

# The Christian Way to Peace

A Statement by the  
N. C. W. C. Joint  
Committee on Peace



**NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE**  
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Washington, D. C.

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**T**HIS statement issues from a joint committee composed of representatives of the Social Action Department, the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women—departments of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. This committee came into being at the request of the Administrative Committee, N. C. W. C. The statement printed herewith, which has been formally adopted by the governing bodies of the departments mentioned, is the first to emanate from this committee.

It deals with the causes of war, rules of just warfare, and means of promoting peace, and it makes an appeal to Catholics in the United States to work for the "Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ," Catholic organizations are urged to discuss this statement in their meetings.

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(An N. C. W. C. Study Club Outline appears on page 13)

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# The Christian Way to Peace

## A Statement by the N. C. W. C. Joint Committee on Peace

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**I**N SPITE OF ALL THAT has been done during the last ten years, the conclusion cannot be escaped that peace between nations is far from being assured. Many of the conditions of international enmity which brought on the last war are unchanged. Political, economic and cultural life, though better organized and in many ways improved, appears still to be unprepared to cope with the problem of keeping the peace in a world grounded in rivalry. What is most important of all and is of the substance of all the rest, the nations are not yet willing to avow Christ and His Kingship over the world.

For those who love justice and hate iniquity one conclusion from this is inevitable. It is, as far as time and abilities allow, to learn what needs to be done to keep the peace of the world and then courageously to do what the needs demand.

### I

**T**HE CHIEF SOURCES of international enmity are still strong.

It is still widely held that nations may do whatever they wish and that in their actions there is no standard of right and wrong. A nation powerful in arms, in wealth, in territory, is still the ideal of many statesmen in a great many countries and their ideal reflects and magnifies the false patriotism of a part of the peoples of every country. The pursuit of livelihood and the pursuit of wealth are still organized around the belief that wealth is the highest good and that to attain it, individuals themselves, and nations in their behalf, may, regardless of the moral law, do nearly anything that they desire.

The old forms of imperialism remain. New forms are created. The old form of colony and protectorate in undeveloped areas and among politically weak peoples still continues. The new form, the outcome of a pre-war tendency, takes from peoples and areas less of the forms of self-rule and more of the substance, leaves technical rights of sovereignty almost intact and seizes the actual power over both the

government and the work and wealth of peoples. In both the open and the masked imperialism there is rivalry among the powers, and rebellion among the subject and dependent peoples. In both the rivalry and the rebellion, as in the Far East, lies one of the greatest of the sources of war.

Much of this imperialism is rooted in national pride. With the world-wide growth of republican forms of government and limited monarchies, pride in royal families has declined as a cause of war, and pride in national honor, national abilities, national mission, national strength and national wealth, has grown. Love of country becomes distorted into national egotism and selfishness, just as in the individual due respect for oneself and one's talents may be distorted into personal egotism and selfishness. Pride is one of the capital sins; yet prefix to it the word "national" and anything done in its name is acclaimed as a virtue by someone. The results of the individual's sin are well known. The results of the nation's sin are international hatred, international injustice and war.

**P**RIDE is a cause of war; greed, its brother, is another. Much imperialism is grounded in avarice and in mistaken notions of how economic well-being may be obtained. Economic imperialism, international rivalry among economic imperialists, and rebellion against economic subjection are to the front. The struggle for exclusive or preferential footholds upon foreign markets in raw materials, in credit and in finished goods, trade barriers, struggles over war debts and repatriation payments, immigration restrictions, are of the currency now of international ill-will. National policies towards other nations are reflections of the struggle for livelihood and the struggle for wealth in a world wherein individual rights of property are magnified and duties minimized and wherein economic opportunities vary from region to region.

International rivalry in armaments has been curbed somewhat by mutual consent in the past ten years. Yet it still exists. Rivalry in armaments is both a symptom of underlying evils and a further provocation of them. It breeds fear and hostility, it bolsters up national egotism, it provokes hasty action in case of disputes and it gives the powerful nations a direct means of extending political and economic empire unjustly.

## II

**T**HERE is a wide difference of opinion about whether the world is or is not better equipped politically, economically and culturally since the lesson of the war to meet the problem of keeping the peace. There is no difference of opinion about whether it is adequately equipped. Everyone agrees that the problem cannot be met by the resources that men are using.

To us the central reason for this is plain. Men and women are not using all of their resources. The nations are not recognizing Christ, are not following Him and are not asking His help. We do not wish to oversimplify nor to appeal to a vague and sentimental love of Christ. Certain definite concrete actions to meet the needs of the case are called for by the love of Christ and by His Kingship over the world, and in the Church Christ founded the world providentially possesses, as well, a living guide of those acts that are required of us by the love of God and the teachings of Christ. But the acts will not be performed, nor when performed will they be performed effectively, without love for the Son of God and the Prince of Peace, and submission to His will.

Not fear of the blood of war, nor fear of war's waste of human talents, nor of its contempt for the grandeurs of science, nor of its defiance of the law of progress, nor of its stunting of democracy, nor thoughts of all combined will be enough to preserve and establish peace. Indeed many of these are alleged as reasons for going to war. The only safe cure of war is, first, the love of God and the love of our brother for the love of God; second, a keen searching to find out what the commandment of love requires of us in a particular set of circumstances; and third, an unflagging willingness to do this will of God as it is discovered. Sober realism animated and guided by the greatest of the virtues is the not impossible key and the only possible key to world peace.

It is the only possible key because wars will not be done away with until human beings banded together in governments recognize that they and their governments are bound by laws of right and wrong towards other peoples and other governments, and that these laws include the laws of justice and the laws of charity and kindness. The unity of the human race and the fundamental equality of all human beings are facts. The obligations that arise from this natural brother-

hood, from the reinforcement Christ gave to it, and from the new life of the spiritual brotherhood of all men in Christ, are elemental in any hopeful plan of a peaceful world. If right and wrong, justice and charity are denied in international relations, the quest for peace is futile.

### III

**WE DO NOT** maintain that war is essentially unjust. But we do maintain that a war can be just only under certain very rigid conditions, that all wars are unjust on one or other side, that there is such a thing as wars that are unjust on both sides, and that if the rigid conditions of a just war were lived up to, armed conflicts would cease.

All this we say in the tradition of the Christian centuries, not the tradition of their deeds because Christians have not lived up sufficiently to their principles, but the tradition of their teachers searching the law of Christ in His teachings and spirit under the guidance of the Church He founded. We refer particularly to the fathers of modern international law, the Spanish theologians of the 16th century, who when the world around them was diluting Christianity with paganism or with Old Testament harshness and selfishness, still thought in terms of the unity of Christ's doctrine.

**FOR A WAR** to be just it must, first, be seeking to rectify actual violation of rights or rights that with certainty are in imminent danger of violation. Vaguely possible future violations or even probable violations in the present are not enough. Extension of territory, growth of power, international prestige, the material progress of the community, are not only not worth going to war for but a people may not go to war for them. Nor may a people go to war to defend merely dubious rights or to prevent a doubtful violation of or a doubtful threat against real rights; there must be certainty. Of two States each guilty of invading the rights of the other, neither can justly wage war on the other to protect itself unless it has first cleaned its hands of its own violation of the other.

Those rights that a war may protect must be of such primary importance as to balance in the scales the wreck and devastation of war. As wars become more destructive the cause that could launch a nation or a world into war must be all the graver.

A third condition is more important and still more rigid. The war must be necessary; peaceful means must be tried and not abandoned until found utterly hopeless. Negotiations, trade embargoes, boycotts, breaking of diplomatic relations, mediation, arbitration, settlement by an international court—these and other ways of peaceful settlement must be tried. Only when all these are found wanting is war justified.

The underlying principle in all this is that within the brotherhood of man, individuals and nations have certain inalienable rights which they may protect even by bloodshed when, first, there is a proportion between the gravity of the right and the gravity of the means used to protect it, and second, when bloodshed is actually the only possible means to protect the right.

#### IV

**WE BELIEVE** this is a common-sense view of the question. It is derived from a double view of mankind. Men are brothers and each man is of eminent worth. To claim a belief in universal brotherhood and then to deny lesser brotherhoods and the high worth of individual human beings is sentimentality; to hold simply the eminent worth of individual men or particular groups of men is by the strange distortion that takes place in men's minds to fall back into the silly and baneful selfishness of the superman; to believe in the absolute power over individuals and organizations of that form of brotherhood of which the State is the organized expression is to believe in the slavery of men to a nation-state; and to hold the absolute right of one government as against every other government is to preach international chaos. A vast network of rights and duties exists between the individual, the organizations to which he belongs, the state of which he is a part and the, as yet imperfectly organized, universal brotherhood of man. We would speed the day when these facts are recognized and we believe that with the recognition will come greater hope of lasting peace.

The emphatic point here looking to immediate external action is first to seek out and correct the underlying causes of war and second to seek out and create means of settling peacefully and without war the particular conflicts that might lead to war. Illusions on the difficulty of the task will end only in despair and inactivity. The problem is as broad as the human nature itself of human beings who are plunged into a century of ever-expanding wealth, of new inventions in produc-

tion and destruction, of ever-contracting space and time, of deepening paganism, and of shallower regard for the Kingship of Christ. Precisely because the task is difficult, it must be undertaken. It must be undertaken to save mankind from self-destruction and to help turn the present multiplied opportunities to greater use here and to greater glory hereafter. The promotion of peace is an act of love of God and man, and none the less so because it is necessary for self-preservation.

In our age democratic forms of government extend to more peoples than ever before. In the United States we have had a democratic form of government for a century and a half. Democratic government elsewhere gives new opportunities and therefore new obligations to the democratic determination of foreign policy in the United States. As citizens of the United States we shall be called upon more and more to speak with democratic voice through our chosen agents and even to transcend elected or appointed officials and speak, people to people, on the general causes of war and upon issues immediately threatening conflict.

Because there is more responsibility and because there is more demand for popular action, peace and its problems are to be considered not as resolvable only by government officials but by decisions and actions of whole peoples. Indeed one of the peaceful alternatives of war should be recourse to the judgment of the people. They know that upon them falls the burden of war. If they are inspired by charity and justice, if they are trained in the meaning of charity and justice, and if they are able to keep cool in the midst of lying propaganda, they will more effectually prevent war and settle conflicts than will diplomats.

## V

**B**UT for this to be successful the people must school themselves in the universality of brotherhood and the right and wrong of international activities.

Mankind is divided into nationalities. Geographical propinquity, a common language, a common history, and pervading similarities of temperament, ideas and ideals, sometimes accompanied even by similarity of physical appearance, set aside men in nations. But greater and more fundamental than nationality is the oneness of human beings. A man is a man before he is an American, before he is a Mexican,



before he is a Frenchman, before he is a German or an Italian or an Englishman or a Chinese or a Japanese or a Negro. Similarities are more important than differences; the differences in nationalities must be kept in mind and they permit varieties in the application of general principles; but the oneness of men, their universal brotherhood, is also a fact, and the first fact, and it provides the first guides of action.

**T**HE OPPORTUNITIES that have come through quick transportation and quick communication now permit peoples to know one another better. We have at least a better physical foundation for brotherhood than when the ocean took months to cross and news was carried by courier. Now we can more quickly learn other peoples, express our sympathies with them, help them; be helped by them, visit each other, and learn each other well enough so that we may, as we do with any friend, understand and forgive faults and understand, appreciate and praise differences which may be every bit as good as or better than our own characteristics.

Yet unless there is charity the very possibility of encountering many different peoples and of learning a little about them causes actually more danger to international good will. If we are vain and unkind, we magnify differences. We in a new country, proud of our new institutions, are open to this fault. We strongly urge therefore homes, schools of all grades, the pulpit, the press, organizations of all sorts to take account of and meet this need of the people of the United States so that we will be better able to do our part in avoiding war and preserving peace.

**O**F THE VERY substance of this is the difference between patriotism and that national egotism which is now called nationalism. The national egotist thinks that his country is always and in all respects right in its dealing with other countries. He thinks that it is sweet to die for one's country even though he dies for injustice. He thinks that whatever his country or a strong element in his country wants is right, and that whatever his country or his countrymen or even the larger part of his countrymen do is the right thing to do and anything to the contrary or different is probably wrong. This is not patriotism. Yet this and close approaches to it are the assumption underlying much public opinion in international relations. World peace will not come until it is stemmed. Again we urge homes and all

institutions and organizations engaged in moulding public opinion to take steps to overcome national egotism.

A third point is equally important and interlocks with the others. It is the need of a wide-spread knowledge of the detailed principles themselves of right and wrong in international relations. The ideals of brotherhood and sane undistorted patriotism are important. But what these mean in detail must be known, and not only the more general principles, but the subordinate principles also, and finally what actions accord with the principles in particular cases. Statesmanship and public opinion are likely to gravitate between vague expression of good will and either sheer or masked reliance upon power alone; with equal certainty neither the first nor the second can substitute for hard and fast principles of conduct. Those who permeate public opinion and governmental circles with the knowledge of the principles of right and wrong in international relations can not guarantee world peace because there is the further difficulty of applying them and because the principles themselves, though known, may be thrown overboard in case of conflict. But detailed knowledge of right and wrong is a first long step towards right conduct.

## VI

**I**T WAS SAID above that war is never justified until means of peace are tried and found wanting. It becomes our duty therefore to work for permanent peaceful means of settling international conflicts.

The Kellogg Treaties wherein countries renounce war are an example in point. Under those treaties the nations agree to renounce war as an instrument of national policy and to use none but peaceful means of settling difficulties. There is a great gain here, comparable in its sphere to the act of a man who firmly resolves not to commit again some habitual sin of which he has been guilty. From the dawn of history war has been an instrument of tribal and national policy. Now the nations publicly disavow it. This is so much to the good.

But at the moment of disavowing it they make certain expressed and mental reservations. Moreover in disavowing it they do not agree upon the peaceful means of settlement that they will use. Both the reservations and the failure to agree upon peaceful means of settlement indicate a weakness in the solemn promise to reject war as an instrument of national policy.

The underlying causes of conflict would still remain if the recommendations we wish now to make were followed. Yet for the peaceful settlement of international conflict we know no better recommendations than those made during wartime by Pope Benedict XV in his message to the warring peoples.

One is to reinforce the solemn renunciation of war the nations have now proclaimed with an obligation, solemnly shouldered, to adopt a code of international right and wrong.

A second is the simultaneous and joint reduction of armaments.

A third is to erect a new means or adapt an old means of arbitrating and adjudicating international conflicts in accord with the code of law.

This, we may add, may well mean regional codes and regional courts, as in the Western Hemisphere.

Most wars and international conflicts center now directly or indirectly in the national pride of peoples, in questions of control over raw materials and markets for finished goods, and in access of peoples to work and livelihood in regions where higher standards of living are possible. These problems must be solved. Yet we lay emphasis upon peaceful means of settling serious conflicts which arise from such problems rather than upon the problems themselves. We do so both in the hope that war will thereby be avoided and in the further hope that the international agencies created to settle conflicts will go farther and aid in the settlement of the underlying causes themselves.

## VII

**WE** WOULD HAVE Catholics in the United States do more than their numerical part to ward off another war in the world. More than our American citizenship is here involved. Or rather our American citizenship lifted to the plane of a religious obligation and permeated with the love of God and man calls upon us to act.

Our years are years of a strange mingling of hope and cynicism, of confident striving and morose inactivity. We urge Catholics in the United States to stand on the side of the confident and the hopeful, to place their trust in God, to pray that the world not lead itself again into the moral and physical shambles of war, and to study earnestly and work faithfully for the peace of the world.

**T**HIS JOINT Committee urges Catholics to extend Catholic action and the knowledge of Catholic principles in order that a right understanding and a true love of peace may be further promoted throughout the United States. We would urge active co-operation with organizations of general membership when there is absolutely no danger of misunderstanding with regard to any principle of Catholic faith.

We commend particularly the reports that have thus far come from the committees of the Catholic Association for International Peace and we invite Catholic organizations and individuals to use these reports as a basis of study and discussion. We trust and we confidently look forward to equally able reports from that organization in the future.

We urge a careful reading of the articles on international relations in the Catholic press. We wish to recommend also that more articles appear in the Catholic press on the life and customs of foreign countries. Many such articles are to be found in the secular press but they lack usually the appeal and the intimate knowledge which are possible with the wider facilities in this regard among Catholics.

We recommend also two steps that can well be taken by Catholic organizations.

One is to have frequent lectures and addresses at organization meetings on topics in the field of international relations.

A second is to create groups for the study of international relations. Such groups may well begin with the report on International Ethics of the Catholic Association for International Peace. A procedure they might follow is that of the N. C. W. C. Study Club.

In this field the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Council of Catholic Men have a great opportunity to extend and intensify the work of education they have already inaugurated.

# N. C. W. C. Study Club Outline

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## Lesson I

### CAUSES OF WAR—INTRO. AND PART I OF TEXT

(Read with this "Causes of War," the report of the committee on sources of international enmity of the Catholic Association for International Peace.)

### SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Necessity of a code of right and wrong in international relations.
2. Examples of the false ideal of what constitutes a great nation.
3. New forms of imperialism.
4. National pride as a cause of war.
5. Greed as a cause of war.
6. Economic differences as a cause of war.
7. Armament rivalry as a cause of war.

### QUESTIONS

1. What connection do you see between "the Kingdom of Christ" and "the Peace of Christ,"—the two parts of Pope Pius XI's motto?
2. Why has the form of imperialism changed?
3. Wherein is national pride now a cause of international ill-will?
4. Why does desire for greater wealth become a possible cause of war?
5. How does the struggle for a bare subsistence in one country arouse ill-will towards other countries?

### PAPERS

1. Nationalism. (Consult "The Historical Attitude of the Church Toward Nationalism," by Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P., S.T.D., in April 1928, *Catholic Historical Review*; and Carlton Hayes' "Essays on Nationalism" (Macmillan).
2. Imperialism. (Consult "Imperialism and World Politics," by Moon, (Macmillan).

3. Latin America and the United States. (Sections II, III, IV, and Appendix B of the report of the same name of the Latin American committee of the Catholic Association for International Peace.)

### *Lesson II*

#### THE CURE OF WAR—PART II OF TEXT

##### SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Present fears of another war.
2. Present day refusal to accept the Kingship of Christ in national life.
3. Failure of human motives as a deterrent of war.
4. Need of knowing what the Love of God and our brother means in relations between nations.
5. Need of knowing the facts of international life so as to be able to apply moral rules.
6. Grounds of international brotherhood.

##### QUESTIONS

1. Do you consider the world now more able or less able to avoid war than it was twenty years ago?
2. Do you think war is still possible?
3. Why is "the only safe cure for war" a combination of Christian Charity, a knowledge of what the command of love means in international life and determination?
4. Do you consider that there is a growing reliance upon rules of right and wrong in international life?

##### PAPERS

1. Pope Pius XI's Encyclical on the Feast of Christ the King. (Encyclicals of Pius XI, page 129—Ryan. Herder Co.)
2. Pope Pius XI's Encyclical on the Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ. (Same, page 3.)

*Lesson III*

## CONDITIONS OF A JUST WAR—PARTS III AND IV OF TEXT

(Consult section V of "International Ethics"—report of the committee of the same name of the Catholic Association for International Peace.)

## SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Certainty of injustice, the first condition of a just war.
2. Gravity proportional to wars' evils, the second condition.
3. Failure of peaceful settlement, the third condition.
4. How these are grounded in brotherhood and the value of the individual.
5. The obligations, arising from these conditions, to work for peace.
6. Present difficulties in keeping the peace.
7. Obligations under democratic governments.

## QUESTIONS

1. Are the conditions of a just war usually weighed when war is about to be declared?
2. Are they usually weighed by Americans in making up their minds on international policies?
3. Would these conditions if rigidly adhered to throughout the world prevent future wars?
4. Why is it necessary to correct the underlying causes of war as well as to settle particular conflicts?
5. Do you think the people can resist propaganda in making up their minds on international policies?

## PAPERS

A Review of the section on International Relations in the Pastoral Letter of the American Hierarchy. (Page 68, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D. C.)

A Review of "International Ethics," section V. (The Catholic Association for International Peace, Washington, D. C.)

*Lesson IV*

## NATIONALISM—SECTION V OF THE TEXT

## SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Democracy in relation to brotherhood and international morality
2. Nationalities and universal brotherhood.
3. New opportunities for nations to know each other.
4. Dangers in this when Charity is lacking. Examples.
5. Differences between patriotism and nationalism.
6. Importance of rules of right and wrong.

## QUESTIONS

1. How does the Catholic Church bring home by its teaching the unity of mankind?
2. How, by its example?
3. Give examples of new ways open now to us to learn other peoples.
4. Why are Americans especially subject to national pride?
5. Do you consider yourself infected with "nationalism?"
6. Do you consider that public opinion on international relations oscillates between sentimental goodwill and reliance on force?

## PAPERS

1. The Universality of the Catholic Church. (Any book on the Church, or the Catholic Encyclopedia.)
2. Review of James Brown Scott's "The Spanish Origin of International Law." (Georgetown School of Foreign Service, Washington, D. C.)

*Lesson V*

## THE MEANS OF PEACE—SECTION VI OF THE TEXT

(Consult Section VI of "International Ethics" and "Papal Pronouncements on Peace" both of the Catholic Association for International Peace, particularly the August 1, 1917 statement of Benedict XV.)



## SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Necessity of using peaceful means of settling conflicts.
2. The Kellogg treaties as a new departure in the history of international relations.
3. Weakness of Kellogg treaties.
4. Recommendations of Benedict XV.
5. Distinction between curing the underlying causes of war and settling conflicts peaceably which arise out of these underlying conflicts.

## QUESTIONS

1. Whence arises the obligation to work for peace?
2. Why are the Kellogg treaties worthwhile?
3. Do you consider them sufficient to prevent war?
4. Why the emphasis of Benedict XV on substituting moral right for arms?
5. Why, on joint armament reduction?
6. Why, on arbitrating conflicts?

## PAPERS

1. The Kellogg Treaties. (Consult "The General Pact for the Renunciation of War," U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.)
2. Review of Section VI of "International Ethics." (The Catholic Association for International Peace, Washington, D. C.)

*Lesson VI*

## CATHOLIC LAY ACTION—SECTION VII OF THE TEXT

## SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Pray for Peace.
2. Hope of permanent peace.
3. General cooperation for peace.
4. Reservation on the type of secular organization to join.
5. Catholic press and peace.

## ORGANIZATION PROGRAM

1. Lectures on international relations before Catholic organizations.
2. Study Clubs on international relations in parishes and organizations.
3. Plans to put this program into effect.

## PAPERS

1. The Catholic Association for International Peace. (Write organization at headquarters—1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C.)
2. Books and pamphlets on International Relations. (Write to the N. C. W. C. Study Club Committee, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. )
3. International Catholic Action for Peace. (Write National Catholic Welfare Conference.)



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