

B. H.

V. F. Peepson

THE STATEMENT

on

PEACE and WAR



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CHURCH of the BRETHREN
1935

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THE PEACE POSITION of The Church of the Brethren

As Stated in Some Excerpts from Annual Conference
Minutes

Historical Background

1785 MINUTES

We cannot see or find any liberty to use any (carnal) sword, but only the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1840 MINUTES

Article 9. Whether it could be allowed for Brethren to go to train (or muster) in the militia?

Considered that the training or mustering is a preparation for war, and since we are inclined to peace, it would be in no wise proper nor allowable for Brethren to learn war. Isa. 2: 4; Mic. 4: 3.

1865 MINUTES

Article 15. Can a brother be held as a member of the church who will, when put into the army, take up arms and aim to shed the blood of his fellow men? Answer: He cannot.

1918 MINUTES (Goshen Conference)

This Conference of the Church of the Brethren hereby declares her continued adherence to the principles of non-resistance, held by the church since its organization in 1708.

We believe that war or any participation in war is wrong and entirely incompatible with the spirit, example, and teachings of Jesus Christ.

That we cannot conscientiously engage in any activity or perform any function, contributing to the destruction of human life.

Some Teachings of the New Testament, The Christian's Rule of Action

1. Christians are servants of Christ. "But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8: 9). "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5).

2. Love motivates the Christian's conduct. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3: 16). "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 43-45).

3. Human life is sacred. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; . . . and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council" (Matt. 5: 21, 22).

4. Physical resistance and revenge are incompatible with Christian conduct. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5: 38, 39). "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12: 17-21).

1919 MINUTES

(Addressed to the United States Senate, 1919 Minutes)

We most respectfully but most earnestly and specifically protest against the enactment of laws that contemplate enforced military training, and especially against such training in the schools of our land—believing that such action would be a step backward of several centuries in the ideals of government and the civilization of the world.

1932 MINUTES

Therefore, we feel bound to avow our conviction that all war is out of harmony with the plain precepts of the Gospel of Christ, and that no plea of necessity or policy, however urgent, can be set up to release either the individual or any nation from the paramount duty which they owe to Jesus who enjoined all men to love their enemies. We express, in all humility, our firm persuasion that all problems, questions, and exigencies incident to the well-being of civil government and the social order can be settled under the ban-

ner of the Prince of Peace in strict conformity to his commands.

1934 MINUTES

It is our conviction as humble followers of the Christ, that **all war is sin**. We, therefore, cannot encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad. We cannot, in the event of war, accept military service or support the military machine in any capacity.



Statement Adopted by 1935 Annual Conference

As a people we have opposed wars at all times throughout our entire history of over two hundred twenty-five years and we have stood with equal consistency for constructive peace principles in all relationships of life. We hate war because we love peace, our way of life at all times. It has been the practice of the church through the years to require of applicants for membership a pledge not to engage in war nor learn the art of war. In our constant attempt to be truly devoted to the highest interests of our country, we have recognized that our supreme allegiance is to God, and we believe that recognition commits us to the highest standard of Christian citizenship by which we can serve our country and our God. We believe a Christian regard for other peoples increases rather than decreases our respect for and our attachment to our own nation.

We believe that all war is sin; that it is wrong for Christians to support or to engage in it; and that war is incompatible with the spirit, example and teachings of Jesus. We believe that war is not inevitable. These beliefs are not based upon a peculiar peace doctrine of our own; they arise from our application of Christian standards to all

human relations, whether individual, group, class, or national. To settle conflicts in any of these relationships by war is not efficient, not constructive, not permanent, and certainly not Christian. We believe that nonviolence, motivated by goodwill, is more powerful than the sword, making possible the survival of both parties, while warfare insures the ultimate destruction of both. War is a far greater calamity to victor and vanquished alike, than would be the hazards incidental to a renunciation of war by a nation and the settlement of all their disputes by peaceful means.

We believe that armaments for nations, like weapons for private defense, do not bring security, but rather intensify the dangers of conflict, as present world conditions tragically testify. We do not believe in the expenditure of our substance for those instruments which endanger our own peace and safety. We believe in the only real preparedness for our nation—goodwill, and the agencies through which it may be expressed and maintained.

We believe the whole war system is futile, always leaving more problems than it settles, if it settles any. Today, only a few years after winning the "war to end war," the United States is in the midst of the greatest of war preparations, and our country shares with other nations the general feeling of insecurity throughout the world. We believe that true democracy, "government of the people, by the people and for the people," is consistent with the spirit and principles of Christianity. But the fruit of war is not democracy; war destroys democracy as the prevalence of dictatorships of

the communist, fascist, or other varieties, testifies. We can not "make the world safe for democracy" by war.

Consequently, we are committed to such interests as a program of peace education for all people; the development and support of the necessary international institutions to settle the disputes between nations by means other than war; the promotion of better relations between conflicting social or economic groups within our country; and honesty and a spirit of public service in our government.

Likewise we are committed in our active opposition to all such interests as appropriations for military purposes; the manufacture of munitions of war either for private profit or by the government; the teaching of the doctrines of military preparedness which are so unsound and so unchristian; voluntary or compulsory military training in our secondary schools and colleges; the challenge of our so-called "war games" to other nations; the enactment of laws conscripting men or property for military purposes; neutrality laws that permit our citizens to profit from the trade of belligerents and draw us into wars; and the secret influence of munitions makers and military officials in conferences called to reduce or abolish armaments.

Therefore, as Christian citizens, we are devoted in principle and in action to the furtherance of every effort by our own nation or any other nation to promote peace in the world, and we are equally devoted in our opposition to those forces within or without our country which make for war, for class struggle, for civil disorder, or for personal conflict.

Suggestive Peace Materials

Peace Action—news bulletin issued monthly by the National Council for Prevention of War, 532 17th St., N. W., Washington, D. C., 50c per year; if five subscriptions are sent in at one time, 40c each.

Peace Literature—order from Board of Christian Education, 22 South State St., Elgin, Illinois.

America First. By Bishop G. Ashton Oldham	free
Bearing of Some Modern Psychological Trends Upon the Problem of War, The. By A. R. Eikenberry..	free
Christian Pacifists	free
Christian Philosophy of Peace, The. By R. H. Miller	free
Compulsory Military Training. Speech of Hon. Fred Biermann	free
Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren on War and Peace (compiled by L. W. Shultz)	25c
Peace Program of the Church of the Brethren, 1935-36	free
Studies in Quaker Pacifism	20c
The Turn Toward Peace	50c
The Arms Inquiry. A summary by Paul Hutchinson	10c

Loan Library Books on Peace (available for payment of postage both ways. Send ten cents per book ordered to the Board of Christian Education, above address).

The Air Menace and the Answer—Fradkin
Arms and Munitions—Baccus
Between War and Peace—Boeckel
Bloody Traffic—Brockway
Character "Bad"—Gray
Community Conflict
The Conquest of Peace—Brandt
Cry Havoc—Nichols

Educating for Peace—Lobingier
Halt! Cry the Dead—Barber
The Horror of It—Barber
King Legion—Duffield
Merchants of Death—Engelbrecht and Hanighen
Peace and the Plain Man—Angell
Peace with Honour—Milne
The Power of Non-Violence—Gregg
Quakers in Action—Jones
Religion Renounces War—Van Kirk
Spreading the Germs of Hate—Vierick
The Turn Toward Peace—Boeckel
War Myth in U. S. History—Hamlin
One Hundred Poems of Peace—Clark and Garrison
The Red Harvest—Burns

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