and forget the rest."

Notice who is speaking. These are the builders. They were not opponents of science or of defense. Like Eisenhower, they warned about what they knew best.

What the record teaches

Lesson	Evidence
Automated warning systems fail in ways their designers did not foresee	1979, 1980, 1983

Lesson	Evidence
Human judgment has repeatedly been the last safeguard	Petrov, Arkhipov
Safeguards work when a person has time and authority to refuse	The three-officer rule; Petrov's discretion
Machines interacting at speed can produce outcomes no one chose	The 2010 flash crash
The builders themselves foresaw the control problem	Turing, Wiener, Good

Through the peacemaker's lens

The Book of Mormon's model commander is remembered for a moment when he stopped. At the height of a battle he was winning, with the enemy surrounded, Captain Moroni halted his army.

> *Therefore when Moroni saw their terror he commanded his men that they should stop shedding their blood. (Alma 43:54)*

He then told the opposing commander, "we do not desire to slay you" (Alma 44:1), and offered terms. A commander needs room for mercy, and room requires a human being in command of the moment.

The Doctrine and Covenants makes the pause a law. Before going to battle, the Lord's people "should first lift a standard of peace" to their adversary (Doctrine and Covenants 98:34). The same revelation commands them to "renounce war and proclaim peace" (Doctrine and Covenants 98:16).

Petrov and Arkhipov, who likely never read those verses, lived them. Any system that removes the minutes in which a person can lift a standard of peace removes the space where peacemaking happens.

The incidents and quotations in this chapter are drawn from widely published histories and were not re-verified for this edition. Quotations from works under copyright are limited to a short phrase.

Chapter 9. Where We May Be Headed

This chapter is about the future, so it is the least certain in the book. It reports what informed people expect, who they are, and where they disagree.

What exists today

Artificial intelligence systems in 2026 write, code, analyze images and plan multi-step tasks at a level that would have seemed fanciful in 2020. They also make confident errors. Every major model has had its safety limits bypassed by

determined users. An independent evaluation this month found that leading models, shown realistic imagery, frequently marked civilian sites as military targets.

Superintelligence means a system that greatly outperforms the best humans in nearly every field. No such system exists.

When might it arrive?

Who	Forecast	Their position
Leaders of the largest AI companies	Human-level or better systems between 2026 and 2028	They build and sell the technology
Authors of the *AI 2027* scenario	A median estimate of March 2029 for superintelligence from one author, 2033 from another	Former industry researchers now urging caution
Crowd forecasting communities	Even odds of human-level AI around 2033	Hobbyist and professional forecasters
A large survey of AI researchers	Even odds of human-level AI by about 2042	Academics and engineers across the field
Prominent skeptics	2035 or later, or never with current methods	Senior researchers pursuing other approaches

Three honest observations follow.

- The range is wide. People with deep knowledge differ by a decade or more.
- Forecasts have shortened sharply in recent years, among insiders and outsiders alike.
- As Chapter 3 warned, the most confident voices are also the most interested. That does not make them wrong.

A responsible citizen holds two thoughts together. Superintelligence may be many years away or may never come in the form imagined. It may also come within this decade, and the cost of being unprepared would be severe. Prudent people buy insurance against fires they do not expect.

Concern is no longer a fringe position. In October 2025, hundreds of public figures, including Nobel laureates and former national security officials, signed a statement calling for a ban on developing superintelligence until it can be done safely. Others regard such a pause as unworkable and dangerous if rivals continue.

Three dangers that do not require superintelligence

The dangers most relevant to Eisenhower's warning are already visible with the technology that exists.

Speed. Chapter 8 showed that human hesitation has been the last safeguard. Military AI is prized for removing hesitation. If two rival powers each automate their responses, a crisis could escalate faster than either government can deliberate. Analysts call this a flash war, by analogy with the flash crash.

Concentration. A handful of companies control the most capable systems. Whoever commands them, whether executives or the officials who direct them, could hold economic, military and persuasive power on a scale no earlier institution approached. Eisenhower's phrase was "misplaced power."

Accountability. When a system recommends a target and a rushed human approves it, who answers for the result? The Minab school strike remains officially unexplained eight months later. Diffuse responsibility is how grave errors go unowned.

Three dangers that do

If systems arrive that outthink their makers, further questions open.

- **Control.** Wiener's 1960 problem becomes urgent: a capable system pursuing a goal slightly different from the one intended.
- **Dependence.** Forster's Machine: a society that can no longer function, or even understand its own infrastructure, without the system.
- **Purpose.** Vonnegut's question of what people are for when machines do the valued work.

Serious researchers disagree about how likely these are. Few now say they are impossible.

The hopeful case

The same technology could shorten wars, expose lies, cure diseases, verify arms agreements and free people from drudgery. Many of those building it are motivated by exactly these hopes. A defender who can see an attack coming clearly may never need to fire. The outcome depends on choices that have not yet been made.

Through the peacemaker's lens

The Book of Mormon ends with two pictures of where a civilization can go.

The first is the Jaredite end. Two armies led by Coriantumr and Shiz fought until almost no one was left. Coriantumr offered more than once to give up his kingdom to stop the killing. By then neither side could stop.

> *The Spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them, and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people; for they were given up unto the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds that they might be destroyed; wherefore they went again to battle. (Ether 15:19)*

This is escalation with no exit: each side armed, each side afraid, each side unable to be the first to stop. It is the scriptural portrait of an arms race at its end.

The second picture comes two centuries after the Savior's visit to the Nephites.

> *And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. (4 Nephi 1:15)*

The record adds that there were no "manner of -ites" among them (4 Nephi 1:17). The divisions that had fueled six hundred years of war were gone. That peace lasted nearly two hundred years and ended through pride and the return of class and faction.

Both peoples had weapons. What separated the two endings was what they loved and what they chose. Lehi taught that people "are free to choose liberty and eternal life... or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Forecasts ask what will happen to us. The scriptures ask what we will choose. A technology that magnifies human intention makes that question larger than it has ever been. Moroni said he had seen our day. What he left us was a set of instructions.

Chapter 10. The Long Road to October 7

The wars in the Middle East are where every theme of this book meets real suffering: arms and profit, speed and machines, truth and its counterfeits, and the hearts of peoples. They are also where public argument is at its worst. People shout, call names and quote the last week's news as if it were the whole story.

This chapter walks the long road. The next looks at the present. Neither will tell you whom to blame. Both try to set out what is known so that you can speak about it as a peacemaker.

A Book of Mormon pattern to keep in mind

The Nephites and Lamanites fought for the better part of a thousand years. Zeniff, a Nephite who had lived among the Lamanites, recorded how the other side told the story.

> *They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the tradition of their fathers, which is this—Believing that they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their*

> *brethren, and they were also wronged while crossing the sea. (Mosiah 10:12)*

The list of grievances continues for several verses and ends: "thus they have taught their children that they should hate them" (Mosiah 10:17).

Zeniff wrote as a partisan, and the passage shows it. It also shows something he may not have intended. Each people had a history in which it was the one wronged, and each taught that history to its children. The conflict could not end by one side winning the argument about the past. In the Book of Mormon it ended, for a time, only when hearts changed.

Read the history below with that in mind. Two peoples each carry a true story of loss.

The road, in brief

Period	What happened	How each people remembers it
Antiquity to 135 AD	Jewish kingdoms in the land; Roman destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion	For Jews, the homeland of their scripture and prayers for 2,000 years
600s to 1917	Arab and then Ottoman rule; a mostly Arab population with a continuous Jewish minority	For Palestinians, their home for more than a millennium
1880s to 1930s	European persecution drives Jewish immigration; Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration favors a Jewish national home; Britain takes control	A refuge and return for one people; an imposed change for the other
1933 to 1945	The Holocaust: six million Jews murdered	The proof, for Jews, that survival requires a state of their own
1947 to 1949	The UN proposes partition; Israel declares independence; neighboring Arab states invade; Israel prevails	Israelis call it the War of Independence. Palestinians call it the Nakba, the catastrophe, in which some 700,000 fled or were expelled.
1950s onward	Hundreds of thousands of Jews leave or are driven from Arab countries	A second displacement, less often remembered
1967	In six days Israel takes the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem,	Deliverance from a feared annihilation; the start of

Period	What happened	How each people remembers it
	Sinai and the Golan	military occupation
1973 to 1979	Egypt and Syria attack; Israel recovers; Egypt and Israel make peace	Evidence that enemies can become neighbors
1987 to 2000	Palestinian uprising; the Oslo accords; talks collapse; a second, bloodier uprising with suicide bombings	Each side concludes the other never wanted peace
2005 to 2007	Israel withdraws settlers and soldiers from Gaza; Hamas wins an election, then seizes Gaza by force; Israel and Egypt impose a blockade	Israelis see rockets in return for withdrawal. Gazans see a siege.
2008 to 2021	Four rounds of war between Israel and Hamas	A generation in Gaza and in southern Israel grows up under fire
2020	The Abraham Accords: several Arab states recognize Israel	Hope for a wider peace; Palestinians fear being bypassed

Iran's road

Iran's story runs alongside and matters for what follows.

- **1953.** The United States and Britain helped overthrow Iran's elected prime minister and restore the shah's power. President Eisenhower approved the operation. Many Iranians date their distrust of America to that year.
- **1979.** A revolution replaced the shah with a clerical government hostile to the United States and to Israel's existence. Iranian students held American diplomats hostage for 444 days.
- **1980s to 2020s.** Iran built a network of armed allies: Hezbollah in Lebanon, militias in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. It also advanced a nuclear program that it called peaceful and its adversaries did not believe.
- **2015 to 2018.** A nuclear agreement limited the program. The United States withdrew from it in 2018.

Eisenhower appears twice on this road. He approved the 1953 coup, a decision whose costs arrived a generation later. In 1956, when Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt over the Suez Canal, he forced all three allies to withdraw. He believed the law had to bind friends as well as foes. Both decisions are part of the record of the man who gave the farewell address.

Latter-day Saint connections to the land

The Church has ties to both peoples that predate the modern conflict. In 1841 the apostle Orson Hyde climbed the Mount of Olives and offered a prayer dedicating the land for the gathering of Judah's scattered remnants. The Book of Mormon rebukes Christians who despise the Jews.

> *O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. (2 Nephi 29:5)*

The same faith teaches that Abraham's blessings extend through Ishmael's line as well as Isaac's, and that all are God's children. In a 1979 address at Brigham Young University, then-Elder Howard W. Hunter said of Jews and Arabs that "as a church we do not take sides." The university's Jerusalem Center has stood on Mount Scopus since the 1980s under a commitment not to proselytize, with both Israeli and Palestinian staff.

What the long road teaches

- Both peoples have deep and legitimate attachments to the same small land.
- Both have been victims of mass violence and displacement within living memory.
- Both have leaders and factions who have rejected compromise, and both have paid for it.
- Outside powers, including the United States, Britain, Iran and the Soviet Union, have repeatedly used the conflict for their own ends and armed its parties.
- Every war since 1948 was explained by each side as a response to what the other did first.

A person who can state the other side's story accurately has taken the first step Zeniff could not.

This chapter is a compressed summary from standard histories and was not re-verified for this edition. Historians dispute many details, including numbers and responsibility for the 1948 displacement. The Hunter quotation is cited from memory.

Chapter 11. Seeing the Present Clearly

This chapter sets out what is established, what is disputed, and the strongest form of each side's case. On the contested questions it does not deliver a verdict. Courts, historians and each reader's conscience will do that.

October 7, 2023

Hamas-led fighters crossed from Gaza into southern Israel and attacked towns, farming communities, army posts and a music festival. They killed about 1,200

people and took 251 hostages. Most of the dead were civilians. It was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

A point of vocabulary helps in conversation. The places attacked were communities inside Israel's internationally recognized borders. The word "settlement" usually refers to Israeli communities built in the occupied West Bank, which are a separate dispute. Using the terms precisely avoids a needless argument.

Hamas is funded, armed and trained in large part by Iran, and has been for decades. Whether Iran directed or knew the timing of the attack has been disputed.

The war in Gaza

Israel responded with an air and ground campaign aimed at destroying Hamas and recovering the hostages. The established facts are grim.

Measure	Figure	Source and caution
Palestinians killed	More than 74,000	Gaza Health Ministry, part of the Hamas-led government. It does not separate fighters from civilians and says about half are women and children. UN agencies regard its records as generally reliable. Israel disputes the figures.
Displacement	Nearly the whole population of 2.1 million, most of them several times	Most were displaced within Gaza. The borders have been largely closed.
Ceasefire	October 2025, under an American plan; the last living hostages were returned	Full-scale operations ended
Since the ceasefire	At least 1,650 Palestinians killed; Israeli forces hold up to 70 percent of the territory; seven Israeli soldiers killed	Aid organizations rate the plan as failing
Reconstruction	About $18 billion pledged; rebuilding has not begun; some 1.4 million people remain in makeshift shelters	Israel's government rejected the plan's second phase in August 2026

"Killed and forced out" is a fair plain-language summary of what Gazans have endured, with one refinement. Most have been forced from their homes into a shrinking part of Gaza. Aid groups report two million people confined to roughly fifty square miles.

The genocide question

No charge is graver, and none is thrown about more carelessly. It has a precise legal meaning. The 1948 Genocide Convention defines it as certain acts, including killing, committed with intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part, as such. The acts in Gaza are largely undisputed. The argument is about intent.

Where the law stands. South Africa brought a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in December 2023. The court ordered Israel to prevent genocidal acts and allow aid while the case proceeds. It has not ruled on whether genocide occurred, and written pleadings are scheduled to run into 2029.

The case that it is genocide. A United Nations commission of inquiry concluded in September 2025 that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza and reaffirmed the finding in June 2026. Several prominent scholars of genocide and the Holocaust, including Israeli-born historians, agree. They point to the scale of killing, the destruction of homes, hospitals and farmland, restrictions on food and medicine, and statements by some Israeli officials that seemed to make no distinction between Hamas and the population.

The case that it is not. Israel rejects the charge as baseless. Its defenders, including scholars of international law and of urban warfare, argue that a terrible civilian toll does not by itself prove intent to destroy a people. They point to evacuation warnings, aid deliveries, a vaccination campaign and legal review of strikes as inconsistent with such intent. They hold that Hamas, by fighting from homes, hospitals and tunnels beneath them, bears responsibility for civilian deaths, and that the war's stated aim was Hamas's defeat and the hostages' return. They note the standard set by the court: genocidal intent must be the only reasonable inference from the conduct.

What each side tends to leave out. Those who say genocide often pass quickly over October 7, the hostages, and Hamas's own choices. Those who deny it often pass quickly over the scale of civilian death and the question of whether lesser crimes were committed. The International Criminal Court issued warrants in 2024 for Israel's prime minister and a former defense minister on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and for a Hamas commander. Those charges are distinct from genocide and are also unproven.

A careful person can say this much: a great many civilians, including many thousands of children, have been killed; the world's highest court is weighing whether that amounts to the gravest crime in law; serious people disagree; and none of that depends on the label for it to demand a moral response.

The wider war

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched nearly 900 strikes on Iran in twelve hours. The strikes killed Iran's supreme leader and other senior officials. The government survived and regrouped under his son. Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, setting off a global fuel crisis. Hezbollah fired on Israel, and Israel invaded southern Lebanon. Britannica's summary counts thousands dead in Iran and Lebanon, dozens in Israel and the Gulf states, and millions displaced.

A ceasefire in April broke down in July. A June agreement to reopen the strait did not hold. As of this writing an American naval blockade continues, the president calls the war "effectively over," and Tehran denies that talks are under way. Congress did not declare this war.

The war and the themes of this book

- **Machines.** AI-assisted targeting was used at scale by Israel in Gaza and by the United States over Iran. The school at Minab is one result still unexplained.
- **Arms.** The United States supplies most of Israel's imported weapons and sells heavily to Gulf states. American missile-defense stocks were drawn down by more than half.
- **Truth.** Every party has made claims that later proved false or unverifiable. Chapter 6's ten techniques are on full display from all directions.
- **Prophecy.** Some American Christians, including some in uniform, have described the Iran war as a step toward Armageddon. The next chapter takes that up.

Through the peacemaker's lens

Apply the five-part test to every party, including one's own country.

Defense, never offense. Israel had a right and a duty to defend its people after October 7. Mormon's own analysis also warns what follows when a defended people "went up" against its enemies in vengeance (Mormon 4:4). Where defense ends and vengeance begins is the question a peacemaker keeps asking, and reasonable people place the line differently.

No delight in bloodshed. The celebration of October 7 by some of Israel's enemies fails this test completely. So does any cheering of Gaza's destruction. After their greatest victory, Moroni's soldiers "were sorry" (Alma 48:23).

Power and gain. Hamas's leaders, Iran's rulers, coalition politicians, arms makers and their investors all have interests that war serves. Ask it of each.

The voice of the people. Gazans have not voted since 2006. Iranians do not choose their supreme leader. Americans did not get a congressional vote on the Iran war. Israelis vote, and are deeply divided.

Persuasion over contention. The First Presidency's statement of October 12, 2023, condemned the violence as contrary to the gospel of peace and said that "our hearts ache for all victims." The Church then funded relief in both Gaza and Israel. "All victims" is the peacemaker's phrase.

The sons of Mosiah offer the model. When they proposed to go among the Lamanites, their own people laughed and offered another plan: "Let us take up arms against them, that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land" (Alma 26:25). Ammon and his brothers went instead "with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls" (Alma 26:26). Their fourteen years among an enemy people did more for Nephite security than any campaign.

Speaking about it

- Mourn both. "I grieve for the families of October 7 and for the children of Gaza" is a complete sentence.
- Use numbers with their sources and their limits.
- Say "the court has not ruled" when someone asserts genocide as settled, and when someone dismisses it as slander.
- Refuse collective guilt. Jews are not the Israeli cabinet. Palestinians are not Hamas. Iranians are not their government.
- Reject hatred of Jews and hatred of Muslims and Arabs wherever they appear, including among people who share your politics.

Chapter 12. The End of the World as Christians Have Imagined It

Millions of American Christians read the news from the Middle East as the opening of the last chapter of history. That belief shapes votes, donations and, in 2026, the words of some military commanders. Any honest account of these wars has to understand it. Latter-day Saints share part of it and differ on points that matter.

What "apocalypse" means

The Greek word *apokalypsis* means an unveiling. It is the first word of the Book of Revelation. Apocalyptic writing, in Daniel and Revelation, came from communities under persecution. Its symbols of beasts, seals and trumpets carried one message to people with little worldly hope: God sees, evil will not have the last word, endure.

Read that way, apocalypse is a literature of comfort. It became a literature of prediction when later readers treated its symbols as a coded timetable.

Two thousand years of expecting the end

The first Christians expected Christ's return soon. As centuries passed, most of the church followed Augustine in reading the thousand-year reign of Revelation 20 as a

figure for the church age. Expectation flared again in times of plague, war and reform.

America has been fertile ground. In the 1830s and 1840s, the farmer-preacher William Miller persuaded tens of thousands that Christ would return about 1843 or 1844. The day he finally settled on passed, and his followers called it the Great Disappointment. Joseph Smith lived in the same region in the same years.

Historians group these beliefs in two families. Premillennialists expect the world to worsen until Christ returns to begin a thousand years of peace. Postmillennialists expect the gospel to improve the world until it is fit for His return. The first tends toward urgency and withdrawal. The second tends toward reform and optimism.

Where the rapture comes from

The word "rapture" does not appear in the English Bible. It comes from the Latin of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where Paul says believers will be "caught up" to meet the Lord. For most of Christian history that verse described the Second Coming itself.

In the 1830s an Anglo-Irish clergyman, John Nelson Darby, taught something new. He divided history into eras called dispensations and held that God has two distinct peoples, Israel and the church, with separate destinies. In his system true Christians are taken from the earth before a seven-year tribulation, and God's dealings then center on the Jewish people in their land.

Darby's system reached American pulpits through the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909. It reached the general public through a 1970 bestseller on prophecy and a series of novels in the 1990s that sold tens of millions of copies. A doctrine less than two hundred years old now feels ancient to many who hold it.

Why it shapes policy

In Darby's scheme the return of Jews to the land and their control of Jerusalem are required steps before the end. The founding of Israel in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem's Old City in 1967 looked to believers like prophecy fulfilled on schedule. The movement called Christian Zionism grew from that conviction and became one of the most fervent sources of American support for Israel.

Many Christian Zionists act from love of the Jewish people and gratitude for the faith's Jewish roots. The theology also carries a hazard. If war in the Middle East is a necessary step toward Christ's return, then peacemaking can look like resistance to God's plan.

That hazard surfaced in 2026. After the strikes on Iran began, a watchdog group reported more than 200 complaints from service members that commanders had described the war as part of God's plan for the end times. A prominent pastor told his congregation the war was prophetically "right on cue." A scholar at Cornell called the belief that Christians should help bring about the end a misreading of Revelation. Other evangelical leaders rejected the rhetoric as well.

Why the end fascinates

Scholars of religion offer several reasons, and they can all be true at once.

- **Meaning.** Chaotic events become bearable when they fit a story with an author.
- **Justice.** Apocalypse promises that the wicked will answer and the faithful will be vindicated.
- **Urgency.** A near end gives ordinary life cosmic stakes.
- **Certainty.** A chart of the future relieves the anxiety of not knowing.
- **Scripture.** The Bible does speak of an end, a return and a judgment. The fixation has a real text behind it.

What Latter-day Saint scholarship says

The leading study is Grant Underwood's *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, published by the University of Illinois Press. Underwood, a historian at Brigham Young University, shows that the first Latter-day Saints were deeply shaped by expectation of an imminent Second Coming, and that they belonged to the premillennial family.

They differed from their neighbors in what they did about it. Darby's followers waited to be removed from a doomed world. The Saints gathered to build a city. Their revelations commanded them to establish Zion, a community of the pure in heart with no poor among them, as the place of preparation.

The historian Jed Woodworth, writing in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, finds that Latter-day Saints are "of two minds." The Doctrine and Covenants paints a dark picture of the conditions before the Lord's return. The same faith sends its people out to heal, teach and build as though the world can be made better. Woodworth argues that the tradition holds both and resists being filed under either label.

Christopher Blythe's *Terrible Revolution*, from Oxford University Press, traces a third thread: a long history of popular end-time speculation among members, and the repeated efforts of Church leaders to restrain it and to keep prophecy within authorized channels.

How Latter-day Saint teaching differs

Question	Dispensationalist view	Latter-day Saint teaching
Are believers removed before the troubles?	Yes, in a rapture before the tribulation	No. Disciples live through the troubles and "stand in holy places" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:32). The righteous are "caught up to meet him" at His coming (Doctrine and Covenants 88:96).
Can the time be known?	Often calculated from signs	"The hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven" (Doctrine

Question	Dispensationalist view	Latter-day Saint teaching
		and Covenants 49:7)
What is the believer's task?	Watch, witness, await removal	Gather, build Zion, care for the poor, make peace
Where is the center?	Jerusalem and the land of Israel	Two centers: the old Jerusalem and a New Jerusalem in the Americas (Ether 13:4-6)
What of war?	Often read as a necessary sign	"Renounce war and proclaim peace" (Doctrine and Covenants 98:16)

Joseph Smith's own experience with date-setting is recorded in scripture. He prayed to know the time and received an answer so ambiguous that he wrote, "I was left thus, without being able to decide" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:16). The lesson the Church has drawn is restraint.

Through the peacemaker's lens

The Book of Mormon gives a blunt test for anyone who welcomes a war on religious grounds. Mormon, watching his people's last campaigns, wrote:

> *But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed. (Mormon 4:5)*

God may bring His purposes out of human wars. The record gives no credit to those who start them. Stirring hearts to bloodshed is assigned to one side only, and it is the wrong side.

The signs of the times, in Latter-day Saint teaching, are given so that disciples will prepare themselves. They are never a commission to hasten catastrophe, to rejoice in another people's ruin, or to treat living men, women and children as props in a prophecy. The Savior who will return is the one who said that the peacemakers are the children of God.

The history of Christian end-time belief in this chapter is summarized from standard reference works and was not re-verified for this edition. Blythe's book is described from memory.

Chapter 13. Standing in Holy Places

If prophecy is given for preparation, two questions follow. Which warnings have proved accurate? And what does it mean to be prepared?

Reading prophecy with care

Three cautions keep this honest.

- Broad descriptions of war, upheaval and pride fit many eras. Every generation since 1830, and many before, has felt it was the last.
- A passage that matches the present may be fulfilled now, may be fulfilled repeatedly, or may describe the human condition.
- Believers and skeptics will weigh the same match differently. What follows reports what the texts say and what readers see in them.

Scripture that readers find fulfilled

Passage	What it says	What readers see	A caution
Doctrine and Covenants 87:1-3 (December 25, 1832)	Wars will begin "at the rebellion of South Carolina"; the Southern States will be divided against the Northern; war will then be "poured out upon all nations"	The Civil War began at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, in 1861. World wars followed.	South Carolina's defiance over tariffs was in the news in 1832. Believers reply that the crisis passed and the war came 28 years later as described.
Mormon 8:29-31	A day of "fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands," "wars, rumors of wars," and "great pollutions upon the face of the earth"	An age of global war news and environmental damage	General enough to fit other centuries, though "pollutions" is a striking word for an 1830 text
Mormon 8:37	A people who love money and fine things "more than ye love the poor and the needy"	Record wealth alongside neglect	True of many ages
2 Nephi 28:20-21	The adversary will "rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger," and lull others into "carnal security" so they say "All is well in Zion"	Outrage as a daily habit, and complacency beside it	Describes a spiritual condition more than an event
Ether 8:22-25	Secret combinations seeking "power and gain" will threaten "the freedom of all lands"	Concentrated, unaccountable power	Invites conspiracy thinking if read carelessly
Doctrine	"The whole earth shall be in	Church leaders	Leaders said the

Passage	What it says	What readers see	A caution
and Covenants 45:26	commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them"	have applied the verse to our season	same in earlier decades
Zechariah 12:3	Jerusalem will be "a burdensome stone for all people"	One small city at the center of world conflict for a century	Jerusalem has been contested for three thousand years

The prophecy of 1832 is the most specific and the most often cited. It is also instructive about purpose. It ends with a command, and the command has nothing to do with predicting anything.

> *Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. (Doctrine and Covenants 87:8)*

Warnings from outside scripture that came true

This book has collected several.

Who and when	The warning	Where we are
Washington, 1796	Overgrown military establishments endanger liberty	A permanent establishment requesting $1.5 trillion
Butler, 1863	We are creating our successors and growing subservient to machines	Daily dependence on systems few understand
Forster, 1909	People will live through screens and forget how the system works	Video calls, isolation, and a week of unexplained outages
Wells, 1914	Atomic bombs will destroy cities	1945, and nine nuclear powers since
Čapek, 1920	Manufactured workers will be sold as soldiers	Autonomous weapons in production
Eisenhower, 1961	Unwarranted influence by a military-industrial complex; policy captive to a technical elite	Contractors advising on purchases; AI rules set in vendor contracts
Wiener, 1960	Machines will pursue the purpose we give them, which may not be the one we want	The alignment problem, now a research field

Who and when	The warning	Where we are
Kimball, 1976	A people trusting in armaments as a false god	The reader may judge

None of these required a vision of the future. Each came from someone who understood human nature and followed a trend to its end. That is itself a lesson. Most of what is coming can be seen by those who are awake.

What "holy places" means

Three times the Doctrine and Covenants tells disciples to stand in holy places (45:32; 87:8; 101:22). Church leaders have explained the phrase consistently.

- **The temple.** An apostle taught in 1994 that the temple is prominent among the holy places and key to the others.
- **The home.** A household where prayer, scripture and kindness are habits is a sanctuary.
- **The congregation.** Wards and stakes are described in revelation as "a defense, and... a refuge from the storm" (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6).
- **The heart.** President Harold B. Lee taught that to stand in holy places is to stand in Zion, which the Lord defines as the pure in heart. A holy place is finally a condition a person carries.

The last meaning answers the word "always." No one can remain in a temple. Alma described the covenant made at baptism as a promise "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in" (Mosiah 18:9). The holy place travels with the covenant keeper into the office, the voting booth and the argument online.

Being prepared to meet God

Amulek taught that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32). The scriptures describe that preparation in ordinary terms. Nothing in the list requires knowing the date.

1. **Repent daily.** Alma asked his people whether they could say, if called to die at that moment, that they had been "sufficiently humble" (Alma 5:27). Readiness is a present-tense question.
2. **Keep covenants.** Baptism, the sacrament each week, and temple covenants bind a person to God and to others.
3. **Be reconciled.** The Savior told the Nephites to settle with a brother before coming to Him (3 Nephi 12:23-24). An unhealed quarrel is unfinished preparation.
4. **Care for the poor.** King Benjamin made it a condition of retaining forgiveness (Mosiah 4:26). Moroni named its neglect as the sin of our day.
5. **Seek learning.** "Out of the best books" and "by study and also by faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). An alert and knowledgeable disciple is harder to deceive.

6. **Prepare temporally.** "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). Food, water, savings and skills are part of discipleship, and they free a family to help others.
7. **Make peace.** In the home first, then outward.
8. **Refuse fear.** After describing the calamities of the last days, the Lord told His disciples, "Be not troubled" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:35).

The parable of the ten virgins, which the Lord applied to the last days (Doctrine and Covenants 45:56-57), turns on oil that cannot be borrowed at the last minute. Preparation is accumulated in small amounts over a long time.

Standing still in a shouting world

The phrase is "stand… and be not moved." In an age that profits from agitation, steadiness is a form of witness. A person standing in a holy place can mourn October 7 and Gaza in the same prayer. That person can support a nation's defense and question its wars, respect expertise and decline to be ruled by it, read prophecy and refuse to cheer for catastrophe.

Mormon addressed his last sermon to people he called "the peaceable followers of Christ," known by their "peaceable walk with the children of men" (Moroni 7:3-4). He wrote those words in the middle of the war that destroyed his nation. The peaceable walk was never dependent on peaceful times.

The remaining chapters turn to what such a person can say and do.

Chapter 14. What Citizens Can Say

Eisenhower put the remedy in the hands of ordinary people. Mosiah did the same. This chapter is about how to carry that responsibility in conversation: at the dinner table, in a ward council or a city council, online, and in a letter to a newspaper.

Begin with the manner

The Savior's first teaching to the Nephites after His arrival concerned how they argued.

> *For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. (3 Nephi 11:29)*

President Russell M. Nelson applied that verse to public life in his April 2023 address "Peacemakers Needed." He said, "Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice." He taught that contention drives away the Spirit and never resolves differences.

Peacemaking of this kind takes courage. Captain Moroni wrote blunt letters. Abinadi stood before a king. The scriptures distinguish between speaking plainly

and speaking in anger. Alma found that honest teaching "had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5).

A practical rule follows. Say what is true, say it with evidence, and say it in a way that leaves the other person room to agree.

Five questions to ask of any claim about war or AI

These need no expertise. They work on a politician, a general, a chief executive and a neighbor.

1. **Who benefits if I believe this?** A stake does not make a claim false. It tells you how hard to check.
2. **What is the evidence, and can anyone outside verify it?** Secret proof is a request for trust.
3. **Compared to what?** "This weapon saves lives" needs a baseline. So does "this weapon is dangerous."
4. **Who is accountable if it goes wrong?** A good answer names a person or an office.
5. **Can it be undone?** Decisions that cannot be reversed deserve the most time.

Things worth saying, and why

Each statement below is offered with its reasoning. Use the ones you find persuasive.

"I support a strong defense and strong oversight. Eisenhower insisted on both." This refuses the false choice between patriotism and scrutiny. The five-star general who built the arsenal is the one who asked citizens to watch it.

"I'd like to know who profits from this decision." It applies the third principle of the peacemaker's test without accusing anyone. Eisenhower said influence can arise unsought.

"A human being should decide when to take a life, and should answer for it." Petrov and Arkhipov are the evidence. Current Pentagon policy already requires "appropriate levels of human judgment over the use of force." The statement asks that the policy be kept and enforced.

"If officials tell adversaries untrue things, how do we know what they tell us?" This is the practical cost of the noble lie. It is a question, which invites an answer in place of a fight.

"I don't know when superintelligence is coming. Neither does anyone else. That is a reason to prepare." Admitting uncertainty builds trust. It also defeats the two easy dismissals: that the danger is science fiction, and that doom is certain.

"The people who build this technology should not be the only ones writing its rules." This is Eisenhower's second warning in one sentence. It respects expertise and declines to be governed by it.

"What would change your mind?" The most useful question in any disagreement. Ask it of yourself first.

Hearing the other side fairly

You will meet thoughtful people who think this book worries too much. Their best arguments deserve to be stated at full strength.

- **"Our rivals will build it anyway."** True, and serious. The reply is that the live choices concern what gets built, how it is tested, who commands it and what is disclosed.
- **"Oversight slows us down, and delay costs lives."** Sometimes it does. The Pentagon's procurement delays are real and have been criticized by reformers in both parties. Oversight that only obstructs is bad oversight.
- **"Precision weapons save civilians."** Often true per strike. Whether total harm falls depends on how many more strikes become thinkable.
- **"Fear of technology has been wrong before."** It has. It has also been right, and the builders themselves raised these concerns.

Granting what is true in an opposing view is a strength. Pahoran did it for Moroni.

What to avoid

- **Villains.** Most soldiers, engineers and officials are doing honest work. The Book of Mormon praises those who defended their families (Alma 43:45-47). Eisenhower described a structure.
- **Certainty you do not have.** About timelines, about intentions, about classified facts.
- **Conspiracy.** The scriptures warn of secret combinations, and they exist in history. Most of what this book describes happens in the open, through legal incentives. Calling it conspiracy makes it easier to dismiss.
- **Party loyalty as a filter.** Every concern in this book has been raised by members of both major parties and practiced by administrations of both.
- **Shared outrage as a substitute for action.** The next chapter is about action.

The home and the congregation

Public discourse begins in small rooms. Families can read Eisenhower's farewell together; it takes fifteen minutes. Youth can be taught the five questions. A person who learns to disagree without contention at home will carry that into every forum. King Benjamin's hope for his people was that they would "not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably" (Mosiah 4:13).

Chapter 15. What to Ask of Congress

The Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war, fund the military and write the rules that govern both. In practice much of that power has drifted to the executive branch and, increasingly, to contract terms negotiated with vendors. Congress can take it back whenever enough constituents ask.

Where things stand

- The United States has no comprehensive federal law governing artificial intelligence. States have passed their own, and a dispute over whether federal law should override them is unresolved.
- Policy on autonomous weapons rests on a Pentagon directive that the department can revise by itself. Congress recently required notification when the department waives that directive.
- The Congressional Research Service has noted that Congress could write the directive's requirements into law. Several members introduced bills on military AI after the 2026 dispute between the Pentagon and an AI company.
- A new Congress is seated in January 2027.

Twelve requests, with reasons and objections

These are options, drawn from proposals made by people across the political spectrum. Each has costs. Decide which you can support in good conscience.

Ask your representatives to...	Why	The strongest objection
1. Put the rule of human judgment over lethal force into statute	A directive can be changed quietly; a law requires a vote	Fixed law may lag behind technology and tie commanders' hands
2. Require a human decision for any nuclear launch, by law	The false alarms of 1979, 1980 and 1983	Already policy; adversaries may not reciprocate
3. Mandate independent testing of AI-enabled weapons, with public summaries	Sellers should not grade their own products	Published results could aid adversaries; testing slows fielding
4. Require prompt public reports when AI-assisted strikes kill civilians	Accountability needs facts; Minab remains unexplained	Investigations take time; details may be classified
5. Enforce conflict-of-interest rules on advisory panels, with public rosters and recusals	Those who profit should not steer purchases unseen	The most knowledgeable people often have

Ask your representatives to…	Why	The strongest objection
		industry ties
6. Lengthen cooling-off periods before officials join contractors	Reduces the pull of a future paycheck on present decisions	May deter talented people from public service
7. Write wartime service terms into contracts for privately owned infrastructure	No single executive should hold a switch over a front line	Firms may refuse the work or raise prices
8. Tie budget growth to progress on passing an audit	Nine failed audits; a 44 percent increase requested	Readiness should not wait on accountants
9. Vote on sustained hostilities, as the Constitution provides	War decisions belong to the people's branch	Modern threats move faster than legislatures
10. Require accurate readiness reporting to Congress, in classified form if needed	Public bravado should not leave lawmakers misinformed	Leaks could reveal weaknesses
11. Establish testing and incident reporting for the most advanced AI systems, with whistleblower protection	The builders should not be the only ones who know the risks	Could slow innovation and advantage foreign rivals
12. Pursue verifiable international limits on the most dangerous military uses of AI	Arms races are safest when both sides can see	Verification is hard; adversaries may cheat

Readers who favor a faster military build-up have requests of their own that fit Eisenhower's concerns. More competition among suppliers, simpler purchasing rules and less dependence on any single vendor all reduce concentrated influence. Several items above, including numbers 3, 7 and 8, are supported by people who want the arsenal stronger.

How to be heard

Congressional staff describe what works in consistent terms.

1. **Contact your own members.** Offices weigh constituents and largely set aside everyone else. Give your address.
2. **Make one request.** Name the bill or the action. "Please support codifying human judgment over the use of force in the defense bill" can be tallied. A general complaint cannot.

3. **Say why in two or three sentences of your own.** Personal letters outweigh form messages.
4. **Note the committee.** Members who sit on the Armed Services, Appropriations, Commerce or Intelligence committees have direct influence. Utah and every other state have members on some of these.
5. **Show up.** A respectful question at a town hall is remembered. So is a brief visit to a district office.
6. **Follow through.** Thank a member who acts. Ask again of one who does not.
7. **Join with others.** A dozen neighbors who write in the same week are noticed.

A sample letter

> *Dear Senator,*
>
> *I am a constituent in [city]. I support a strong national defense, and I share President Eisenhower's concern that it remain accountable to the people.*
>
> *I ask that you support writing into law the Pentagon's existing requirement of human judgment over the use of lethal force, and independent testing of AI-enabled weapons before they are fielded. Decisions about taking life should rest with people who answer for them.*
>
> *I would be grateful to know your position.*

Through the peacemaker's lens

Latter-day Saint scripture treats government as a trust for which people answer.

> *We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them. (Doctrine and Covenants 134:1)*

That accountability covers those who govern and those who choose them. A revelation given in 1833 states the citizen's part.

> *Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold. (Doctrine and Covenants 98:9-10)*

King Mosiah's reform also built in the check that this chapter asks Congress to exercise. If higher judges judged unrighteously, lower judges were to be gathered to "judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people" (Mosiah 29:29). Oversight of the powerful by those who answer to the people is written into the Nephite constitution.

The Church encourages its members to be informed and active citizens and remains neutral among parties and candidates. Nothing in this chapter carries its endorsement. Two Latter-day Saints may read the same verses, weigh the same twelve requests and choose differently. What the scriptures do not leave open is whether to take part.

Chapter 16. The Citizen's Test

When Captain Moroni needed to rally a divided people, he tore his coat and wrote on it.

> *In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children. (Alma 46:12)*

Peace is on the banner. The most famous military standard in the Book of Mormon lists it among the things worth defending, alongside faith, freedom and family. Moroni raised an army under that title, and he measured the army's purpose by it.

Eisenhower ended his farewell address in the same key. After the warnings came a prayer, offered by a soldier who had seen more of war than almost anyone alive.

> *We pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations, may have their great human needs satisfied... and that, in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love.*

Between the banner and the prayer lies the argument of this book.

What we have seen

A general who built the modern American arsenal warned that it would generate influence no one voted for, and that science harnessed to it could capture the policy meant to govern it. He was right about the influence and partly right about the rest, and the republic he feared for is still standing.

A new arsenal is now being built by technology companies. It is faster, more privately held and more persuasive than the one he knew. Its builders make serious arguments for it. Its first year of large-scale use in war has left unanswered questions about a school, a satellite switch and an advisory panel.

The wars of the Middle East have tested all of it at once. Two peoples with true stories of loss, a region armed by outside powers, machines choosing targets, and some believers reading the bloodshed as a welcome sign. Latter-day Saint scripture and scholarship point another way: mourn every victim, refuse to hasten catastrophe, and stand in holy places without being moved.

Storytellers and scientists warned for two centuries that our creations could outrun our judgment. History records several nights when one person's hesitation was all that stood between a false alarm and catastrophe.

No one knows when or whether machines will surpass us. The decisions that matter most do not wait on that answer.

The test, one last time

Apply these five questions to any weapon, any war, any policy and any technology. They come from the record of a people who failed them.

1. **Is it for defense?** "Never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives" (Alma 48:14).
2. **Do we take it up with sorrow?** "They were sorry to take up arms... because they did not delight in the shedding of blood" (Alma 48:23).
3. **Who gains power and wealth from it?** Combinations form "to get power and gain" (Ether 8:22).
4. **Have the people been told the truth and given a voice?** "Do your business by the voice of the people" (Mosiah 29:26).
5. **Are we pursuing it as peacemakers?** "He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me" (3 Nephi 11:29).

A program that passes all five deserves support. One that fails any of them deserves questions, asked plainly and without anger.

What one person can do this month

- Read Eisenhower's farewell address aloud at home. It takes fifteen minutes.
- Read Alma 43 through 48 and Mormon 3 through 4 with the five questions beside you.
- Choose two of the twelve requests in Chapter 15 and write to your three members of Congress.
- Check one confident public claim about war or AI against a primary source.
- Have one conversation with someone who disagrees with you, and ask what would change each of your minds.
- Keep your household's several days of water, food and medicine. Preparedness is the humblest form of defense.

Awake

Eisenhower asked for a citizenry that is "alert and knowledgeable." Moroni, who said he had seen our day, used a single word.

> *Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation. (Ether 8:24)*

Both men wrote at the end of long service, to people they would not live to see. Both believed those people could choose better than the generations before them. Mormon's last word to us on war was to lay down our weapons and "delight no more in the shedding of blood" (Mormon 7:4). Isaiah's promise, preserved by

Nephi, is that the day will come when nations "shall beat their swords into plow-shares" and learn war no more (2 Nephi 12:4).

Until that day, the work falls to people willing to stay awake, learn the facts, speak without contention and ask their leaders for an accounting. The Savior gave them a name and a promise when He stood among the Nephites.

> *And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. (3 Nephi 12:9)*

Notes on sources and quotations

What was verified for this edition (November 19, 2026).

- Eisenhower's farewell address and "Chance for Peace" speech, against the texts published by the Eisenhower Presidential Library.
- Book of Mormon passages from Alma 24 and 48, Mormon 3 and 4, and Mosiah 29, against the edition published by the Church. Other scripture is quoted from memory of the same edition. Please read each passage in context.
- President Kimball's 1976 message, the 1981 First Presidency statement on the MX missile, and President Nelson's 2023 address, against Church and news sources linked in the text.
- Current events of 2025 and 2026, against the news and government sources linked in the text and in the companion claim-by-claim analysis.

Middle East chapters. Casualty figures, the status of the genocide case, the Gaza ceasefire and the Iran war in Chapter 11 were checked on November 19, 2026 against the linked sources. Figures from Gaza come from its Health Ministry and are disputed by Israel. Both sides of the genocide debate are stated from their own advocates. The book takes no position on that question. Events are moving daily.

What rests on general knowledge. Historical narrative in Chapters 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 12, including dates, figures and the quotations from Turing, Wiener, Good, Oppenheimer, Bradley and the Russell-Einstein manifesto. Each chapter says so at its end. A careful reader should confirm any detail before repeating it publicly.

Quotations and copyright. Speeches by presidents and generals are government works. Scripture, Shelley, Butler, Forster and the founders are in the public domain and are quoted at length. Works still under copyright are described in the author's words and quoted by a short phrase only.

Forecasts. Timelines for advanced AI in Chapter 9 come from aggregator sites that compile public statements. They change monthly. Treat them as a snapshot.

Independence. This is not a publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Eisenhower Library or any organization named in it. The pairing of Eisenhower with Mormon, the five-part peacemaker's test and the applications of scripture to policy are the book's own. The requests in Chapter 15 are options for citizens to weigh, each with a stated objection.

Authorship. Drafted by Claude, an AI system made by Anthropic, at the request of the reader named on the title line. Anthropic is a party to one dispute described in Chapter 5.

For further reading.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address (1961) and "The Chance for Peace" (1953)
- The Book of Mormon: Mosiah 29; Alma 24, 43 to 48, 60 to 61; 3 Nephi 11 to 12; 4 Nephi; Mormon 1 to 8; Ether 8 and 15
- Doctrine and Covenants 98, 121 and 134
- Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship" (1976)
- Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed" (2023)
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818); E. M. Forster, "The Machine Stops" (1909)
- Norbert Wiener, "Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation" (1960)
- Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: U.S. Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems"