



# STATEMENT OF POSITION

on  
PEACE, WAR,  
AND SOCIAL ISSUES

2004

*“Jesus answered,  
My kingdom is not of this world.”  
John 18:36*

## PREFACE - 2004 Edition

The Preface and Introductory Statements, in the 1982 Edition of the "Statement of Position on Peace, War and Social Issues" continues to be relevant and current in 2004. However, the Social and Political climate in our day necessitate an occasional review and updating.

Whereas the issues of Jury Duty and Litigation in the Court System were not specifically included in the earlier booklet, these concerns are now addressed in the current edition of this "Statement" booklet

These changes and additional statements were officially adopted at the Annual Ministers Meeting in April, 2003, held in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Although the writers originated from within the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, we offer this booklet to any constituent church group of similar conviction for your benefit and the furtherance of the Gospel.

Sincerely,  
The Peace and Service Committee  
Daniel D. Bontrager  
David S. King  
Elmer J. Miller  
David L. Miller, Administrator

## PREFACE - 1982 Edition

In the spring of 1967 the ministers of the Beachy Amish Mennonite churches, at their annual meeting, elected a committee of three brethren to draw up a Statement of Position on Peace, War, and Social Issues. This was done, and copies thereof were mailed to the ministers prior to their next annual meeting, held April 18 and 19, 1968, at Wellesley, Ontario. At this meeting the statement was discussed, a few changes made, and officially adopted by unanimous vote

At the annual Ministers' Fellowship held April 8-10, 1980, at the Pleasant View Church, Arthur, Illinois, the 130 ministers present voted to have the same committee amend that statement to cover some additional considerations. At the next annual Ministers' Fellowship, April 7-9, 1981, at the Fair Haven Church, Middlebury, Indiana, a copy of the proposed statement was given to each of the 170 ministers present, for careful personal study and response. On August 22 the committee met again to consider, and incorporate into the statement, further recommendations received. Revised copies were then mailed to the ministers of each participating congregation for further study and further response. On November 24 the committee met once more to study the final recommendations, and to complete to the best of our ability a corporate statement according to the convictions and beliefs of the constituency, and in keeping with the Word of God

In this way this statement has been unanimously approved by the ordained brethren of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Constituency, as our corporate statement of position on peace, war, and social issues

Sincerely,  
your servants in Christ,  
Daniel N. King  
Yost H. Miller  
Ervin N. Hershberger

## Introduction – 1982 Edition

We believe that all matters pertaining to godliness and eternal life are fully centered in the Person and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings being the very core of the New Testament, it is evident that every faithful disciple of Jesus Christ must be fully committed to keeping our Lord's commandments with no reservations. Thousands have lived and died in loyalty to these commandments in spite of persecution, despoiling of goods, and even death, claiming the promise of Jesus, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

Due to troubled world conditions and frequent misunderstandings we sense the need for a fresh expression of our Biblical teaching and heritage, reemphasizing discipleship and faith in God, as set forth and practiced by the Apostolic Church, renewed in Reformation times in Switzerland in 1525, and upheld by the Amish Mennonite and other historic peace churches to this day

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## I. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

*We believe the government is duly ordained and instituted of God.* The Scriptures teach that God overrules in the kingdom of men, putting down whom He will and setting up whom He will (Ps. 75:7; Dan. 4:32). "For there is no authority except from God, and those authorities which exist are established by God" (Rom. 13:1b, NASB).

God has delegated to the government the authority "to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). The government is responsible both "for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well" (I Peter 2:14).

*We further believe the church and state are separate from each other.* The church is responsible in the spiritual and moral realms of life; whereas, the state is responsible for the civil and political realms. We view the state as having no Biblical authority to interfere with the church's spiritual responsibility and function. The church, on the other hand, must not resist, hinder, or obstruct the state's political function (Rom. 12:13).

## II. DUTY TO THE STATE

*We believe in submission to every law of the land that does not violate the laws of God* (I Peter 2:13-17). We invoke the blessings of God upon our national leaders and are thankful that under their administration laws have been made that allow the Christian to exercise a conscience void of offense. We must pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:1-2).

*We believe taxes are a legitimate option of the state and are to be paid without resistance.* "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:17-21). "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, . . . for conscience sake . . . for they are God's ministers . . . Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:5-7).

*We believe we cannot participate in any type of personal investments that directly support war efforts. We view these investments as being a violation of the Biblical principle of nonresistance.*

### III. REGISTRATION AND CONSCRIPTION

*We look with disfavor upon military registration and conscription. Nevertheless, should these become mandatory, we can support alternative service under civilian or church administration.*

If any individual takes the position of non-cooperation to registration and the draft, in keeping with the Scriptures the constituency would consider this action valid only if the person manifests a deeply-held conviction based upon solid Biblical evidences.

*We believe conscription of women is a social and spiritual hazard. This would militate against women's Biblical role as 'keepers at home' (Titus 2:5) and against the God-ordained distinction between men and women as revealed by the Scriptures (Deut. 22:5; I Cor. 11:3-16). Therefore, we earnestly pray that our government may continue to grant exemption to women.*

### IV. MILITARY SERVICE

*We believe war and armed force are contrary to New Testament principles for Christians. Jesus has forbidden His disciples to engage in any form of revenge or resistance by such means. Christians are commanded to return good for evil, "put up the sword into the sheath," or to "beat their swords into plowshares" (Matt. 5:39-44; Jn. 18:11; Rom. 12:14; I Pet. 3:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3). (See also *Dortrecht Confession*, Article XIV).*

According to the Scriptures, therefore, it is inconsistent for Christians to participate in military service—whether combatant or non-combatant, whether in defense or offense.

In the event that our country becomes involved in war or violent conflict the Bible instructs us to maintain a spirit of Christian love and goodwill, avoid hatred and hysteria, and be obedient to all governmental laws and regulations that are not

in conflict with Scriptural teachings. We are to turn the other cheek, rather than to retaliate (Matt. 5:39; Rom. 12:19). If necessary, the Scriptures require us to flee or suffer the spoiling of our goods (Matt. 10:23) rather than to inflict injury on any person, even on an enemy. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56).

## V. CIVIL DEFENSE

*We believe many civil defense activities violate the principles delineated in the Bible.* For the reasons cited in the preceding sections, we cannot do the following:

- (1) Bind ourselves to local or national Civil Defense organizations or to organizations (such as YMCA or Red Cross) which in wartime become an active part of the war effort.
- (2) Assist in the financing of war operations by means of bonds or voluntary contributions, etc.
- (3) Participate knowingly in the manufacture of war munitions and weapons during peace or wartime
- (4) Participate in military training schools and colleges or any other form of peacetime preparation for war service.
- (5) Promote propaganda, agitation, or activities that tend to stimulate war hysteria or ill will.
- (6) Benefit from excessive wartime profits. If such should come into our possession, we should conscientiously donate them to charitable purposes.
- (7) Aid or assist the fighting forces in a way that would facilitate the destruction or death of any man whether friend or foe

## VI. POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

*We believe that active participation in the political system is inconsistent with our allegiance to God and constitutes a compromise of principle.* Christ's kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36), and His disciples are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13) "For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20 NASB), and it is to that country (Heaven) that we owe our supreme allegiance. Furthermore, the church is called, not to revolutionize the government, but to evangelize the world. (Mat. 28: 19-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). In the event



that we would have occasion to approach our government in matters of conscience, we believe that this should be done by respectful entreaty. Therefore, we do not participate in or support public demonstrations or other forms of non-violent coercion.

As Christians who subscribe to the Biblical nonresistance, administration of justice is out of our field. We readily grant the State that right and responsibility, but are consciously opposed to participation by the church, in any aspect of law enforcement that ultimately relies on the use of force, including serving as magistrates or jurists. We cannot participate in a system that bears the carnal sword, because "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (II Cor. 10:4). Nor can we participate in political campaigns, rallies and elections, as involvements with such activities identifies us with the "worldly" instead of the "heavenly" system. Since God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan. 4:17). We view the fervent prayers of a few Christians as doing more good than many Christian's off-setting one another's votes at the polls

The extent of our political involvement is described in I Tim. 2:1-3.

I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; that ye may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

## LITIGATION

*We believe that initiation of lawsuits is a violation of God's higher law of love and forgiveness.* As Christians, in our personal and business lives, we cannot participate in activities that involve retaliation, vengeance, and strife. Our earnest concern is for the salvation of men's souls rather than the security of carnal 'possessions'. Positive response to mistreatment by a born again person is to return good for evil and to give more than is required (Mat. 5:40-41).

Also the New Testament teaches us clearly that disputes and differences concerning civil and legal matters among the brotherhood must be resolved according to Christ's teaching of love and nonresistance, (I Cor. 6:1-8). "Dare any of you having

a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."

## VII. WORLD PEACE

*We believe the Bible teaches that human efforts will never accomplish world peace.* Jesus said, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt 24:6-7). This reality is also pointed out in II Tim. 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Only the Prince of Peace can make wars to cease and strife to end. Christians build their hope on Christ alone. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ . . . to subject all things to Himself" (Phil 3:20-21, NASB).

## VIII. CIVIL RIGHTS

*We believe that civil rights and equal treatment should be the right of all citizens.* In our daily lives, we should continually demonstrate to all persons the untainted principles of peace and love taught and exemplified by Jesus and His disciples. Matt. 5:38-48; 7:12; 10:22; Luke 6:31; Rom. 12:14, 19-21; I Pet. 3:9

We do not view organized marches, sit-ins, mass demonstrations and other coercive methods as Christian

strategies for solving civil rights issues. We perceive nonviolent coercion as a form of external force, which frequently has the intent to harm through psychological undermining. Therefore, we disassociate ourselves from all protest demonstrations, peace marches, and other similar activities.

While the *social gospel* is used by some to enhance civil rights, we recognize the Christian's weapon as being the *Spiritual Gospel* which points the way to freedom from sin. Unless persons are led to spiritual liberty and eternal life through salvation in Christ Jesus, any legal and rightful comforts in this life are only temporary.

Among other Christian duties, we stress the following as ways for attaining civil rights and equal treatment of all persons:

- (1) Love your neighbor—friend or foe—as yourself.
- (2) Relieve physical needs with material aid.
- (3) Avoid all bitterness and agitation.
- (4) Present Christ in word and deed.

## IX. RACE RELATIONS

*We believe all people are essentially "one" people.* God "hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26)

"God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). By the blood of one and the same Saviour He has redeemed unto Himself of all nations and races "whosoever believeth in him" (John 3:16). In Christ there is only "one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16), 'one body, one Lord, . . . one God and Father of all' (Eph. 4:4-6). 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, . . . Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. 3:11). "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph 5:30). In Him 'we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25).

Therefore, our role in race relations is as follows:

- (1) Confessing our sins, and the sins of our race collectively, for having treated certain other races as though they were basically inferior.
- (2) Recognizing restitution as an essential part of confession, and seeking opportunities to do all we can in restoring the victims of racial discrimination to proper honor. Seeking to

- restore a rejected race, family, or person, moreover, may mean the way of the cross, embarrassing inconveniences, the risk of misunderstanding, and even persecution.
- (3) Recognizing passive acceptance of prevailing customs of discrimination as a violation of the Scriptural principle of nonconformity to the evils of this world
  - (4) Seeking to cleanse our speech and thoughts of any words, sayings, stories, or ideas that tend to foster racial or any other kind of prejudice.
  - (5) Recognizing that oneness with Christ, through repentance, faith, regeneration, and Christian discipleship, produces a spiritual oneness in Christ with all who are likewise in Him, irrespective of race or color.
  - (6) Seeking constantly in business and social contacts, religious teachings, and spiritual fellowship to be faithful 'ambassadors for Christ,' whose redemptive love transcends and triumphs over personal and racial barriers (II Cor. 5:18-21).

## X. INDUSTRIAL, LABOR, AND AGRICULTURAL UNIONS

*We believe the Biblical principles of peace and nonresistance negate participation in union activities.* We recognize that industrial and labor unions have made great improvements in the working conditions and salaries of their members. But we also see the vicious cycle created by force and power tactics. Using evil to fight evil multiplies evil.

Since we subscribe to Biblical principles, we cannot bind ourselves to any membership agreement or contracts that would involve us in the use of methods or practices contrary to New Testament teachings. Our participation would constitute an unequal yoke, which is expressly forbidden (II Cor. 6:14).

Although large, impersonal corporations may not be accustomed to our views, we think that many responsible officials will still respond to an appeal for exemption from union membership on the basis of mutual interest, social respectability, and good reason. Even if this fails, we still cannot be directly involved or financially support the tactics and actual

violence frequently resorted to by unions (Luke 3:14) The Bible teaches a better way (Matt. 7:12; II Cor. 3:5; Eph. 4:31, 32; I Pet. 3:9; II Tim. 2:24). The right of vengeance belongs to God and not to man (Rom. 12:17, 19).

In order to uphold our belief regarding non-participation in unions, we strongly suggest the following:

- (1) Our members seek employment where union membership is not required.
- (2) Farmers refrain from membership in farmers' unions, which also utilize coercive and sometimes destructive tactics.
- (3) Employment and markets be transferred to non-union organizations if unions do take control and if employment or market is restricted to union members.

## XI. DISCIPLESHIP

We believe that Christ's call to salvation and peace may not be separated from His call to discipleship. To follow Christ means to live by the principles He left for His disciples. This life-style is contrary to man's inherited nature and the customs that prevail in the world. Since the standards, values, and ambitions which characterize the present world system are often established and maintained by force and violence, they must be forsaken. Our goal must be to reflect the teachings of Christ.

For the Christian, the choice is clear: discipleship is a must! Following Christ may involve suffering and persecution, but life with Him in His eternal kingdom more than compensates for any earthly sacrifice. Matt. 5-7; 19:29; Mk. 8:35; Rev. 12:11.

For further sources see

*Dortrecht Confession of Faith*. Dort, Holland signed April 21, 1632  
by 51 delegates.

*Schleitheim Confession* compiled by Michael Sattler, Schleitheim, Switzerland  
February 4, 1527. This is the oldest Anabaptist confession on record and  
consists only of seven articles peculiar to the Anabaptists



*'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (I Thess 5:21)*

*'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life' (Rev. 2:10b)*