



*An Appeal for
Peace.*

AN
APPEAL FOR PEACE

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Of the
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS

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1909

MINUTE.

At a Meeting of the Representative Body of Ohio Yearly Meeting held Ninth Month 24th, 1909.

A concern having prevailed in a former meeting in regard to the trend of public opinion toward the encouragement of the war spirit among our citizens, a Committee was appointed, who prepared the following address, "An Appeal for Peace."

They are directed to have it printed, and furnish the heads of our National and State Governments with copies thereof, also members of Congress and of the General Assembly, and make such other distribution as they may think proper.

Taken from the minutes of the meeting.

WM. L. ASHTON, Clerk

AN APPEAL FOR PEACE.

We would be glad, if in our Nation, professing Christianity, we could find no occasion to call in question the attitude of Government toward a subject upon which the teaching of Christ was so plain, direct, and emphatic, the subject of Peace !

But it is so difficult to harmonize the noble efforts made by the United States, in the cause of international arbitration, in the second Hague Conference, with the gigantic armament in progress, and in contemplation, that we feel a desire to examine the matter, carefully and conscientiously.

As honest inquiry into the motives and spirit of war, if we could see it divested of the pomp, and circumstance, and pageantry, that hide its hideous deformity; if we could examine it apart from the passions and prejudices that excite and control it; if we could only measure the immeasurable train of calamitous consequences, that accompany, or follow in its wake, arson, pillage, lust, disregard of human life, and immorality, whose name is legion; could we thus examine the antecedents, the accompaniments and the consequences of militarism, we believe such examination would drive intelligent opinion upon the ground whereon the Religious Society of Friends, and a few other religious denominations have long

stood; the ground of opposition to all war, and to the spirit that fosters it, believing, as we do, that both are at variance with the Gospel of Christ, who declared, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews” (John xviii-36), and who clearly enjoined upon His followers “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. v. 44-45)

The fact of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, established by sacred, and corroborated by profane history, and accepted by the Christian world, places a supreme importance upon His teaching.

“Never man spake like this man !” for “He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes !”

His Divine origin, and His oneness with God removes His teaching out of the class of the human and fallible, and invests it with an import which every Christian must accept, and by which we should regulate our conduct. If our Divine Master meant what He said (and who would dare think otherwise?) could He have more completely forbidden war ?

If it be claimed that His words, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,” might be construed as a justification of war, we would say, that not alone His words, but His life and conduct, especially on that eventful

night in Gethsemane when with all the power of God at His command (See Matt. xxvi. 52-53) He would not even defend himself, is a sufficient answer. The acts and attitude of Christ, from the beginning to the end of His public ministry, were so in harmony with His words, above quoted, that it seems scarce necessary to increase the length of this essay, by further Scripture evidence to show that His teaching was always, and altogether opposed to war.

Nowhere in the scripture record of His pure and sinless life, do we find anything to indicate that He ever wavered from a steadfast opposition to sin, wickedness and violence, and what is war but the embodiment of these ?

The practice of the early Christian Church was consistent with the life and teaching of its Founder, and for the first two hundred years there is no record of a single Christian soldier !

Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens of Alexandria, and many others who wrote during the first three hundred years of the Christian Era, are emphatic in their condemnation of war, believing as did Marcellus, the Centurion, who, when converted to Christianity, resigned his commission in the army, declaring, "It is not lawful for a Christian to bear arms for any earthly consideration." That this was the prevailing sentiment among Christians at this time there can be no doubt, and the numerous instances of those, who, refusing to bear arms, suffered martyrdom therefor, furnish sad evidence of the fact.

During the reign of Constantine the Christian religion spread so remarkably in the Roman Empire, that Tertullian wrote, "We are but of yesterday and today we have overrun your empire !" Yet notwithstanding this great expansion of Christianity, the same writer says in regard to a part of the army comprising more than one-third of the standing Legions of Rome, "Not a Christian could be found among them !"

It is not greatly surprising, that, in view of these conditions in his empire the ambitious Constantine should have espoused the new religion, and to make it popular with his subjects, substituted the golden cross for the Roman eagle, compelling his army to worship beneath the new standard.

Shall we believe that if Christ and His apostles, and the early Church, held war to be wrong, that this effort to popularize, by a Roman emperor, makes it right ? Makes it any less barbarous and hateful ?

No ! Whether examined in the light of Christianity, or reason, or philosophy, we find no tenable ground, upon which the apologist for war can stand, with the hope of making good his contention.

There are, indeed, as we apprehend, few people today, prominent, either in the world of letters, of science, or of religion, who would wish to be known as advocates of war, in the abstract.

Nations are coming more and more to realize that there are better methods of settling their

differences, than the cruel resort to arms !

We have alluded incidentally to the work of the second Hague Conference. It is profoundly gratifying to know of the advance of public sentiment in regard to world peace, during the interval between the two conferences. Gratifying also to know that our distinguished fellow-citizens of the American delegation were the pioneers, and indefatigable workers in favor of a permanent Arbitral Court that should adjudicate all international difficulties that could not be settled by diplomacy. While we rejoice in these hopeful evidences of the growth of peace principles, yet we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that there are countervailing forces and influences at work to hinder the consummation of the beneficent purpose of arbitration, and to nullify the efforts being made in that direction.

We can but deplore the inconsistency of our government, in pushing its ever increasing plans for armament, while at the same time advocating international arbitration; stultifying itself, by refusing in practice what it advocates in theory !

It is interesting, although humiliating, to discover what vast sums of money have been devoted by the general government, in the past to the payment of its military and naval expenses.

In examining statistics published in "The World Calendar and Almanac" for the year 1908, page 344, we find that our government has spent, from its organization in 1789, to the close of the fiscal year, 1907, for its military, naval and pen-

sion departments, the vast sum of twelve thousand, two hundred million dollars ! (\$12,200,000,000)

The civil and miscellaneous expenditures during the same time amounted to four thousand one hundred and five millions ! (\$4,105,000,000)

In addition to these sums, vast beyond comprehension, three thousand, one hundred and seventy millions (\$3,170,000,000) were paid in interest on the public debt. A large part of this debt was incurred on account of the military and naval expenses of government, but we have not included this item in that list.

It seems very clear, however, that since the organization of government, more than twice as much money has been paid for the warlike, as for the peaceful expenses of our country !

Have we not small reason, as a nation, to be called the followers of the Prince of Peace ?

We can but believe that the inconsistency of Government, above alluded to, is due in great measure to the specious reasoning, that “the way to preserve peace, is to prepare for war !” and to the prevalence of erroneous ideas of patriotism. If, in the conduct of national affairs, the way to preserve peace is to prepare for war, by the same method of reasoning, would it not conduce to the peace and good order of a community, for each man to go armed and equipped, to enforce his demands among his neighbors, according to his own ideas of right and justice ? How soon such a course would end in anarchy ! The thought seems

absurd ! But is not the comparison reasonable and just ? If not, WHY NOT?

Let us not be deceived by such sophistry ! Such false reasoning will not do in business ! It will not do in citizenship ! Why should it be counted sound in statesmanship ? Does not this reasoning, when summed up, simply mean this, that if we are powerful enough, if our army and navy are formidable enough to over-awe our neighbor, among the nations; if we are in condition to enforce our demands with stronger battalions and heavier ordnance, this fact will often overrule the questions of right that may be involved !

But do we not see, that this “logic of the strongest,” followed to its ultimate analysis, brings us back to barbarism ? To the doctrine that “might makes right?” To the barbarism not alone of war, but of plunder and piracy as well ?

The world has wearied of this ! Civilization demands something better ! Christianity points the way to better methods, more humane, more rational. Voicing humanity’s demand for peace, some poet has written:

“When shall the flags of war be furled?
Its bellowing thunders cease?
And all the nations of the world
Ring in the reign of peace? -

Too long has might been held as right,
In the Council Halls of State,
Too long have the ears of Infinite Love
Been filled with the cries of hate.”

We believe it is coming to be more generally recognized, in the business world, at least among the best business men that the Golden Rule is adapted to the needs of the world; and if in the business world, why not in the political world as well ?

We believe the adoption of this rule in the comity of nations, would relieve the conditions of suspicion and distrust which are disturbing them.

James Bryce, British Ambassador to the United States, a man to whom statesmen are wont to listen, said in an address before the Lake Mohonk Conference last spring, "At this moment, all the governments, of the great military and naval states, are intensely desirous of peace.

"Every one of them would lose more by war than could possibly be gained !

"Each nation is conscious of its own rectitude of purpose, but each is told not to credit with similar good intentions, the other nations. And this is one of the chief causes of the atmosphere of suspicion in relation to the great powers."

Were we willing, as a nation, to rise above the barbaric idea, and as was fitly expressed by the Lake Mohonk Conference, "Substitute law for war, in the settlement of international difficulties," we believe our gigantic and ruinously expensive armament would prove as useless and cumbrous, as would the armament of neighbors for their peaceful vocations.

We have referred to the erroneous ideas of patriotism, that seem to us, to be held by many of our fellow citizens.

To some, patriotism seems to mean a blind and unquestioning obedience to whatever government may demand.

To others it seems only a willingness to fight for one's country in time of war.

Real patriotism may mean something entirely different from either.

Patriotism is defined by Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary as "Love and devotion to one's country. The spirit, that originating in love of country, prompts to obedience to its laws, to support and defense of its existence rights and institutions, and to the promotion of its welfare." Simply a willingness to fight our country's battles, may or may not be prompted by patriotism, and this service, at best, would be but a small part of patriotism.

We believe there is a patriotism of peace, wherein we may serve our country more wisely, more faithfully, and more advantageously, than in a military way.

Indeed, looking at it from our viewpoint, believing war to be wrong, not only inconsistent with the teaching of Christ, but inconsistent also with the material welfare of our country; deeply imbued with the belief that our Government would be wiser and safer, in trusting to the findings of a

legal tribunal, than in a resort to arms, we feel that real “love of country,” and a desire “to promote its welfare,” would demand of us, to stand opposed to war, even in the face of popular outcry for it ! Had there been more patriots like John Bright and Lord Aberdeen in the British Parliament in 1854, England might have been spared the expensive, disastrous, and inglorious Crimean War ! Had real patriotism been sufficiently abundant in our own country in 1846, we might have been spared the pain and regret of looking back to that blot on our history, the useless, wicked war of conquest against Mexico !

There come to men, and to nations, times of trial and of proving, when right and truth and obedience to the Divine law, are at stake, and in these crises may we be found loyal to God and His truth, even if, in the popular view, we may be counted unpatriotic !

We wish, in this connection to quote from an address of Wm. Everett, on “Patriotism,” at Commencement at Harvard University in 1900. “Brethren, if there is anything, of which Philosophy must say ‘it is wrong,’ that thing is war ! I do not mean any particular school of Philosophy, ancient or modern, but I mean, if any one studies the nature of God and man, in the light of history, with a view to draw from that study rules of sound thought and maxims of right action, he must say ‘war is wrong, a blundering, antiquated, criminal means, of solving a national doubt, by accepting the certainty of misery. . . Right and truth and love to man, and allegiance to God are above all patriotism, and every citizen who sustains his country

in sin, is responsible to humanity, to history, to philosophy, and to Him to whom all nations are as a drop in the bucket, and as the small dust on the balance.”

Another thing, about which great account is made is our “National honor !” Great stress is placed upon little breaches of international etiquette: more it would seem than upon that “righteousness that exalteth a nation.”

We would, with all our fellow countrymen, rejoice to see our country honored, because honorable ! But here again we are driven to the same touchstone of peace ! and in all candor would query, whether our national honor would not be safer in the tribunals of justice, than submitted to the more uncertain and brutal arbitrament of war ?

Not many years ago, much account was made of individual honor, in much the same sense, and the “Code of honor” was jealously guarded and many a duel, and many a death followed its violation; but today the parties to a duel are criminals before the law, and are followed to justice.

May the time soon come when National duels will pass forever away, under the benign influence of the spirit of Christ our Redeemer !

Opposing, not only war, but the spirit that fosters it, we can but view with alarm and distrust, any influences or tendencies that are calculated to keep alive this spirit in our country.

Especially do we wish to bear our testimo-

ny against the cultivation of this spirit among our children, and would earnestly protest against all forms of military training in our country's schools, and also against the "Boys' Brigade" movement.

While it may be true that physical development, and salutary discipline are sought, and perhaps attained, in a degree, by these methods, yet the price paid is too great ! Can we afford to make our valuable educational system a recruiting station for the army ?

Another agency, as we apprehend, that contributes to the perpetuation of the war spirit, is the use that is made of "Memorial Day," for the glorification of military characters and achievements. With martial music, and military parades, the youthful mind is filled with the glitter and glamor of war; intoxicated with the spectacular display, and fired with the oratory of the occasion, to emulate the example of those who died in battle or in prison.

The actual, and brutal, and horrible side of war is not the popular subject of these memorial day addresses !

The fact that military life is beset with almost every form of vice and immorality, is not brought into view.

Rather the dead soldier is lauded as a model for our sons to copy regardless of his moral character, regardless of the environments of his calling, regardless of the profanity, the blasphemy, the licentiousness that run riot in every army ! We

earnestly desire as professing Christians, to do our whole duty, in advancing the cause of peace, not only in our own beloved country, but among the nations of the world.

The Church of Christ today has a vast responsibility resting upon it, in upholding the standard of the "Prince of Peace," not allowing it to trail in the dust of expediency !

Let us be faithful to our high calling, if mayhap we may be instrumental in the bringing in, of that glad day when "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

In conclusion, we wish to quote a few stanzas from that beautiful and pacific poem of Longfellow's, "The Arsenal at Springfield:"

"Is it, O man, with such discordant noises,
With such accursed instruments as these,
Thou drownest Nature's sweet and kindly voices,
And jarrest the celestial harmonies ?

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals and forts.

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred,
And every nation that should lift again,
Its hand against a brother, on its forehead
Would wear forevermore the curse of Cain.

Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease,
And like a bell with solemn sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say 'Peace!'

Peace ! and no longer from its brazen portals,
The blast of war's great organ shakes the skies,
But beautiful as songs of the immortals
The holy melodies of love arise."

