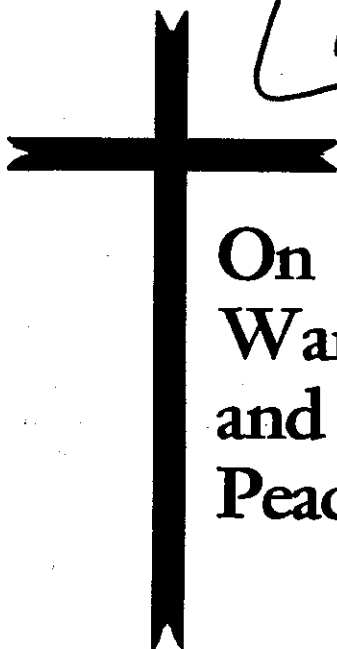


(EPF)



**On
War
and
Peace**

Excerpts from

**The Pastoral Letters of the
House of Bishops**

and

**The Proceedings of the
General Conventions**

of

**The Episcopal Church
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ON WAR AND PEACE

Resolution adopted by the Lambeth Conference, 1930, and incorporated in a general resolution on "World Peace," adopted by the General Convention, 1931.

"War, as a method of settling international disputes, is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We believe that as the Christian conscience has condemned infanticide and slavery and torture, it is now called to condemn war as an outrage on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind."

Excerpts from
the Pastoral Letter, Davenport, 1933

"The Cross is above the flag. In any issue between country and God, the clear duty of the Christian is to put obedience to God above every other loyalty. No nation can live unto itself. We must cooperate or perish. War will be abolished finally only when Christ's spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation is in control of the world's international relationships.

We urge upon you, the people of the Church, to dare to do some of the things Jesus Christ died to make real in a Christian's daily living. If it is a question of compromise between honesty and anything else — dare to do the honest thing. What if it is costly? Are we followers of Christ or not? That is the final question.

Let us not be misled by the false slogan, 'My country, right or wrong.' Dare to meet intolerance with good will. Christ's way is the only way for the Christian, and the only way for a world in need. Stand alone if we must. Be counted a fool if it is necessary. Let us dare to do the thing now that counts. Let us practice what our religion stands for."

Excerpts from "The Pastoral Letter," 1934

"War is murder on a colossal scale. The only armed force, whether on land or sea, which is justifiable, is a constabulary designed to regulate and safeguard those interests that have to do with the prosecution of an orderly social and economic life. The testimony of the great war shows the wicked folly of such a struggle, and its aftermath has shattered the world's hopes and issues in confusion and disorder, the magnitude of which we are as yet incapable of measuring.

The Christian Church can not and will not deny loyalty and fealty to its Lord by being partner in any scheme, national or international, that contemplates the wholesale destruction of human life. It refuses to respond to that form of cheap patriotism that has as its slogan, 'In times of peace prepare for war.' It regards as wicked the waste of the nations' wealth in the building of vast armament and the maintenance of greatly augmented forces on land and sea."

Resolution on "Conscientious Objectors."
Adopted by the General Convention, 1934.

"WHEREAS, the House of Bishops in its Pastoral Letter issued from Davenport stated that it is the duty of Christians to put the Cross above the flag and in any conflict of loyalties to follow the Christ; and,

WHEREAS, we desire that all Christian people who, though willing to risk their lives in non-combatant service are unwilling for conscience's sake to take human life in war, and shall have signified their intention by placing themselves on record at national headquarters of their respective Churches, be accorded by the United States Government the status in fact accorded members of the Society of Friends as respects military service — be it

Resolved: That a Commission of six Bishops, six Presbyters, and six Laymen, be appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to perform the following duties:

- (1) To petition the Congress of the United States for such legislation as may be necessary to secure the status in fact accorded members of the Society of Friends for all Christian men who, though prepared to risk their lives in non-combatant service, are prevented by their conscience from serving in the combatant forces of the United States;
- (2) In the event of such legislation, to make provision for an accurate register to be kept at the offices of the National Council of such members of the Protestant Episcopal Church as are conscientiously unable to serve in the combatant forces of the United States."

From the Oxford Conference of 1937

"War involves compulsory enmity, diabolical outrage against human personality, and a wanton distortion of the truth. War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world, and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No justification of war must be allowed to conceal or minimize this fact.

The universal Church, surveying the nations of the world in every one of which it is now planted and rooted, must pronounce a condemnation of war unqualified and unrestricted . . . If war breaks out, then pre-eminently the Church must manifestly be the Church, still united as the one Body of Christ, though the nations wherein it is planted fight each other, consciously offering the same prayers that God's name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His will be done in both, or all, the warring nations. This fellowship of prayer must at all costs remain unbroken.

The Church must also hold together in one spiritual fellowship those of its members, who take different views concerning their duty as Christian citizens in time of war."

Excerpts from the Pastoral Letter, 1939
"In Days of War"

"God has created us not machines, but men. He has made us in His own image and has given us the terrible gift of freedom . . . He is not a despot but a Father, and His children can either love and obey Him or rebel against Him and refuse to obey His laws . . . We know that we can will to do His will, or reject it. It is wrong, therefore, to blame God for war, for the cupidity and stupidity of men and nations who devour each other. War as an instrument of national policy is a hideous denial of God and His condemnation rests upon it. It is rationally unjustifiable, morally indefensible, and religiously irreconcilable with the love of God and our neighbor. And it is wholly incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that war will never achieve peace, but only sow the seeds for further wars. We believe that the only sure foundations for peace are mutual understanding, sympathy, fairness, generosity, good will between nations — in a word, 'peace among men of good will.' This belief may necessitate surrender by each nation of national sovereignty in such degree as may ensure security for all nations. We believe that the teachings of Jesus Christ — 'Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you; bless them that curse you; and pray for them that despitefully use you; as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise' — are not mere counsels of perfection, but sound, sober, practical commonsense. To hate your enemies, to attack them that curse you, and to do evil to those that despitefully use you, has been shown to be, and is again being

shown to be not only wicked, but silly and stupid and senseless and impractical — the sure way to wreck what we have dared to call our civilization.

Religion is the greatest energizing force in life. When its vigor abates, society decays, and the heart of religion is 'to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.' The most disrupting and evil force in the world, coiling itself at the center of all wars and of all human barbarisms that beget war, is acquisitiveness, greed.

Our Lord pierced at the tap root of these barbarisms when He said 'Beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Nor does a nation's life consist in the extent of its territories. Men and nations, including so-called Christian nations, must recognize Jesus Christ not as a Galilean visionary but as a stern and practical realist, not as a voice merely for His day but as a voice for today, and for all the days even to the end of time, not as remote in history but always our contemporary. If we will listen to Him and submit ourselves to Him, there will be an end of war, a reign of good will among men, a triumph of righteousness and peace.

We call upon you in this hour to be good citizens, but not only citizens of your nation: we call upon you to be loyal, patriotic citizens of the Commonwealth of God. Do your duty as citizens who follow their conscience, and that an illuminated conscience, — a conscience that is not the victim of propaganda nor the voice of rationalized self-interest, nor of cowardice, nor of fear, but the voice of God speaking through Jesus Christ.

The Church in this hour must see to it that she holds fast to Christian principles and upholds above all national flags the Cross of a Christ who belongs to no nation or race, but to all men, because all men are sinners and all alike need His redemption. We are very members of the body of

Christ, the Church. Let there be among us no surrender to the powers of darkness, neither to hatred, nor to vengeance, nor to bitterness. Let us strongly resist every attempt to use the Church as an instrument of war propaganda. Let us hate covetousness and hate injustice and hate deceit and hate lies and hate war and hate hate — but let us never hate a child of God. Let us love our Country and love our Church and love our God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us do everything in our power to succor the suffering victims of man's inhumanity to man; to aid both Christian and non-Christian refugees; to pour our healing aid into the Orient where human beings are suffering from flood and famine and the ravages of war; to support the Red Cross and every other reliable agency for the amelioration of human suffering; and to bring to all men everywhere the compassionate ministries of Jesus Christ."

General Convention, 1940

NON-COMBATANT WAR SERVICE

"RESOLVED, That a Committee of three, one Bishop to be appointed by the Presiding Bishop and one Presbyter and one Layman to be appointed by the President of the House of Deputies to represent our Church on the Committee on Conscientious Objectors under the Department of International Justice and Good Will of the Federal Council of Churches.

RESOLVED, That the General Convention request the Presiding Bishop to convey to the officers of the Federal Council and their executive committee our thanks for the energy and efficiency with which they have set forth the expressed wishes of our church with regard to the subject of conscientious objectors."

General Convention, 1943
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

"RESOLVED, That a Joint Commission be set up composed of six persons — two Bishops, to be appointed by the Presiding Bishop; two Presbyters; and two Laymen, to be appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, whose duties shall be

(a) To assure the members of this Church who by reason of religious training and belief are conscientiously opposed to participation in war of the continuing fellowship of the Church with them and care for them;

(b) To maintain through the Committee on Conscientious Objectors under the Department of International Justice and Good-Will of the Federal Council of Churches an official relationship under the provisions set up by the Selective Service Act;

(c) To inform the Church from time to time of the situation in its several aspects and to receive and raise such funds on a purely voluntary basis as are needed for the support of active members of our church who are conscientious objectors and whose personal funds are inadequate; in such manner and in such sums as the National Council may approve—the necessary expenses of the Commission being met out of other funds."

General Convention, 1946

"WHEREAS, More than a year after the end of hostilities, 1,500 conscientious objectors, including Jehovah's Witnesses, are still confined in federal prisons, many with sentences of five years; and

WHEREAS, It is becoming in a democracy that restrictions upon the persons of its citizens occasioned by war be removed at the earliest possible moment; and

WHEREAS, The continued punishment of men for fidelity to their religious or humanitarian beliefs violates freedom of conscience; and

WHEREAS, Only an executive amnesty can both release the conscientious objectors still in prison and restore full civil rights to them and to the 4,500 others who have already completed their prison terms; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the General Convention expresses as its conviction that the cause of justice and religion would be served if the President of the United States should forthwith proclaim such an amnesty."

Excerpts from the Pastoral Letter, 1946

"Prophetic voices have cried out through these past years of conflict, warning of the time when having won the war, we might lose the peace. That time is now upon us.

Our brave men allied with the brave of other lands saved mankind from the adversary of flesh and blood. But mankind is not yet saved. More subtle adversaries, 'the rulers of the darkness of this world' have entered the field. They would make easy prey both of the victors, who are weary and impoverished, and of the vanquished who are desperate in their utter ruin. It is all too true that hundreds of millions are famished and bankrupt in body and goods; but far more is it true that the spirit of mankind cries out of rescue lest it perish.

At home we have confusion and vexation in every quarter, but these fade to nothingness once we become aware of the desperate plight of the world about us.

May it please God that the nations will never again resort to war as the means of settling their differences. Even as the war ended, arms increased to such fantastic power that we face the specter of mankind's obliteration. Only with the armor of God can we withstand this evil day; with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace; faith in our sovereign God and His power to save; the quick

spirit speaking His word within men's hearts, moving them to do His will; and with unceasing, believing prayer.

All earthly devices have failed, but let no one scoff at the overcoming power of Christ's Church once she employs the weapons of the Spirit. For with them she can bring forth not mere idle professions and empty words but food to feed hungry bodies, shelter for the homeless, work for the unemployed, peace among factious brethren, peace among nations, solution of strife between races and classes, forgiveness and reconciliation between those who once hated each other to the death — in short, the peace of God. We are not such fools as to think that our single communion, the Episcopal Church, can do all this alone, but we believe that Christendom presenting an ever more united front can lead all men of good will into the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose."

Are we truly penitent for our share in the world's sin and suffering? Will what we seek bring God's peace? Does it heal? Does it let in light and reasonableness upon ignorance and perversity? Does it cheer the despondent, Does it again take up the burden and march onward? Is it a 'must', a first thing of the Kingdom of God, Does it issue in positive action for the common good? Does it cost us anything? Does it cost thought, searching of heart, amendment, sacrifice of lesser loyalties, and cherished prejudices? Does it cost in self-denial, time, money, energy? Does it call us to hazard anything? Does it force us out of a snug place into the unknown, into some hardship? . . .

The world situation demands Christian steadiness and courage in our insistence upon the exercise of justice and good will in the face of rumor, misunderstanding, and power politics among the nations; support of such steps as will lead to the strengthening of the United Nations, to make it an effective organization to promote human wel-

fare and a just and durable peace. We believe that it is possible to bring about among the nations of the world a lasting peace, because Jesus Christ pointed the way to such a peace; that we should think and talk in terms of such a possibility, lending our aid to human agencies, not closing our eyes to reality, but daring to act on the premise that peace ultimately depends upon the Christian standard of life."

Excerpts from the Pastoral Letter, 1952

"What are the signs of the times which God expects us to discern? One is surely the unprecedented search for unity, both in the divided world and in the divided Church. The world sets about its task with the best means it has; and we pray God's blessing on those means, imperfect as they are. It is right that nations seek stronger and more enduring unity, and find the way to put behind them old and now meaningless nationalisms. For all the blessings which national life has brought us, the conception of absolute national sovereignty is an anachronism. In the words of a resolution of this Convention, 'The only possible pathway to world peace lies through collective security.' Indeed, with all thoughtful citizens, we pledge our support to the United Nations organization, and hope for its future development into a world federation open to all peoples, and capable of maintaining the peace."

General Convention, 1952

from a resolution adopted on "Preventive War"

"Believers in a God of Justice and Love as revealed in Christ cannot concede that war is inevitable; and voices are occasionally raised suggesting that a preventive war would afford a short-cut through our present dilemma; and, if this advice were accepted the United States would be placed in an indefensible moral position before the world, as well as violate the fundamental teachings of Christ. Therefore . . . we unalterably oppose the idea of so-called 'preventive war.'"

General Convention, 1958

Reaffirmed the Lambeth Conference position that "War as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ," and declared that "Nothing less than the abolition of war itself should be the goal of the nations, their leaders and all citizens." It called for governments to "accept such limitations of their own sovereignty as effective control (of nuclear warfare) demands."

General Convention, 1961 CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

"WHEREAS, the 1940 General Convention had a joint Commission on Non-Combatant Service to protect, under the National Selective Service Act, the rights of members of our Church who held the Christian Pacifist Position and to care for their interests; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council be asked to provide in such way as seems best to them a similar agency to protect the rights and interests, under the National Selective Service Act, of the members of our Church who hold the Christian Pacifist position."

UNITED NATIONS

"WHEREAS, the Lambeth Conference affirmed 'the need for strengthening the United Nations' and commended 'wholeheartedly the work done under the aegis of the United Nations'; and

WHEREAS, the President of the United States has called for 'new strength and new roles for a new United Nations'; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Convention calls upon our people to support the President of the United States in his efforts to bring this nation into an even closer relationship with the United Nations and its charter."

Excerpt from Study Document of the House of Bishops, 1962

"The Church's ministry cannot dissociate itself from any of its people and in fact should have a pastoral longing to share their frustrations. We can recognize the work of those of our people in military and military-related activities. To the men at the missile bases, scientific centers, and diplomatic posts, as well as to the people as a whole united in their determination to remain free, we must not hesitate to offer a full ministry, realizing the political and military complexity of our national situation, and the fact that the situation for all of us, military and civilian alike, is not totally of our making. With equal — in some cases even greater—poignancy, we recognize the validity of the calling of the conscientious objector and the pacifist and the duty of the Church fully to minister to him, and its obligation to see that we live in a society in which the dictates of his conscience are respected.

The Church calls upon all people, especially the leaders of nations, to exercise the strongest discipline of conscience to prevent total war. Under modern conditions, such war cannot serve any moral or even useful purpose. Every possible moral force must be summoned to prevent its occurrence. It is becoming increasingly evident that all-out modern war cannot protect the world's peoples, that an atomic holocaust cannot serve the purpose that war may once have served as an instrument of political or police action to secure justice and peace, that total war under modern conditions is self-defeating, and that it will utterly fail to secure peace with the enemy or even peace within the borders of the countries waging it."

"Position Paper" of The House of Bishops, 1964 ON CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE

"Christian teaching holds that civil authority is given by God to provide order in human society,

and that just human law is a reflection of immutable divine law which man did not devise. Under all normal circumstances, therefore, Christians obey the civil law, seeing in it the will of God. Yet it must be recognized that laws exist which deny these eternal and immutable laws. In such circumstances, the Church and its members, faithful to Scripture, reserve the right to obey God rather than man.

Thus, the Church recognizes the rights of any persons to urge the repeal of unjust laws by all lawful means, including participation in *peaceful* demonstrations. If and when the means of legal recourse have been exhausted, or are demonstrably inadequate, the Church recognizes the right of all persons, for reasons of informed conscience, to disobey such laws, so long as such persons

- (a) accept the legal penalty for their action,
- (b) carry out their protest in a non-violent manner, and
- (c) exercise severe restraint in using this privilege of conscience, because of the danger of lawlessness attendant thereon.

Before Christians participate in such actions, they should seek the will of God in prayer and the counsel of their fellow Christians."

Excerpts from the Pastoral Letter, 1964

"The Church corporate, and individual Christians, must meet all the issues of war and peace, including the menace of nuclear weapons. At all levels of its life, the Church must charge its people with the insistent duty of working with all their strength for the prevention and elimination of war.

The Church is not, by its nature, a series of parishes or dioceses like marbles on a tray; it is, rather, a world body, brotherhood, fellowship, through which there moves a common divine life. Let us see, then, as a great opportunity, that the hand of God in modern history is pushing us together, and calling us to become what we are.

All of us are sometimes numbed by the massiveness of the world's problems and needs. In addition to racial tensions, the problems of urbanism and the threat of nuclear war, we know that half the world goes to bed hungry. But God does not call his creatures to an impossible task; nor, since our circumstances vary, does he ask us primarily to 'succeed.' He asks of us, rather, loyalty in the station in which we are placed."

ABOUT THE EPISCOPAL PEACE FELLOWSHIP

The E. P. F. is an independent society of Episcopalians working for reconciliation between men and nations, and pledged to renounce so far as possible participation in war. We seek to set forward "the way of the cross", beginning with our own lives, as we confront the issues of war and peace in our time. An Executive Director operates from our national office in All Saints Church, Manhattan. Membership is open to adult and student Episcopalians who accept this statement of commitment:

"In loyalty to the person, teachings and lordship of Jesus Christ, my conscience commits me to His way of redemptive love; to pray, study and work for peace and to renounce so far as is possible participation in militarism and war. In fellowship with others of like mind, I will work to discover and practice alternatives to violence in the resolution of conflicts.

As a member of the Holy Catholic Church, I urge the Episcopal Church to dissociate herself from the military establishment and to wage peace across all boundaries, calling upon men everywhere to repent, to forgive and to love."

For membership applications, for pamphlets, or for service to the Church in any way, write or call:

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