



# WAR

## WITH THE REMNANT

THE HIDDEN NARRATIVE OF  
TERRORISM AND THE  
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

MATTHEW A. HUGHES

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## CHAPTER 1

# TERRORISM IN THE LAST DAYS

*“Everything in the arsenal of the adversary will eventually be used.”*

*—Elder Neal A. Maxwell, “All Hell is Moved,” Devotional given at Brigham Young University, November 8, 1977*

### **Relevance of Contemporary Terrorism**

Nephi and other prophets foresaw the challenges of these last days, among which is the bloodshed associated with terrorism. They recorded their visions and revelations in the compilation of scripture penned by prophets known as the Book of Mormon. David Brent Marsh of the Priesthood and Family Department for the Church explained that the Book of Mormon was preserved and brought forth in our day to help Saints with the challenges of this dispensation, stating that, “of the 239 chapters in the Book of Mormon, 174 (73 percent) deal with war, terrorism, murder, political conspiracies, secret combinations, threats, family collusions, and other hostilities.”<sup>12</sup> The last days are rife with violence. People all over the world witnessed terrorism increase in frequency and impact in recent decades, influencing many facets of life, from security procedures at airports to apprehensions about sending our children to school.

Latter-day Saints do not readily come to mind as a unit of people directly affected by contemporary terrorism, yet many have been deliberately targeted in attacks or have become the victims of indiscriminate targeting in broader

terrorism campaigns. In fact, at one time in recent history, the Church was the most frequently targeted organization in anti-US attacks in Latin America.<sup>13</sup> While attacks waxed in the late 1980s and early 1990s and waned in the following years, the Church remains a target. Saints have been victims of attacks not specifically targeting the Church, as well, with Saints perishing or suffering injuries in the Oklahoma City Bombing, the 9/11 attacks, and other events.

Terrorism has been the subject of scriptural prophecy, as well as counsel and warnings of modern-day prophets. While armed conflict still produces more fatalities than do acts of terrorism, the frequency of terrorist attacks in the world and perpetrators' indiscriminate nature of targeting makes this a chief factor of concern among people, especially members of younger generations bombarded by terrorism in the media for most of their lives. Future generations will undoubtedly continue to confront the perpetual and ever-evolving threat of terrorism.

## **Brigham Young's Prophecy on the Power of Satan in the Last Days**

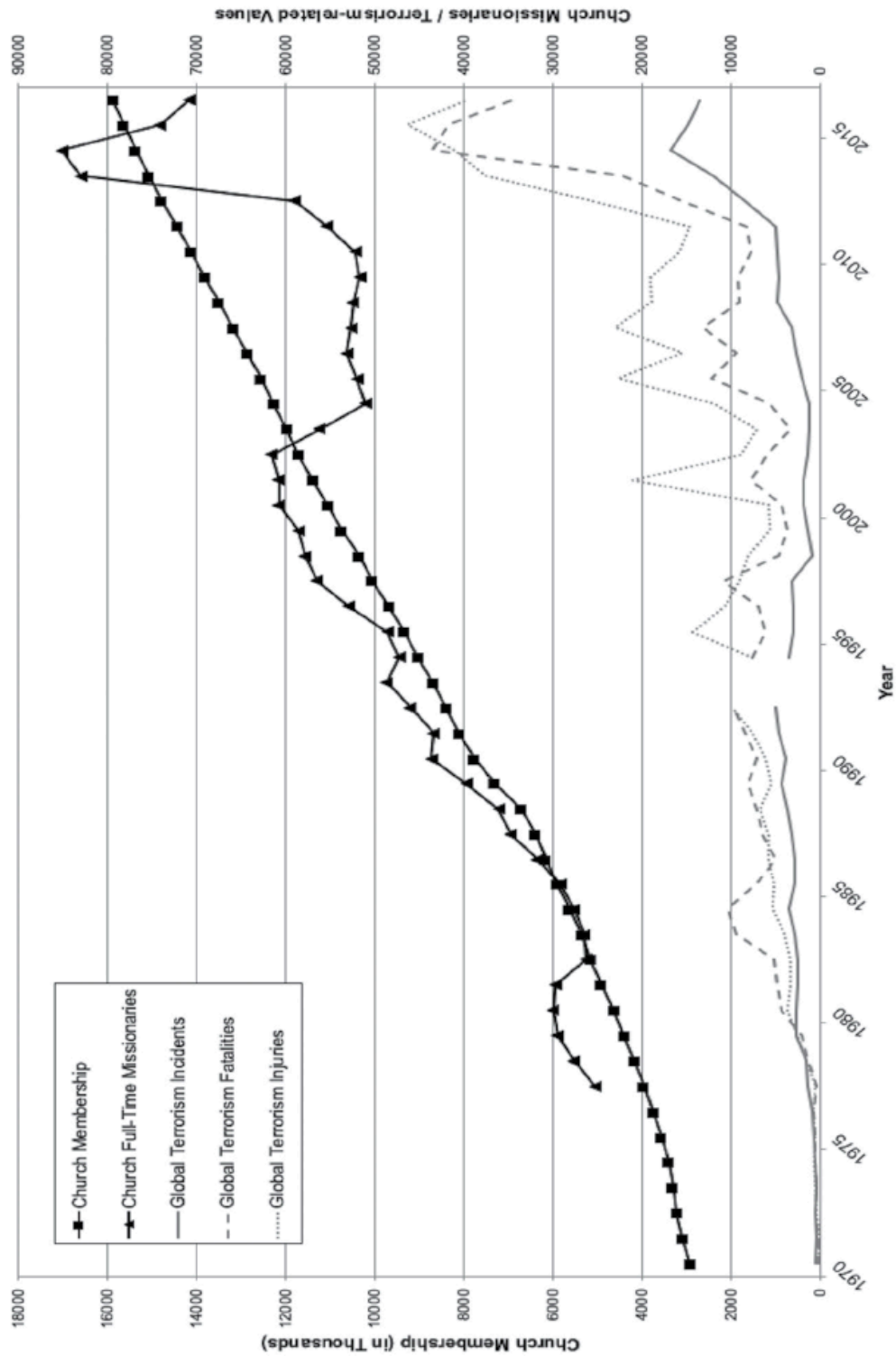
Satan's power and influence in the world are often difficult to quantify, given gradual shifts in public policy on issues of morality, changing perceptions of polemic issues across generations, and evil practices adopted and accepted as norms as society grows more distant from God. Terrorism, however, differs from many of the shifting societal norms, as terrorism remains one aspect of opposition in the world most people still recognize as evil. Aspects of terrorism are quantifiable, revealing trends over time.

By nature, terrorism incites fear that can counteract the faith and hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Commenting on the opposition countering the spread of the Church, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Quorum of the Seventy at the time, stated the following:

“President Brigham Young observed that it would be at the very time when the Church was reaching out to all the nations of the world, when it was prospering and growing, that there would be in proportion to the spread of the gospel a rise in the power of Satan.”<sup>14</sup>

In other words, assigning variables to certain phrases in this prophecy, with an increase in missionary work and Church membership, there will be a proportional increase in evil. In the context of terrorism, one manifestation of Satan's power in the world, comparing key indicators of the variables listed in Brigham Young's prophecy reveals a proportional correlation. The graph depicted in Figure 1.1 compares changes in Church membership (primary vertical axis) and the number of full-time missionaries (secondary vertical axis) to key indicators of terrorism (also secondary vertical axis) over time.

**Figure 1.1: Key Indicators for Church Growth and Global Terrorism**



Source: Values for Church membership and full-time missionaries compiled from statistics presented in each General Conference. Terrorism figures compiled from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism Global Terrorism Database. Terrorism statistics for 1993 are not included in the GTD.

Generally, key variables representing the occurrence and impacts of terrorism changed *in proportion to* the number of full-time missionaries over the depicted 47-year time frame. Key indicators of terrorism closely followed changes in the number of full-time missionaries throughout the depicted time period, with marked similarities in slope. The rise in terrorism after 1979 marks a changing tide in predominant ideologies fueling terrorism, shifting from violence perpetrated by leftist groups to religious terrorism conducted by extremist factions. Despite a lull in attacks from 1998 to 2005, casualty counts remained relatively high, especially on September 11, 2001. Global Church membership consistently increased at a relatively constant rate, but the number of full-time missionaries varied in recent decades. President Thomas S. Monson's announcement in the October 2012 General Conference, lowering the minimum age of male missionaries from 19 to 18 and of women missionaries from 21 to 19 contributed to the subsequent momentary spike in the number of full-time missionaries. Interestingly, a proportional increase in the number of terrorism-inflicted casualties accompanied this dramatic increase in the preaching of the gospel, partially due to the resurgence of the Islamic State in 2011 during the Syrian civil war. Similarly, casualty numbers decreased between 2015 and 2017, accompanying a decline in the number of full-time missionaries.

Missionary work represents one of the most formidable tools combating Satan's focus on the spiritual and eternal state of man, so correlations between degrees of evil and terrorism and missionary work seem practical. Missionaries are the front line of the Lord's work, so as their ranks increase in size and spread to new countries, a logical reaction from Satan would be to increase his efforts to spread chaos and sow seeds of strife. In addition to Brigham Young's prophecy concerning evil, supported by terrorism trends compared to Church statistics, many other General Authorities have spoken on the topic of terrorism and violent opposition.

## **Rebuke, Chastisement, and Other Associations**

Terrorism plays a significant role in warnings and prophecies associated with the last days. Due to the relative newness of the term *terrorism*, that role may not be

as readily apparent as other foretold events and aspects of the last days that prophets overtly describe in scripture in translated terms still used today, such as wars and rumors of wars. Analyzing the context of terror in scriptures especially relevant to the latter days, such as the Book of Mormon and General Conference addresses, helps to fill this gap of knowledge and understanding and exposes terrorism as another topic included among revelations.

Since the Restoration, many General Authorities mentioned *terror* in their general conference addresses. The word cloud depicted in Figure 1.2 reflects words occurring most frequently in close proximity to the term *terror* and related terms in General Conference addresses. In the word cloud, the size of the word reflects the word frequency—the larger the word, the greater the frequency of that word.

The word cloud reveals three of the most common words associated with *terror* in General Conference addresses are *death*, *war*, and *famine*, reminiscent of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Descriptions vary among scholars, but the *New Testament Institute Student Manual* asserts the following possible interpretations regarding symbolism in Revelation 6: white horse, victory; red horse, bloodshed; black horse, famine; and pale horse, death.<sup>15</sup> Other scriptural accounts and prophetic statements describing how God chastises man and punishes the wicked mention variations of four elements, listing death, war (bloodshed, the sword, or strife), famine (hunger or drought), and pestilence (plague, disease, or sickness).

Helaman 12:3 mentions the four elements in this model of rebuke and chastisement with one particular variation. The verse reads as follows (italics added):

“And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with *terror*, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.”

This echoes the description of afflictions plaguing man in other accounts, with the important distinction of the word *terror* taking the place normally occupied by *war* or a reference to war. While the meaning of the term *terror* varies throughout each book of scripture, prophets emphasize the Book of Mormon was written for our time and holds special significance for the latter days. The

verse does not reference a specific group of people or time period, as opposed to the preceding verses in Helaman 12:1–2 describing the Lord’s dealings with the Nephites. Hence, *terror* is likely one form of chastisement tailored to this phase of the last days. Regarding this likening of scripture to present day conditions, Elder Dallin H. Oaks once stated (italics added):

“The idea that scripture reading can lead to inspiration and revelation opens the door to the truth that *a scripture is not limited to what it meant when it was written but may also include what that scripture means to a reader today*. Even more, scripture reading may also lead to current revelation on whatever else the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader at that time. We do not overstate the point when we say that the scriptures can be a Urim and Thummim to assist each of us to receive personal revelation.”<sup>16</sup>

The rarity of the term *terror* in scripture, especially in this context, further bolsters the possibility that the verse relates to these latter days and holds a unique meaning for readers today that differs from the meaning understood in the times of the Nephites. President Boyd K. Packer, in his 2004 General Conference address “Do Not Fear,” also mentioned Helaman 12:3 in discussing events leading up to the Lord’s return, and posed the question, “Have you noticed that word *terror* in that prophetic Book of Mormon warning?”<sup>17</sup> Book of Mormon prophets foresaw these last days; their writings hold special meaning in our modern interpretations.



lone wolf gunmen than nuclear nightmares of past generations. As such, the Lord may leverage the term *terror* in scripture for the intended effect of calling the wicked to repentance and in chastening His people, given the more palpable fear and connection than with other terms. Along this vein of insight, Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Quorum of the Seventy Presidency shared the following shortly after the 9/11 attacks:

“So now the question for all of us is the one Elder Henry B. Eyring asked at October Conference about all the people who’ve started praying since the terrorist attack. ‘I hope the change lasts,’ said Elder Eyring. His concern, and mine, is that, as Mormon wrote, ‘Except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions [and] visit them with . . . terror . . . they will not remember him.’”<sup>19</sup>

Elder Hafen’s interpretation of Helaman 12:3 takes a modern approach to the word *terror* with a direct reference to the 9/11 attacks. While terrorism will not necessarily supplant the sword in an era characterized by wars and rumors of wars, acts of terror will serve as one method to chasten the wicked and call people to repentance.

#### **American Religiosity in the Wake of 9/11**

For weeks following the 9/11 attacks, church attendance reached record highs as religiosity returned to America. Many wondered whether the attacks altered the spiritual state of Americans for the foreseeable future, as evidenced by this religious fervor and increased church attendance. Over the course of the following months, however, church attendance began to decrease and then returned to percentages near those prior to 9/11. Studies reflect this shift, as a September 21–22, 2001 Gallup poll showed 47 percent of Americans said “they had attended church or synagogue in the past seven days,” but by November, subsequent polls showed “church attendance had dropped back to 42 percent,” levels consistent with those of previous years.<sup>20</sup> The spiritual rejuvenation experienced after similar attacks is regrettably fleeting. Such events awaken people to the fragility of life, but ultimately fail to produce an enduring change of behavior, the same type of change associated with repentance.

## **Evolution of *Terror* and Associated Terms in Latter-day Saint Vernacular**

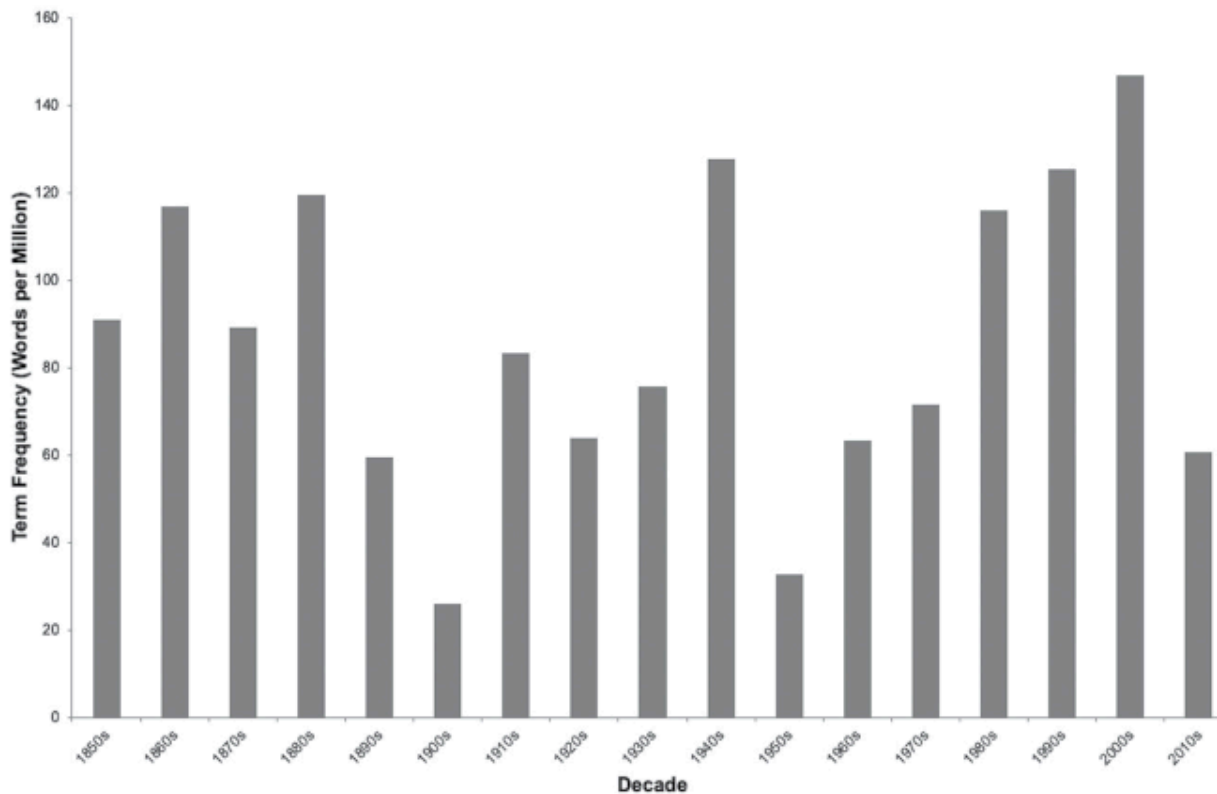
The frequency and meanings of the term *terror* within the Church changed over time, generally reflecting changes in term meaning among the greater public as media and political conditions prompted the term to evolve. Textual analysis reveals three distinct periods in which General Authorities used the term more prevalently. These periods also reflect different meanings for the term and associated words, based on context in General Conference addresses.

### **Early Church Growth, Tyranny, and Death (1850s–1890s)**

Shortly after the Restoration, General Authority use of the word *terror* predominantly followed one of three themes: the unstoppable spread of the Gospel, tyranny and compulsion, or physical death. The leading theme associated with terror held a positive connotation involving the spread of the Church. In 1856, for instance, President Brigham Young said the following:

“The very report of the Church and kingdom of God on earth is a *terror* to all nations, wheresoever the sound thereof goeth. The sound of ‘Mormonism’ is a *terror* to towns, counties, states, the pretended republican governments, and to all the world. Why? Because, as the Lord Almighty lives and the Prophets have ever written the truth, this work is destined to revolutionize the world and bring all under subjection to the law of God, who is our lawgiver.”<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 1.3: Prevalence of Terror and Associated Terms in General Conference Addresses by Decade**



Source: Generated using the General Conference Corpus with the search term terror\*\*\* and the frequency by decade for this term. This search yielded 268 occurrences of 12 related terms (e.g., terror, terrorism, terrorist, terrorists) in the corpus. The General Conference Corpus, a text analysis tool developed by BYU Linguistics Professor Mark Davies, is accessible at <http://www.lds-general-conference.org>.

The term, thus, referred to emotions associated with uprooting secular institutions. The principle of revolution remains associated with modern uses of these terms, as political change is the common objective of modern terrorism. President John Taylor’s words two years later echo similar positive sentiments of terror after the Restoration when he said, “Zion will become a terror to all nations,” referring to the growth of the Church as an unstoppable force.<sup>22</sup> Similar phrases exist among the addresses of other early Church leaders, reflecting a connotation to the Church that faded over time as interpretations of terror with negative connotations replaced former meanings.

A second common theme associated with terror reflected the secular use of the term, referring to tyranny and political oppression after the model of

France. The term *terrorism* originated from the 1793–4 *régime de la terreur* in France as political leaders used fear and intimidation tactics to maintain order during a phase of anarchy, but quickly became an expression describing “the abuse of office and power” during Robespierre’s reign.<sup>23</sup> Some church leaders used the term with this connotation to tyranny commonly used in Europe. This meaning is evident in the words of Charles W. Penrose, spoken in 1883:

“Some people say they can not understand how it is that these Latter-day Saints are so united, unless they are held together by some secret bond or some kind of tyranny. They can not understand how it is that when the leaders of the people speak, the people are willing to move in a body, with scarcely a dissenting voice, unless it is that they are terrorized or coerced by some power that is not known on the outside. Now, all the bondage and terrorism that exist in this church is the terrorism and bondage—if such a thing can be—of conscience.”<sup>24</sup>

This definition and usage reflects compulsion and overriding agency through threats and inspiring fear in a group of people. This characteristic of the term gained momentum and it remains a fundamental characteristic in the word’s meaning today.

Death, and the fear associated with departing the mortal frame, became a third predominant theme linked to *terror* in the early Church. In this sense, the term held a negative connotation and reflected uncertainty and fear related to the unknown hereafter. In 1860, John Taylor used the term as follows:

“He [God] has planted within us, through the principles of eternal truth, the germs of everlasting life; so that Death, which has been a terror to all nations for generations past, which has caused men to quail, and through which the Jews all their life long were subject to bondage, has lost its terrors on the minds of men who live their religion, who walk according to the laws of the holy Priesthood, and cultivate the Spirit of God.”<sup>25</sup>

This meaning faded over the subsequent decades, or at least the term’s association to death or fear appeared less frequently. The term *terror* and associated terms became less prevalent around the turn of the century, regaining use as the world erupted in armed conflict.

## **The Desolation of War (1910s–1940s)**

A resurgence in the usage of the word *terror* and associated terms took place between the 1910s and 1940s, aligned to two world wars and reflecting the horror and devastation of armed conflict. During these times, General Authorities used the term *terror* to describe the sweeping destruction of military forces and the fears felt by civilians. In the 1918 General Conference, Joseph B. Murdock used the term *terror* as he contrasted Christ's temperament and charity to Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German Kaiser and King of Prussia during World War I:

“He [Christ] said ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ That was the testimony of the Savior, in whose footsteps we are striving to follow. What a vast difference between that and the statement of the monster to his armies, to the effect: ‘Leave your mark when you go through the great cities, that you may strike terror to the inhabitants of the world, even to the extent of killing, crucifying women and children, soldiers, prisoners or any one, that terror may come into the hearts of the people! That the fear of the sword and of the aim of the Kaiser, (who falsely represents that he is a representative of the Almighty) might strike terror to the hearts of the people.’”<sup>26</sup>

Other church leaders used the term *terror* to describe the effects of war and militarism, alluding to physical devastation and emotional damage inflicted through fear. Many conveyed the futile application of despotic rule over a people and advocated for liberty and tenets of democracy.

## **Terrorism as a Political Tool to Engender Change and Incite Fear (1960s–Present)**

After another lull in the use of *terror* and related terms, these terms reemerged in the 1960s. The gradual increase from the 1960s into the 1980s emphasized fear, anarchy, and war. In the late 1970s, *terror* and associated terms took on the distinct meaning of violence conducted by individuals and networks pursuing political change. In the October 1979 General Conference, Barbara B. Smith, General President of the Relief Society, discussed the harrowing times and

vulnerability of Saints throughout the world in the midst of new threats, commenting:

“My heart was deeply touched by the obedience of sisters I recently met in a country at war. I heard the branch Relief Society president commend them for their commitment to the work of the Lord and to each other during the perilous times they faced each day. She said, ‘You never know when you step outside your door whether you will be attacked by terrorists, yet you do your visiting teaching and attend all of your church meetings. You are courageous women who do a mighty work quietly in such a time as this.’”<sup>27</sup>

In the execution of their religious duties, Saints began to face threats of physical violence. That danger continued into the next decade, as the likelihood of violence also increased in areas where North American missionaries and Latter-day Saint chapels constituted vulnerable and symbolic entities associated with the United States, at least in the eyes of many anti-US terrorist groups.

This steady increase in the frequency of the terms *terror* and *terrorism* in General Conference addresses took place during a time when persecutions targeting chapels and missionaries increased, mainly in South America. In the wake of the assassinations of Latter-day Saint missionaries Todd Ray Wilson and Jeffrey Brent Ball in Bolivia on May 24, 1989, Elder M. Russell Ballard stated the following in the October 1989 General Conference:

“Our missionaries have not participated in this great work without serious challenges, tribulations, and difficulties. Parents of missionaries have always known the risk of losing a loved one serving in the mission field due to accident or illness. Now, we must add to the risk of missionary service the possibility of acts of terrorism. Terrorism is centuries old but perhaps has never before been so open and blatant nor had such extensive news coverage. Terrorism has many victims. They include the innocent and law-abiding people residing in a troubled region who are striving to provide for their families and to do what is right. Missionaries live among the peoples of the world; and even with the protection of the members, they also can become innocent victims of acts of violence.”<sup>28</sup>

Terrorism took on a new and more personal meaning, as threats of violence seemed to pervade previously safe communities in Western countries. Communist extremist groups and others emerged in the Western Hemisphere, determined to attack US facilities and citizens abroad as political statements, such as to protest US military actions in the Middle East.

This ever-present danger and possibility of violence with political objectives increased in frequency into the new millennium. In his dedicatory prayer of the Conference Center, the new site of all General Conferences in Salt Lake City, Utah, President Gordon B. Hinckley incorporated protection from such threats among the invoked blessings upon the edifice. He said, "Protect it from [. . .] the desecrating hand of the vandal and destroyer. Preserve it from conflict and acts of terrorism."<sup>29</sup> General Conference addresses reflected this evolving and pervasive threat as General Authorities counseled Saints on how to supplant fear with faith. Many likened the scriptures unto our day, including President Boyd K. Packer when he spoke on terrorism and stated, "We are not blind to the conditions in the world," and then continued, "Isaiah promised, 'In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee (Isaiah 54:14).'"<sup>30</sup> The most prevalent period of General Conference references to terrorism occurred in the five years following the 9/11 attacks, but General Authorities continue to provide guidance on how to endure such evils.

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