

---

# Article XVI. Peace and War

---

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

*Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.*

(Sermon Title)

Passage?

Background: The first Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1925 a few years after the “War to end all Wars.” In the war that ended in 1918 that we number as WWI several new tools of were introduced. The newly invented airplane was quickly adapted to war and poison gas was used in combat for the first time on a major scale. Tanks whose conception can be traced all the back to Leonardo da Vinci’s drawings suddenly appeared and terrorized the battlefield. Machine guns had been utilized in previous conflicts but found their place in the killing fields of what many thought would surely be the last major war.

Our national leaders after the war genuinely believed that Christians were too smart to ever engage in another war with the terrible weapons that had been used in WWI. The Baptist Faith and Message was revised again in 1963 and once more in 1999. The Peace and War section was practically untouched in both revisions.

Fortunately the revision committee’s report in 2000 said “that we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality, or infallibility. As in the past so in the future Baptist should hold themselves free to revise their statement of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time. (Report to the Convention, para. 6(2)).

The world situation in 2008 is quiet different from the world our predecessors shared 1925. We have experienced the criminal fanaticism of Hitler’s Germany and the unbelievable cruelty of Japanese Imperialist. By fate or divine design we inherited the

post WWII role as policeman or protector of the oppressed and the emerging nations. Rapidly following WWII we participated in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Somalia, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and numerous other conflicts. Unfortunately during this time we also have watched the birth of the modern day version of terrorism. Terrorism is not new and can be found in history books and in our Bible but usually not by the term terrorism.

War seems to have been around almost since the creation of man. After Adam and Eve's fall and expulsion from the Garden it was not long before Cane killed Abel. This might not be considered a war but we Able would surely dispute that decision. By the fourth chapter of Genesis, Lamech who was Noah's father, is bragging that he killed a man in a fight. In Genesis 14 we find Abraham has 318 professional soldiers in his family organization when he lead an operation to rescue Lot and his family. When the Hebrews left Egypt Exodus 13:18 says, "Israel went up out of Egypt armed for battle."

Obviously every year thereafter war became a part of Jewish life. In the Book of Numbers Arad, the Amorites, the Moabites, and the Midianites had lost battles to the army of Israel. By Deuteronomy 20 God said, "When you go to war against the enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them because the Lord your God will be with you."

We are all familiar with General Joshua's history and how the army defeated Jericho's defensive wall and its army. By the time David became king Israel had a highly trained and lead professional army. The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles abound with war stories.

It is difficult for me as a Christian and former career military member to find scriptural support for a pacifist or antiwar position. The Baptist Faith and Message says, "Christians should do all in their power to put an end to war" and also it adds, "Pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace." So here we are in 2008 with a document in one hand in which we totally agree and an enemy on the other hand who has sworn to destroy Israel from the face of the earth and all who support Israel which is to say especially the United States.

Isaiah 2:4 says, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." How do we bring about such a euphoric world in 2008? How can we make this happen just like the scripture says it should?

The previous verse to that great statement, Isaiah 2:3 says, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths."

Our Christian problem is:

What do you do if they will not come to the mountain of the Lord?

What do we do if they will not allow Him to teach them His ways?

What do we do if they refuse to walk in His paths?

Paul wrote in Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you

Live at peace with everyone.

We are currently facing a complex national dilemma that the church has never faced before. There is no reference book or recent history book that we can consult about the decisions that face the church.

While we sit here comfortably talking about peace there has been a war declared against us. Those who have declared this war call it a Jihad, for them a holy war.

As a nation we have never been in a war like this or a hostile conflict that threatens our country.

It is not a war declared by a nation but a religious organization.

It is not a war where a government declared but a cultural group.

America cannot declare war on a culture.

There is no battlefield we can meet on.

While we are nuclear armed, we cannot use our terror weapons.

We cannot unleash our shock and awe.

They do not wear distinct uniforms or markings.

Our final line of national defense is overwhelming nuclear. Their offence is stark and heartless terrorism. Our battlefield rules of engagement are based the Geneva Convention. Theirs rules of engagement are to use suicide bombings, civilian targets, houses of worship, and the use of children and the mentally challenged.

Terrorism is not new, it can be found in the Old Testament and it is referred to in the New Testament. This type of warfare has been around most of recorded history. Terroristic warfare that does not recognize national boundaries has never been defeated since WWII. For example, how long has Israel been fighting terrorism just for their national survival in the Middle East? The answer is 60 years. Have they won???? Of course not, they suffer terrorist activity almost every week as evidenced by the terrorist that rushed into the Hebrew seminary this week with a blazing AK47 and killed almost a dozen seminary students.

In Hebrews 12:14 we are told, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men." Making peace against a holy war has never been successful.

Look at what is happening to some of our allies in the world. France is totally neutralized and cannot control the violence in its streets that seemingly can be generated in just a few hours by terrorist. Germany is just a step behind France and will soon be in the same position. Spain too has been neutralized as evidenced by terrorist events causing the removal of their troops from UN service in Iraq. Unfortunately our English cousins are also undergoing increasing pressure from their huge number of foreign residents some of which are legal residents but many others are undocumented.

In America we have more Muslims than Presbyterians. We have more Muslims than Episcopalians. We have between 12 and 14 million people in America who belong to the religious group that has declared the Jihad on us. Our Pledge of Allegiance currently contains the statement "one nation under God". Are we really one nation under God or are we on the same track as our neutralized European friends? We are living in what could be the most critical time for the church in the last 500 years. We are probably at a major turning point in our history.

Previously I said that we are at war regardless of what our politicians or major news providers tell us. I am not referring to Iraq or Afghanistan. I am referring to the Jihad. It has been declared against you whether you accept it or not. We have to fight this war regardless of what we determine our religious convictions to be.

We have to do it somewhere. We currently have the terrorist combat focused mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have not been attacked on our soil since 9/11 as we have been able to keep it focused in those two nations. But do not be complacent, when we withdraw from these two nations and we will next year regardless of who wins the election the war will quickly come to our shores. So where do you want to fight the war they have declared on you? It will either be in Iraq and Afghanistan or in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Orlando or Jacksonville.

Those who have declared the Jihad against us have access to the largest war chest ever assembled for religious warfare. They have access to much of the Middle East oil

that we are almost totally dependent upon. Every time we fill our automobile gas tanks we are probably making a contribution to this vast war chest.

In the light of this bad news remember we live in a land that is without a defense against terrorism. We have the strongest and best equipped Army, a highly trained Navy, a state of the art technically equipped Air Force, and a proud Marine Corps. But we are sadly lacking in an organization trained and willing to meet terrorist on terrorist terms. That is an affront to our Christian ethics and unacceptable to our political leaders.

With all that military might that I just mentioned remember we have two extremely long and basically undefended borders. In spite of the best efforts of our meager and undermanned border patrol we freely admit that we have 12 million illegal aliens who have crossed our Southern border. Neither of our political parties have been willing to just enforce our laws already on the books about controlling the borders. Our Northern border which stretches over 2000 miles for the most part is totally unguarded. Except for the popular tourist crossings such as Niagara Falls and a few other crossings there is almost no attempt to control this border. In the Midwestern rural border area far away from the tourist crossing there are no border patrols on duty at all. If we know this, the terrorist know this. If we know where there are no defenses, they know where there are no defenses.

We know that 12 million has crossed the Southern border. Our Canadian friends to the North allow anyone to fly in and if they declare themselves to be seeking political asylum they are allowed to stay with little or no control over their subsequent behavior. How many of these quickly find themselves easily crossing our borders.

Our infrastructure is public and totally unguarded in America because it has never been threatened. We don't guard our power lines or water supply. Our country side is laced with power lines and gas line that are carefully marked for everyone to see. Our water supply is sometimes also our public recreation area. If we know this the Jihad warriors know this. When they leave the Middle East after we withdraw what do you think they are going to do when they get here?

In this war there can be no pacifist. There will be no second chances. Anyway pacifist always lose, the anti-pacifist kill them. Do you ever wonder why you never see any antiwar activist in the news demonstrating in Iran, Syria, or North Korea where they really need peace activist most? Let me explain why, they would be immediately killed. (Raymond Craft, Historical Significance – The Iraq War)

Less you misunderstand I am not a blind warmonger. Anyone who has ever been in a war wants to avoid another war at all costs. General Sherman had it right in the war of

Northern aggression when he said, "War is hell." I put my hands on 309 dead or dying Marines and Sailors in one 12 month period. Broken and dying bodies may be non-terrifying in movies or on television but General Sherman was correct and I would not want any of you to have to experience it.

How do we respond to terrorist who do not even pretend to play by the rules?

(Christian Reflections, Center for Christian Ethics, Baylor University) How do we respond to mothers who rejoice when their sons and daughters become suicide bombers to kill you or your family? I am very aware that Jesus said in Matthew 5:40 "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." We cannot put our own spin of what Jesus said but I will point out that it is extremely dangerous to turn the other cheek to a suicide terrorist.

The church of today which has never had to pay any price for its religious freedom nor paid any attention to those who died to make this freedom possible will soon get a chance to put their antiwar and antimilitary convictions to the test. Our European allies now living in a post Christian Europe have simply surrendered to the terrorist and lack the courage to control their streets and enforce their laws. The greatest challenge to the American church may be in front of us if or when the war comes to our country.

The Cold War lasted 40 years before the communist empire finally failed under political and economic pressure exerted by President Reagan. If you project 40 years forward starting in 2001 you will be almost midcentury if in fact we find the strength in Jesus, not in nuclear weapons to defeat the terrorist enemy. Once totally defeated, he might be willing to hear about the Prince of Peace from us.

The Baptist Faith and Message ends its statement on Peace and War by saying, "Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace." If we aren't already deeply in prayer about this very thing we are already late.

For the benefit of our scholars on the faculty let me insert at least one quote from Saint Augustine, the 4<sup>th</sup> century church leader who gave us the concept of "just war." Augustine wrote that although war was always the result of sin, war was also the remedy for sin and for the restoration of peace. He said Christians do not have the right to defend themselves from violence however they could use violence if it was necessary to defend the innocent against evil. (James Watkins.com) I will try to defend you if in turn you will try to defend me.

God bless you, God bless our troops in harm's way today, and God bless America.

Mr. Charles Parker