

# A Peaceful People, a Peculiar People: Thoughts on Maintaining a Christian Peace Testimony\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1661, England was approaching the end of a violent era. For a quarter century or more partisan forces had been shredding the land with violence, largely over religion, but also over kingship, democracy, poverty, property, class, and a host of related problems. The world had been turned upside down, as Christopher Hill has put it, and everyone thought they knew how to put it right again.

The Royalists, who by 1660 had carried the day, wanted a king at the top of government and at the top of the Church. No one else did. The Presbyterians wanted a national, compulsory Church ruled by judicial boards of clergy and lay elders, arrayed in a pyramid and watching over the morals of every English subject. The Independents wanted congregations to be independent of one another. The Ranters looked for a freewheeling religion that permitted ecstatic demonstrations without restraint of law, custom, or communal discernment. The Anglicans thought the minister should wear a surplice and stole in church and should pray from the Prayer Book. The Congregationalists thought he should wear only a long black cassock and should pray from Scripture. The Baptists didn't care what he wore, thought he should pray as the Spirit moved, and were generally sure "he" could just as well be a "she." Adamites thought the minister shouldn't wear anything at all, and neither

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should anyone else. James Nayler rode into Bristol mounted on an ass, with his followers spreading branches before him and singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Elizabeth Clark rode into Oxford on an ass, wearing not so much as a palm leaf, “going naked for a sign.” Clark was flogged, Nayler imprisoned, tortured, and abandoned by his Quaker companions. Some Anglicans lost their heads, as did Catholics. Presbyterians and Independents fought Royalists, and each other for that matter, in a “New Model Army” that often enough protected the populace by ruining their crops, raiding their homes, and deflowering their daughters, all in the name of establishing the rule of the saints. The chaos and violence spilled over into neighboring Ireland, beleaguered and unsuspecting, where the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell wrought such devastation and misery on the Catholic populace that to this day he has not been forgiven there.

By 1661 the fury had largely spent itself. A crypto-Catholic king had been summoned home and crowned, and a police state reigned. Everyone was suspect. Wearied and fearful after living through years of principled but pointless violence, a group of Quaker men and women, accused of association with the millenarian, revolutionary “Fifth Monarchy Men,” penned the following testimony to King Charles II:

We utterly deny all outward war and strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever; and this is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing of evil, and again to move us unto it; and we do certainly know and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us unto all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.<sup>1</sup>

This was the first formal statement of what Quakers call their “Peace Testimony.” It evolved over 13 years of seeking, coalescing, organizing, agonizing, preaching, waiting on the Lord in silence, and finding new Light. George Fox, founder of the Quakers — known more formally as the Religious Society of Friends — never tired of telling people that “Christ had come to teach his people himself.” What Christ had to teach

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<sup>1</sup> “A Declaration of the harmless and innocent people of God called in scorn Quakers,” 1661, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John Nickalls, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952 and subsequent printings, 65.

about war was learned through 13 years of harnessing an enormous religious energy and a fire-storm of intense corporate experiences of the presence of God. By 1661 when this “Declaration of the harmless and innocent people of God called in scorn Quakers” was written, Friends were clear that Scripture taught and God willed that a Christian could never (as they said) “fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.”<sup>2</sup>

Friends have maintained this testimony to the present day and we are well known for it. We have not always been as successful as the world thinks we have. Friends resisted fighting on either side in that war between aristocratic generals, redcoat conscripts, mercenaries, wealthy landowners, and a minority of colonial farmers and burgers, that so deeply shaped America in the late eighteenth century. We found our choices much more difficult in the war between the states and in the Second World War. This history of Friends and their peace testimony has been brilliantly chronicled by the great English historian of pacifism, Peter Brock. His most important book on this topic is called *The Quaker Peace Testimony, 1660–1914*.<sup>3</sup> I recommend it. I will not rehearse that history here.

What I want to suggest here is that our peace testimony has stood or fallen on two points: first, that Christ is the root of our peace testimony; second, that it is only as a *people*, differentiated from the “world,” that we can be faithful to our calling to pacifism. What makes these points interesting is not that they say anything about *our* history — which should have no *intrinsic* value for this audience — but that they are and must be true of *any* Christian community that seeks to live in the “peace that passeth all understanding.”

I will not belabor the question of why Christians ought to refuse to fight in wars. I refer you to the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” which the Israelites forgot the moment they heard it, and to the Sermon on the Mount, which Christians forgot the moment Constantine decided that Christianity was the best ideological and social glue he could find to keep his empire in one piece. I will only state my conviction as a Quaker and

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> York, England: Sessions Book Trust, 1990. Other works by Brock that deal in whole or in part with the Friends’ peace testimony include his monumental *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972; *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970; *Pioneers of the Peaceable Kingdom*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.

as a Christian that accepting the redeeming and saving and transforming work of God through the cross of Christ involves us in an unconditional demand: that after the ignominy of the cross, no Christian can take the life of another human being. All the more, no Christian can take part in organized murder as an instrument of national or international policy. To do so is as ridiculous as allowing that a Muslim can worship idols, a Jew believe in someone else's God, or a Buddhist claim that suffering is no problem. Anthony Buzzard of Atlanta Bible College has written an excellent paper on the topic of why Christians specifically should not kill other Christians, and I recommend it.<sup>4</sup>

I will not belabor who the Quakers are, what our peculiar "take" is on the Christian tradition, how we are structured, or what makes us distinctive.<sup>5</sup> These things are not precisely relevant because what I wish to do is to make a general argument, from Quaker experience, about any Christian community that chooses to maintain a peace testimony.

I will, however, explain two matters briefly in order to make my terms clear. First, when I use the word "testimony" in the phrase "peace testimony," this is a rough Quaker equivalent to a notion of an ethical principle growing out of religious faith. Each of the practical principles of Christian living that Quakerism espouses is called a "testimony." Collectively they are referred to as "The Testimonies," with the force that lies behind the "Thirty-Nine Articles" or "The Schleithem Confession" or "Jewish law," though our testimonies are not as complicated as any of these. They are the fundamental ethical expression of what makes us a people and of how people should be faithful.

Second, I use the word "pacifism" in the strictest of senses: the individual refusal to fight in war or to serve in the military under any circumstances. Broader questions of peacemaking and of corporate witness against military service and organized violence are implied but they are derivative and secondary. At most points I will be referring to the refusal of military service, since this is the fundamental political act that is the foundation of a corporate peace testimony and an individual decision to follow Christ, not Cain, and not Constantine.

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<sup>4</sup> "Towards the Cessation of Church Suicide: A Theology of Peace from an Anabaptist Point of View," Brooks, GA: Restoration Fellowship.

<sup>5</sup> See P. J. Nugent, "Unitarian Belief among Early Quakers," *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 8–13 for a brief introduction to Friends' belief and practice.

## II. A PEACE TESTIMONY MUST BE GROUNDED IN CHRIST

There are any number of good reasons to be a pacifist. The two most enduring reasons, apart from overtly religious ones, are the practical and the visceral.

Practically, some people are pacifists because they are convinced that the best way to achieve social transformation or to respond to international conflict is not through murder, not through violence, not through killing, but through a reasoned and ordered discussion between parties in conflict, and in more extreme situations, through strategies of conflict that do not rely on violence. An excellent three-volume series by the political theorist Gene Sharp makes this point in painstaking detail, and outlines strategies both for non-violent social change and for non-violent civilian defense against aggression.<sup>6</sup>

Viscerally, some people are pacifists because violence and its effects horrify them, and they refuse to participate. For such people, pacifism is a protest against “a world where murder is legitimate and where human life is considered trifling.”<sup>7</sup> Consider this excerpt from Albert Camus, the existentialist French novelist and playwright:

For my part I have chosen. And having chosen, I think that I must speak out, that I must state that I will never again be one of those, whoever they be, who compromise with murder, and that I must take the consequences of such a decision . . . all I ask is that, in the midst of a murderous world, we agree to reflect on murder and to make a choice. After that, we can distinguish those who accept the consequences of being murderous themselves or the accomplices of murderers, and those who refuse to do so with all their force and being. Since this terrible dividing line does actually exist, it will be a gain if it be clearly marked. Over the expanse of five continents throughout the coming years an endless struggle is going to be pursued between violence and friendly persuasion, a struggle in which, granted, the former has a thousand times the chances of success than the latter. But I have always held that, if he who bases his hopes on human nature is a fool, he who gives up in the face of circumstances is a coward. And henceforth, the only honorable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble: that words are more powerful than munitions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3 vols., Boston, MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Camus, *Neither Victims nor Executioners*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Camus, 59–60.

Other grounds for pacifism are more strictly political: those who adopt them object to their own nation perpetrating violence in other nations as a means for achieving political or economic ends, or they object to a foreign nation doing the same in their own. In any case, they refuse to participate because of the effects of violence and their disagreement with the policies it is meant to advance. Or an analysis of the nature of violence itself may lead to pacifism: violence naturally and inevitably begets violence, and the only way to stop violence is by refusing to be violent.

All of these reasons are valid and honorable and truthful. All are important and may be adopted in good conscience as part of a well-thought out, thoroughgoing refusal to participate in war. But I would argue that at least for Christians, the *ultimate* foundation for the refusal to fight must be something deeper and more enduring and more empowering. The foundation for refusing to take human life in obedience to the state or a substitute for the state must be, for Christians, *one's experience of the work of Christ*. Marshall Hodgson, the great historian of Islam and also a Quaker and a committed Christian, wrote a pamphlet whose title makes the point clearly and bluntly: "The Peace Testimony: Christ Is the Root."

My position is this: any Christian community which decides that it is contrary to Christian practice, contrary to the witness of Christ and the love of God, to fight in war, has to insist that the ultimate horizon, the ultimate ground for the Christian refusal to fight in war is our experience of the transforming love of God and our conviction that such refusal is ultimately the will of God, transcending human perspectives, human projects, human goals, human social and political arrangements.

The reason that we have to stand on this as our final ground is partly a *practical* reason. War has such an aggregating, cumulative, spiraling, self-nurturing effect that when it finally arrives, arguing against it on practical grounds is extremely difficult.

War is usually the end of a long historical, political, social process. It is the fruit of a cycle of habits and deeds that feed on and nurture each other into the future: habits of exploitation, deceit, oppression, acts of violence and commitments to violence and escalations toward violence. The precise outbreak of killing is not the beginning of war, but a late and concrete milestone in a much longer development. This development equally deserves the name of war because it contains the seeds, buds, and blossom of the bitter fruit itself. War is an event of the mind and the spirit long before it is an act of guns and tanks and bullets and dead bodies.

This may sound abstract. Consider the Second World War. A lot of people otherwise committed to peace — Quakers, Mennonites, secular pacifists — will tell you that if ever they were to fight in a war, it would have been the Second World War. Indeed, many Quakers, Mennonites, and secular pacifists *did* fight in that war. The evil was so monstrous (they say), the threat so grave (they argue), the cause so unimpeachable (they plead), that this war alone among all others might have warranted their fighting in it. In the face of such massive evil (they ask), what else could a person of conscience do? What else could a person of conscience do?

There is almost no way to answer that question persuasively, especially in the language of means and ends, ethics and justice, duty and effectiveness. Only a complex analysis could begin to communicate how very complicated that apparently simple war really was. War was brewing and being fought for decades, indeed had never really ended; Hitler and Mussolini attained political power largely because the victorious Allies, after the War to End All Wars, treated the Axis nations so vindictively that profound and virile resentment festered and came to a head. All manner of steps could have — should have — been taken in the intervening time to avert further war.

An answer such as that might go on forever. But such an answer — a very good answer when one faces the prospect of war ten or twenty or thirty years in the future — becomes limp and pallid when the first shot has been fired, the alarm sounded, and the newsreels or soundbites have captured the public attention. “In the face of such massive evil, what else could a person of conscience do besides fight?” When 1941 comes, and the real choice confronts people, they cannot go back and change any of what has already happened. The imperialist aggression of Japan, the slaughter of the Jews by the Germans, the unparalleled aggression by powers that seem to represent evil incarnate and flout essential principles of sovereignty and territoriality and national self-determination and the sanctity of civilian life, not to mention truth and honesty: In the face of such massive evil, what else could a person of conscience do? Faced with a crisis like this demanding that people decide and act, and faced with the powerful and well-funded government campaigns of advertisement and propaganda, there is very little that one can do to argue that nonviolence is effective and preferable. The argument will not stick and will not convince anyone. Not because it is not valid, but because it is too late.

In that kind of extreme situation, where the wisdom of the world seems overpowering, we see most clearly that the Christian pacifist must hold

precisely to the commitment to God, the experience of the transforming work of Christ. These alone, in the hour of extremity, make the act of killing, particularly as the instrument of governmental policy, absolutely impermissible. It is only our allegiance to the Kingdom that can set us against our allegiance to the kingdoms of the world with any degree of confidence and conscience. The role of the Christian at this point is witness. The realm of argument and persuasion is largely closed, because merely practical argument and persuasion crumble, in the opinion of most people, in the face of a Hitler.

Taking such a position is not to plead an easy ignorance, a blind fideism which enables us to close our eyes to reality and refuse to do the dirty work that others are going to do for us. This is a matter of a passionate conviction: a conviction that our primary allegiance is to a reality that transcends our visible world and its perpetual disasters. There is a radical difference between that divine reality and the visible realities that we face in history. Sometimes they are so separate as to be utterly irreconcilable. One cannot be understood in terms of the other. God cannot be understood in terms of war and fighting a Hitler, nor can war and fighting a Hitler be understood in terms of and reconciled with dwelling in the life of God. As Christians we are called to make our decision in sight of the transcendent horizon, the existence of God as the ground of our being, the existence of God as guarantor of our commitment, our experience of God as the authority for what we do. The redeeming work of God through Christ has transformed us as persons and makes it simply impossible for us to engage in murder as a tool of international or national policy.

Practical arguments about peace in time of war may not make a great deal of sense to someone who does not share this fundamental commitment. But our experience of God and of the redeeming work of God through Christ *may* indeed be attractive. One's witness to the rule of love and to the transformation that a relationship with God brings may be persuasive. A person may be led through that to the conviction that a soul thus graced cannot kill a fellow human being.

As I said earlier, the Quaker peace testimony historically stands or falls on two grounds, and this is one of them. This is a practical point, an historical argument, not an overtly theological one. When Friends have held most faithfully to their experience of the indwelling and transforming presence of God, they have been the most successful in resisting the lure of dealing with international conflict by means of organized violence. The closer we have been to Christ the easier it has been to resist war.



Conversely, when Friends have become enamored of the merely practical basis of pacifism, then practical considerations have become the *fundamental* ground for their refusal to fight. Their experience of Christ as the revelation of God then ceases to be the fundamental reason for Quaker pacifism; Jesus is at best a good example of why one ought to be a pacifist, not the reason for being a pacifist. When Quakers have rested solely in the realm of political persuasion and argument over the practical desirability of pacifism, the persuasions and arguments in favor of fighting a Hitler or fighting slavery by means of war have become, for many, more persuasive, more logical, more practical, more efficient than fighting Hitler by means of love, or turning the other cheek, or witnessing to the kingdom of God that deserves our primary allegiance. These ways of behaving are not effective, as the world measures political effectiveness.

A Christian pacifist position that rests on mere effectiveness or on humanistic arguments is bound to fail in the short run (and after all, war is about the short run, not the long view). It is not appealing to practical-minded 18 to 21-year-old potential conscripts who will fight a war. And as a matter of fact, the times when Quakers have been least successful in maintaining their peace testimony are precisely the times when a more humanistic foundation for the peace testimony has prevailed, resting on a naive sense that pacifism stems from the conviction that nonviolence is the most effective means of dealing with conflict. When Quakers have taken the merely humanistic tack, war has caught up with us and our young people have signed up to fight.

### III. A PEACE TESTIMONY MUST BE GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY

The second point I want to address is also practical but in many ways more subtle. It has to do with maintaining a “culture” of peace. This, I would argue, is a central task of the Christian community.

The evangelical world understands well how pervasive our dominant culture is. Evangelical writing and preaching are filled with admonitions against the dangers of many aspects of contemporary culture. Evangelicals generally understand how important it is to provide alternative models and alternative communities for young people (and everyone else for that matter) if one wants to maintain and nourish an alternative system of values and ethical practice. The great failure of the evangelical world

is that this discourse of separateness, or of difference, vanishes the moment the government asks us to kill, or to support killing, citizens of other nations who stand in opposition to our putative “national interests” or “international policy.” When we are asked to fight a war, support a war, or pay for a war, the admonition to be in the world but not of it is swept under the rug and kept safely out of sight. Never have the most prominent evangelical leaders spoken out against murder as a tool of international policy and a means of resolving conflicts between nations. Usually they have supported war with all their heart, all their mind, all their strength.

What the “Bible-believing” culture has missed is that the single most debilitating, pervasive, and insidious allure of contemporary culture (and of most cultures throughout history) has been the allure of violence. It pervades our lives. Violence is sanctioned against children in the form of corporal punishment and child abuse. Violence is countenanced against women in the domestic violence that pervades every stratum, class, economic bracket, religious group, profession, race, and situation of life in this nation. Violence is countenanced as a method of social transformation by militant groups on the left and on the right. Violence is rife in our forms of entertainment: movies and television and professional sports. Even musical performances of the kind that young people are likely to witness rely on a form of stylized violence for their entertainment value. And at the summit of all this, violence is sanctioned as a method of solving conflict, or engaging in it, when nations disagree.

We live in a culture of violence. It is particularly seductive to young people, especially when military recruiters have free rein in our high schools, when our history textbooks glorify war or at least take it for granted as permissible and inevitable, and when young men and women see their friends enlisting for military service as an alternative to other forms of employment. And as in many other areas, the ability of parents to provide alternative understandings in a persuasive way is very limited.

The solution to this difficulty in the Christian tradition has been a profound sense of *peoplehood*, a sense that the Christian community is different from and separate from the world. This is one of the most enduring and effective contributions of the Radical Reformation: the notion of being a people of God separate from the world. Now of course being “separate” is a metaphor. Clearly we live with the world, work with the world, hang out on weekends with the world, read its newspapers. Of course, we *are* the world: we are just as human and just as fleshy and just as soulful and just as flawed and just as beautiful and just as hardworking

and just as confused as everybody else in “the world.” So what does this metaphor, this “cipher,” stand for?

It stands for *peoplehood*. Christians are not just “individuals of God,” we are a “people of God.” Being members of a church community does not just mean attending services and meetings and softball games at the appointed time. It means (or should mean) being a *people* together. And one of the marks of peoplehood is difference from other people and other peoples.

Difference can be divisive. It can be insidious. It can be evil. But when understood and used rightly, difference makes us who we are. It distinguishes one group from another, one person from another, one family from another, one denomination from another. Whenever we express opinion we express difference. Having *common* opinions defines interest groups, political parties, factions, religious groups. Having a body of common opinion that leads to common commitment and common action defines a community apart from other communities. What defines a community, then, is its characteristic *differences* from other communities. Such differences need not be exclusive: they can be attractive, inviting, appealing. Most importantly, differences help structure the *inner* life of communities, not just their relation with other communities.

What every Christian community needs to think about very carefully is the character of our differences from all other communities. If being Christian simply makes us a better or more acceptable member of the community at large, if it is a ticket to the club or the political party or a promotion or to good relations with one’s neighbors, then it is an ideology, a system of ideas and practices that serves the interests of whatever group dominates and holds power. Christianity is not meant to be an ideology. Commitment to Christ is not meant to make power or oppression or violence more palatable. Rather we are the body, the people, among whom God’s love can be known and can change people’s lives. We are the body of Christ.

One of the most important transforming effects of God’s love, when we are open to it, is the knowledge that we can no longer commit or be accomplices to violence, particularly war. A distinguishing mark of the Christian community (at its best) is that as a community, as a people, it builds up the values, the beliefs, the practices, and the commitments that enable its members, particularly its young members, to resist the allurements of war. The more separate we are, the more different we are, the more

our peoplehood is emphasized and embodied and built up, the more we provide an alternative to the dominant culture of violence, the more successful we will be in equipping our young people to act differently than their companions who choose to enlist in the military and to fight wars. Without a sense of difference, of “otherness,” without being a strong alternative culture, we will be dismal failures in equipping young people (and everybody else in the church) to resist violence. We exist not only to witness to another world, but to *be* another world.

In the Society of Friends, we have a phrase for this sense of being an alternative culture. We have called ourselves a “peculiar people” and have spent much time and energy considering, defining, and redefining what it means to be “peculiar” — not in the sense of “warped,” but in the sense of being different, unique, set apart. At times in our history, this peculiarity has been most manifest in outward habits and practices that served as a “hedge” around us. For two centuries Quakers wore distinctive clothing and used a peculiar form of speech, addressing individuals as “thou” and “thee,” reserving “you” for the plural. This began as a witness against social privilege and against an unchristian deference to the wealthy and powerful, but soon became more important as a distinguishing mark of our difference. To this day many Friends still refuse to use honorific titles; some will not even say “Mr.” or “Mrs.” or “Doctor” or the like. Many Friends refuse to wear ties, expensive or fashionable clothing, jewelry, or make-up. Friends have had a peculiar system of naming days and months. We refuse to swear judicial or other oaths. All of these practices have religious and ethical foundations and are evaluated accordingly. But, equally important, they undergird our peculiarity, our difference, our character as an alternative community.

The same may be said for most of what we do. Our rejection of a paid ministry and the openness of our meetings for worship to ministry or prayer from any member; our system of making decisions by unity rather than by voting; our insistence upon the equality of men and women in church affairs and everywhere else in life; our refusal to fight in war; our suspicion of media such as the television; our common (though not universal) refusal to make the Pledge of Allegiance or to make use of formal creeds; our refusal to place some members over others in hierarchical arrangements — all of these things reinforce our peoplehood. They remind us of our difference from the world and instill this sense of difference in us. They are the marks of an alternative community, of our

*peoplehood*. They mark a “royal nation, a holy priesthood, a people set apart.”

These marks of peoplehood and the sense of difference they represent also reinforce the values that undergird them, especially our peace testimony. When Friends are confronted with demands to acquiesce in state violence, we know that our security and identity rest not in the state but in the alternative community dedicated to knowing and living in the transforming love of God.

This should be true of any Christian community. It has been empirically the case in our history that the more we preserve the sense of peculiarity, the more we preserve the “hedge” of difference around ourselves, the more we embody the call to be a “royal nation, a holy priesthood, a people set apart,” the more we have been able to resist the allure of violence and war. But the more we have sought acceptance from the world and have conformed ourselves to it and played down our difference, the less successful we have been in maintaining our peace testimony.

I cannot tell your church how and where it ought to be different and what its angle on Christianity calls it to do in constructing itself as an alternative community. What I can say is that being an alternative community, being a peculiar people, being a *people* with a strong and deep sense of who you are and what makes you different and what is important to you in your walk with Christ, and having structures and practices that strengthen your peoplehood and your sense of difference, will be crucial to successfully maintaining a peace testimony: for all your members in all aspects of their lives, and particularly for your young people as they face career choices and, God forbid, conscription.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

To underline, then, the two points I have tried to make: First, maintaining a peace testimony, though it will have many humanistic and political and practical foundations and consequences, must ultimately be grounded in your religious experience, in your faith, in the grace you have been given by God through Christ Jesus. Otherwise it will fail you. Second, maintaining a peace testimony depends largely upon maintaining an intense sense of peoplehood, belonging, difference, and providing a positive, constructive, alternative culture for yourselves and your youth,

in order to equip yourselves against the allure of violence and murder as an instrument of national and international policy. Anything less fails our common Christian calling and identifies us as the Church of Constantine, not the *ekklesia* of Christ.