

PFC. Robert J. Weiss  
Petition for Conscientious Objector Status 1-0  
Formatted According to AR 600-43

a. **General information.**

1. Robert James Weiss

11. Application was not made to the Selective Service System.

12. I have made no previous application for classification as a conscientious objector.

13. N/A

Training and Belief

1) **An express, specific statement as to whether the person requests classification as a conscientious objector 1-0, or as a conscientious objector 1-A-0.**

I, Robert J. Weiss, am seeking an honorable discharge as a conscientious objector 1-0.

2) **A description of the nature of the belief that requires the person to seek separation from the military service or assignment to noncombatant training and duty for reasons of conscience.**

It is my deeply held belief that participation in warfare is immoral. This is built upon my feeling that war, and furthermore, killing is against the will of God and constitutes unforgivable sin. While there are many areas in the bible to support this conclusion I need only elect a few to demonstrate my claim. The first comes from the book of Matthew chapter 5 verses 38-39. In the words of Jesus; "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." I interpret this passage in the following manner. Jesus begins by revealing to the crowd what we should not do, which is to act in accordance with the 'eye for an eye' notion. The idea is that if someone inflicts some injury than it is acceptable to likewise inflict this injury back upon them. For instance if a person destroys your eye you may in turn destroy theirs; hence an eye for an eye. Jesus however refutes this mentality by revealing how we should comport ourselves instead. He says that we should not resist evil. Jesus refers here to injurious resistance of evil. Certainly Jesus' very presence and actions were a form of resistance to evil so clearly he does not mean all opposition to evil is wrong, merely damaging force. As it says in 2 Corinthians 10:3, "the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world". Rather than to physically resist evil we should instead turn the other cheek. I conclude from this passage that attacking because we are attacked is wrong and also that when we are attacked our response should be to bear it without retaliation. The second passage comes from Luke 6:27-28. Again Jesus is preaching to a multitude of people and tells them, "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." This commandment seems pretty simplistic yet is still subject to some degree of interpretation. First we are told to love our enemies. There is no doubt in my mind that if we love someone than we cannot inflict harm upon them. Next we are told to do good to those who hate us. While our enemies may dedicate themselves to our destruction we shouldn't hunt them down and kill them but try to help them. To bless those that curse us has the same implication. Finally we should pray for those that conspire against us. Therefore, no matter what wrong is done against us we should pray for the salvation of our oppressors. I conclude from this passage that no matter what our enemies do to us we should act merciful towards them. My final reference comes from the book of Romans chapter 12 verses 17-21. Paul writes, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." I draw a significant message from this text. The first theme I observe, to repay evil not with evil but good, I have already discussed. However, something new is added. We are told that revenge is reserved for the Lord. We should not seek payback but rather leave it in Gods hands to judge people. The other message here is that of generosity towards our enemies. When they are in need we should provide for them. Despite

whatever hatred and malice they bear towards us it is still our duty to treat them with love. Perhaps the most significant message here is to live in peace with other men. Drawing all the preceding passages together I am left with a strong and lasting impression upon my mind. The bible tells me not to resist evil or to seek revenge for it but instead to respond with good and blessings. It further says that we should love our enemies, pray for them, and give them provisions when they are needy. I believe that any act of warfare or killing is in direct contradiction to these commandments God provides for us to live our life by. Therefore I cannot engage in any act of war.

3) **An explanation as to how his or her beliefs changed or developed, to include an explanation as to what factors (how, when, and from whom or from what source training received and belief acquired) caused the change in or development of conscientious objection beliefs.**

In 2005 I was a 16 year old who was living with my friend at his grandfathers house because I was no longer welcome in my own. I was content with this situation because it allotted my a generous amount of freedom to do as I sat fit. I wasn't, however, ignorant of the fact that it could not be a permanent situation. To this end I worked hard in school so that I would have enough credits to graduate highschool after my junior year. From there I would join the army and could rely on myself for sustenance. I sought out a recruiter who told me he could not work with my until I turned 17. This was fine since I had to complete the school year as well. In April of 2005 I turned 17 and sought out the recruiter again. I enlisted in the army with parental consent and chose the position of cavalry scout. I was in no way, shape or form a conscientious objector at the time when I took the oath of enlistment. I retained no qualms about performing the duties of a soldier whatsoever. Furthermore, I actually wanted a combat position because there was a war being fought and the prospect of being in a battle sounded exciting and fun. In June I graduated high school and two weeks later I went into basic training. During the next 17 months I completed basic and AIT, went to my unit in Fort Lewis and from there made the transition to Rose Barracks in Germany. Throughout this period I was enthusiastic about my work and very proud to be serving my country. Even though I was young, being a soldier generated respect from people and I felt that people from my home town looked up to me.

Also, during this period the influence of God upon my life began to slowly erode. I come from a very devoutly religious family and have always felt very spiritual but I began to feel I no longer needed him actively in my life. My personal pursuits and desires were beginning to conflict with a virtuous Christian lifestyle. I wanted to get drunk and yet the bible instructed me not to. I wanted to go out to a bar or strip club and again the bible instructed me not to do that either. Essentially what I desired for myself and that which God desired shifted to opposite ends of the spectrum. Eventually as I moved further down the path of sin I came to an impasse. Either I would return to Christ or abandon him all together. I am ashamed to say that I selected the latter. However this wasn't altogether final. I knew deep inside me that God was very tangible no matter how hard I strove to convince myself otherwise. To alleviate this feeling of guilt I had to persuade myself that Christianity was false. To this end I read all manner of scientific and philosophical arguments against the existence of God. I would debate with Christians that I worked with about how impossible or irrational a faith in some omniscient being was. It didn't matter to me that my arguments had no credibility or factual basis I simply believed them because I wanted to believe them. I would misconstrue my findings so that they would conform to what I though the truth ought to be rather than what it was. For instance, I would frequently say that the bible has been translated over and over again for thousands of years and altered somewhat during each new translation. Therefore the bible that we have today cannot possibly accurately resemble the original material. If this is true than it cannot be the divinely inspired word of God and furthermore has no authority as a religious text with which one could derive doctrine from. This might sound like a compelling argument but it disintegrates under scrutiny. The reality is that there are thousands of surviving manuscripts going back to the early years of the Christian church. Scholars sift through this massive pool of information to remove the flawed or defective texts and than base their translations on the remainder. By painstakingly comparing writing styles such as the usage of particular terms or the overall fluidity of a passage additions to the original material can be mitigated. So, the copy of the bible one might read today is in fact almost identical to the archetype. Mark 13:31 says "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

At the end of December 2006 I found myself home on block leave visiting my family for the holidays. It was here that something profound happened. For years my sister was dating a man named Dustin, even becoming engaged for a period of time. On New Years Eve he was at a party got into a fight with another man and was stabbed in the heart. He died on the way to the hospital. He was only 21 years old. Although I wasn't a friend of Dustin or even someone that talked with him regularly I was still very moved by his passing. Up to this point I had never know anyone who was killed or even died of natural causes. This was therefore the first time I had first hand experienced a death. It made me see how frail life was and that I might depart this world at any time. Knowing that

at any moment my time might come I wanted to be ready to stand before God and be judged. I was immediately drawn much closer to Christ than I had ever been before. I saw also how devastated my sister was by this incident. She grieved and was inconsolable for a long time afterwards. It seemed to me that it was awful that someone so young and full of life could be cut down in such a brutal and horrific way. The whole event was purposeless and brought no positive result for any party. One kid died and another would soon go to prison and the families and friends of both parties would be affected as well. As these thoughts went through my mind I began to question the morality of killing and what good could be brought about by ending someone's life. To answer my questions I looked into the bible. I devoted much of my time reading passages concentrating particularly on the ministry of Jesus. In his teaching and parables I saw and read things that surprised me. A reoccurring element was that of peace and love towards on another. This perplexed me because I had always understood that one could be a Christian and still be a soldier. Yet here I was reading about praying for my enemies and doing good to those that hurt me. To shed some light on the issue I began searching for books that addressed the topic of pacifism from a Christian perspective. I purchased quite a few books that would help to shape my views including; *The Politics of Jesus*, by John Howard Yoder, *Blessed Are the Pacifists*, by Thomas Trzyna, *What About Hitler: Wrestling with Jesus' Call to Nonviolence in and Evil World*, by Robert W. Brimlow, and *Christian Non-Resistance*, by Adin Ballou. Most notable among these books was Adin Ballou's interpretations of the gospels in the new testament. Adin, who was a prominent Christian reformer during the 1800's, provided a straightforward and easy to understand argument for pacifism based on Jesus' teachings. For the next few months I spent my time reading these books and buying even more on the subject. Although I was somewhat embarrassed about my new beliefs, given the atmosphere I live in, I still brought them forward at select times. When there weren't many people around I would talk to friends or coworkers, particularly people who had experienced combat, about how they felt about killing. As was expected most people disagreed and were critical of any wariness towards war.

On the 13 of April my grandmother, on my mother's side, died of natural causes. This struck a particular blow to me because I loved my grandmother very much. I also felt deep regret because I had not stayed in touch with her very well since moving to Germany despite being so close with her as a child. My sadness was eased by the knowledge that she had recently accepted Christ. I knew that although she was no longer here on earth she had gone to a much better place. During the later years of her life she suffered constant pain because of complications from diabetes and a lifetime of smoking cigarettes, but now she was with the lord where she would suffer no pain. It was such good news that she had accepted Jesus because she had rejected Christianity her whole life. She ignored any urging from my mother to attend a church service or talk with a pastor. Finally, nearing her deathbed and seriously ill she conceded and became saved. Perhaps it was because she knew she didn't have long to live or because she felt something was missing from here life, but whatever the reason the Lord chose that time to work in her life. This made me realize that God had a plan for everyone. He knows all our hearts and how he can use each of us. This made me realize too that God had something planned for even the terrorists who our soldiers fight overseas. No matter how evil they act or how much we loath them, the Lord loves them and has some design for their life when they accept it. I realized that if we kill these "enemies" than they die prematurely without fulfilling God's mission that he prepared for them. Likewise had some unnatural death befallen my grandmother years ago she would be in a much different place now.

#### 4) **An explanation as to when these beliefs become incompatible with military service and why.**

During the latter half of April 2007 I was granted emergency leave to attend my grandmother's funeral and to support my family in the aftermath of her passing. This provided me with a good deal of time to think about where my life was headed and what God wanted for me. I was also able to be with my family, my mother and sisters in particular, and engage in discussion with them about what God wants for us in life as well as in death. I attended church services, read a great deal from my bible, and prayed to the lord for clarity. In response to my prayers a multitude of things became perspicuous. Things that I had read about in my books began to make a lot of sense in my mind. I ultimately decided here that my conscience would no longer allow me to perform my duties as a soldier.

My beliefs are incompatible with military service for the following reason; I would rather lay my life down than take the life of a fellow human being. This revelation crystallized itself during the aforementioned leave period. Now although I harbor no desire to die, if it came down between my death or the death of another person I would choose them over myself. I feel this way because I believe that they have much more to lose by dying than I do. I know that if I die I will immediately be risen to heaven to spend eternity with my creator. All I have really lost than is maybe 50 or so years of being on earth. This may seem like a great deal to have surrendered voluntarily but compared to the span of living for all time in heaven it is less than the blink of an eye. On the other hand if I slay an opponent who hasn't received God's forgiveness that there are much more drastic consequences. Not only have they

suffered a gruesome death and missed out on 50 years that they may have otherwise gone on to live but they also lose the most important thing which is their soul. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The pain of being torn apart by a hail of bullets or an explosion will seem like nothing compared to the agony they will go on to suffer in hell. Imagine living in perpetual and never-ending torment submerged in a lake of fire from which there is no relief. In Matthew chapter 13 verse 42 Jesus paints a awful picture of hell saying, "cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth". In the book of Revelation chapter 20 verse 15 it says of the unsaved, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." How then could I or anyone, who loved their enemy, forcibly inflict this ghastly and dreadful state of being onto a fellow man. No, I could not and will not do such a thing to someone no matter how horribly or maliciously they wrong me. I would opt instead to perish for the betterment of that person as Jesus' perished for the betterment of all people. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12)

This leaves open the possibility of serving in the armed forces under a position that would not engage in combat. However, I feel that doing so would be equally immoral and objectionable in God's eyes. If the pursuit of killing another human being is wrong that certainly any role that enables it, however indirectly, must also be wrong. I view the army as a collective of many small and unique modes of operation that together constitute one encompassing cohesive fighting force. In a sense then, the military can be viewed an intricate piece of machinery where no part can operate independently of the whole. For example the infantry man can not complete his mission without information from the intelligence department, or a competent plan from the planning department, or equipment from supply department, or weapons from the armory department, or food from the culinary department et cetera. Therefore it must be observed that any position one fulfills in the army, however innocent or blameless it may appear superficially, is in fact every bit as liable for the killing as the man pulling the trigger. To illustrate my point I will draw upon an example found in the new testament of the bible. The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) tell the story of one of the disciples of Jesus names Judas Iscariot. Although Judas was a follower and close companion of Jesus during his ministry he ultimately betrayed him for monetary gain. Judas sought out the rabbis and plotted with them to deliver Jesus into their hands in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. As per their plan, the soldiers of the high priest came upon Jesus in the absence of the multitude left only in the company of his 12 disciples. Upon their arrival Judas kissed Jesus as a signal to the soldiers that he is the man they were ordered to capture. Now, Jesus knew of the treachery long before it even came into mind and responded, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). In this instance is not Judas to be responsible for the crucifixion that followed? Granted he didn't personally assault him and drive nails through his hands and feet but wasn't he an instrumental and necessary component that allow it to happen. If we aid and abet a sinful act are we ourselves not just as guilty of sin as well? It is my belief that we are.

**5) An explanation as to the circumstances, if any, under which the person believes in the use of force, and to what extent, under any foreseeable circumstances.**

I believe that physical force on an individual can and should be used as long as it meets certain criteria. These criteria apply only on a personal level and in no way applies to an organized force. I believe that there is a clear difference between a singular person acting in defense and a massive force organized to carry out acts of aggression. So while it would be acceptable for a woman to defend herself against a rapist, it would not be tolerable for a mob to attack the rapist in the court room. The first requirement that is must meet is that it is nonlethal force. Under no circumstances do I believe it to be acceptable to take action that might potentially be fatal to the receiving party. For instance, shooting someone in the chest with a rifle might not necessarily end their life. However, there is a reasonable chance that it will kill them, therefore, this would be wrong. The second criteria is that the force used must be the least amount of force necessary to achieve the desired effect. What I mean by this is that it is permissible to use only the absolute minimum amount of physical force required to stop a threat. That mitigates the amount of damage inflicted upon the attacker. For instance, lets suppose you witnessed a frail old man attacking his wife with his fists. The first step you could take would be to order him to stop what he was doing. If he persisted in his attack it would then become necessary to use physical force. Since the man is only a weak senior the situation would not necessitate the use of an excessive amount of force. Instead I'm confident that simply holding back his arms until he gained a hold of his emotions would suffice. This would apply to any situation where action would begin on the lowest level possible and then escalate only to, and not beyond, the lowest effective level. The last criteria is that the use of force must be for a righteous cause. The defense of ones self or another individual from the threat of physical harm is the only situation that I would deem the use of force appropriate. For instance, an assault against someone because of some perceived insult or offense would be an unjust and sinful act of retribution. Romans 12:19 says

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

**6) An explanation as to what in the person’s life most conspicuously demonstrates the consistency and depth of his or her beliefs that have rise to his or her claim.**

Throughout the development of my sentiments towards warfare and killing I have formed many new affiliations and relationships. I have recently been exchanging correspondences with a pastor from my hometown. We’ve been using the internet to write letters back and forth for quite a while. He is the minister of Harvest Baptist Church where my family attend services every Wednesday and Sunday. My mother introduced him to me hoping that he might help me resolve the issues I’ve been having serving in the military. His justification for functioning as a soldier in the armed forces comes from the book of Romans in the New Testament. In chapter 13 verses 1-2 Paul writes “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Pastor Carpenter interprets this to mean that governments are established by God and are therefore his earthly representatives. If then we disobey our government we are in effect disobeying God. As Christians we are bound to abide in all things by the law which government administers. Accordingly when we are ordered to provide military service and participate in warfare is it our duty to react with compliance. However, I retort that neither man nor any institution of man acts as the executor of perfect justice. Indeed one would be hard pressed to find a governing body that delegated solely based upon biblical principles. Take for example the Nazi regime in Germany during World War II. Was Adolf Hitler himself an angelic representative of God whose genocide of the Jewish peoples was divinely willed? And are not our enemies governments also ordained by the Lord? Rather, I believe that God is and will forever be the ultimate authority. In his hands alone rests the wisdom to rule the earth. The use of lethal force to settle disputes is an instance where our government blatantly disregards biblical commandments. Jesus implores us to love our enemies whereas our government orders us to mercilessly hunt them down and slaughter them like animals. There is no conceivable way for one to simultaneously satisfy both of these interests therefore one must choose which takes precedence. Should we abide by God’s law or man’s? This is essentially a rhetorical question because the obvious answer is to follow God above all else. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Matthew 4:10)

I next sought out an audience with my squadron’s religious advisor, Chaplain Smith. I had no misconceptions about how our discussion would go before I met with him. Needless to say, if a person serving as a commissioned officer in the military we can deduce that they cannot be opposed to the mission of the military. I expected therefore not support for my assertions but rather a rebuttal. Nevertheless I was interested in how he reconciled his faith with his profession. He justified a life dedicated to the furtherance of war by citing the many wars that God commanded during the time of the Old Testament. A review of this argument reveals two crippling flaws. First one must consider the prerequisites for these archaic wars. No military conquest undertaken by the Israelites met success in the absence of a divine mandate from the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 16 we are told the story a battle between the Syrians and the Israelites. They are unsuccessful in their conquest because they rely on their weapons rather than the Lord. A messenger of God rebukes them saying; “Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.” (2 Chronicles 16:7). The desolation of opposing forces was never the product of the prowess of the Jewish armies but rather of celestial approbation. There are many instances of Israeli armies effortlessly seizing victory when pitted against astonishing odds. There are even examples of God vanquishing their enemies before a battle had commenced. In one case the Jews were confronted with menacing forces from neighboring lands. The Lord consoled them saying; “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you.” (2 Chronicles 20:17). Thereafter God caused their enemies to fight amongst themselves and be decimated. The significance here is to note that only wars God endorsed were those which he personally authorized. Not since the times of the Old Testament has God commanded men to fight one another. Granted, historically there have been many wars, such as the crusades, waged in the name of God. However these are not the divine usage of men to punish evildoers but rather an exploitation of public religious sentiment. The only possible reason God has not commanded a war in thousands of years is that he no longer wishes men to engage in war.

My second point is that the teachings of the New Testament supercede those of the old. When there is a divergence in doctrine it is towards the New Testament that our allegiance lies. In fact those who assert that both testaments are parallel in importance devalue the overall moral authority of the bible. This may sound like an anti-canonical heresy but rather it is biblical truth. I need not labor in defending my charge because the scriptures speak for themselves. The bible says “ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been

faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.” (Hebrews 8:6-9). The meaning is clear; the covenant in the times of the Old Testament was imperfect and therefore necessitated the establishment of a better covenant instituted by Jesus. This passage concludes with “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” (Hebrews 8:13). The way of the New Testament nullifies the way of the Old. Our next passages come from Galatians 3:23-25 “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” This excerpt refers to the law of Moses as a schoolmaster which led us to Christ but afterwards is dispensable. My final reference comes from Hebrews 7. In verses 18 and 19 we read; “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God.” The law during the times preceding Christ was ineffectual and in need of amelioration. Verse 22 recapitulates the implication; “By so much as Jesus made a surety of a better testament.” Upon hearing these words is not my allegation vindicated? If any excess proof is required one need look no further than the words of Jesus. According to mosaic law a man may divorce his wife for reason of dislike but according to Jesus’ law a man may only divorce his wife in the case of adultery (Matthew 19:9). According to mosaic law a man may not eat meat that is unclean (i.e. pork) but according to Jesus’ law it is not what goes into the mouth of a man that defiles him but rather what comes out of his mouth (Matthew 15:11). According to mosaic law a man may not swear oaths falsely but according to Jesus’ law a man may take no oaths (Matthew 5:34). There are many more examples of Jesus amending the law of Moses but I think I have demonstrated a sufficient portion. We cannot assume that because something was acceptable during the day of Moses it is by implication acceptable in our day. The presence of war in the Old Testament is not ample justification for war waged in modern days especially when the New Testament speaks adamantly against it. My point in relating these discussions is to give the reader an understanding of the care that has gone into my decision. I have frequently been accused of picking and choosing parts of the bible that support my position while ignoring the rest. This could not be further from the truth. In reality, prior to making my decision I carefully weighed all the evidence relevant to the issue. As I have endeavored to show, the arguments used to justify the slaughter of our fellow man have no foundation. When examined in depth their credibility is destroyed. My doctrine is based not one verse or passage but rather the whole bible collectively.

The most compelling evidence of my sincerity that I could offer is that I am submitting a claim for recognition as a conscientious objector. Doing so will inflict a plethora of negative attention upon myself both socially and financially. I am fully aware that once the claim is submitted I will be exposed to different treatment from my peers and supervisors. I have no doubt that because people do not share my sentiments they will misunderstand them. People will naturally assume that I am doing it because I am coward and will look down upon me or ridicule me. I imagine that I might be put on tedious details or assignments specifically because of spite or contempt. I expect also that I will be isolated from social groups. I am sure I will feel very alone during the processing of my claim. Soldiers have a strong comradery built upon the assurance that they will fight side by side and I have no place in that. However, this does not deter me or in any way weaken my resolve. I would much rather stand up for what I think is right and be hated than conform to what I believe is wrong and be liked. From a financial perspective I stand to lose a great deal. I know that part of the application process involves the signing of a waiver whereby I forfeit my right to veterans benefits. The loss of these could potentially make my life much more difficult in the future.

There exists a significant possibility that my application will be denied. I am confident that this will not be the case given the amount of time and effort I have put into it. However, I read that only 45 percent of applications are approved so I have already prepared myself for that eventuality. I have decided that I will not under any circumstances use my weapon to take a human life. No matter what kind of danger or peril confronts me I will refuse to let my desire for self preservation make me compromise my beliefs. Furthermore, I will refuse to perform any military duties that empower another individual to take a human life in a combat environment. If I am put into such a position against my resolve I will be left with no other alternative than to refuse to follow orders. It is inevitable that doing so will lead to incarceration and a military court marshal proceeding. I expect I would be charged with such crimes as dereliction of duty, failure to obey a lawful order from a commissioned officer, and so forth. The maximum penalty for these offenses in conjunction with one another could mean years of imprisonment followed by a less than honorable discharge. I can only pray that my predicament never requires such absolute

defiance. Nevertheless I am resolved to do what I believe to be right regardless of the consequences. As long as I live I will do everything within my power to hold to my convictions.

**7) An explanation as to how the applicant's daily life style has changed as a result of his or her beliefs and what future actions he or she plans to continue to support his or her beliefs.**

Since I am still serving in the military there is a very limited degree to which I can alter my lifestyle. The majority of my time is spent performing the duties of a soldier. My typical day may consist of shooting weapons at a range or practicing tactical maneuvers. This constricts the amount of time and ease of which I can devote to the lifestyle I wish to lead. The situation is further complicated because I am stationed in Germany. I cannot fluently speak German which means that it is hard to associate myself with people who share my beliefs. I have searched online for a pacifist congregation in Germany, such as a Mennonite or Quaker church, without success. The only churches available to me are those on or immediately around army posts. I am reluctant to attend these churches because they are populated primarily by military personal who would not be sympathetic to my values and whose doctrine would be incompatible to my own. However, it is very important to me that I am able to have fellowship with other Christians so that I may grow stronger in my faith. When I return to the United States I look forward to gaining membership in a Christian establishment that includes non-violence in their tenets.

For the present, my private life has assumed a very amicable disposition. My faith in Christ has permeated all the aspects of my life. Adherence to the teachings of the bible and understanding of Christian principles has caused me to abandon many of the activities I once pursued and to adopt new ones that I never pursued. This can be witnessed clearly in the books I read, the music I listen to and the habits of my daily life. The majority of the literature I peruse is oriented around Christian pacifism and the real message of what Jesus taught. I find it useful and thought provoking to approach the bible from many different perspectives. I also read a great deal of books on the development of Christian movements throughout history such as the persecution of the Mennonites in the sixteenth century. I am currently reading *Militarist Christendom and the Gospel of the Prince of Peace* by Daniel H. Shubin which traces how Christianity has been historically misinterpreted to justify wars. Naturally, the music that I listen to also possesses a Christian theme or message. I have always preferred classical music and so it is wonderful that there is such an abundance of works created to glorify God. In fact, it may be surprising how many liturgical compositions were created during the era when classical music was prevalent. Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frederic Handel, Antonio Vivaldi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Johannes Brahms, to name a few, were all devout Christians who interlaced religious motifs into the music they wrote. Listening to Christian music is one way for me to incorporate my faith into daily functions that would otherwise be devoid of religious connotations. The predominant influence, however, of Christ in my life comes through prayer and reading the scriptures. I spend a lot of time reading my bible so that I may consistently build upon my religious foundation as well as to refresh my knowledge. Within the bible is thousands of years of wisdom passed down from God to his disciples through divine inspiration. 2 Timothy 3:16 says; "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". Accordingly I use it as a comprehensive manual for the comportment of my life and my demeanor towards others. The story of Jesus gives us the perfect conduit into the life of one who was blameless and utterly without sin. If we mimic Jesus' behavior and his conduct during his time on earth we may also strive towards faultlessness. One area which Jesus provides clear instruction on is the manner of our prayer. He says in Matthew 21:22 "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." If we have faith in the power of the Lord and when I seek his assistance he shall provide for me. Whenever I take my problems to God in prayer I feel that I no longer bear the burden of them. I need not worry after the things in the world when I know that they are in mightier hands than mine. The extent of my prayer is not limited to the adjuration of rewards but rather it encompasses all things. I pray not only for solace but also to thank the Lord for the many blessing that have already been bestowed upon me. I see Jesus not only as a savior but also as a confidant and consequently someone who I can convey my daily episodes to. For this reason prayer has become a huge component in who I am.

I have no definitive or conclusive plan for my future activities. At some point in high school I decided that I wanted to teach history. I think students should receive an impartial and unbiased education in world events. Lessons unfettered by national interests or political sentiments provide the purest understanding of chronicled happenings. I agree with the oft repeated saying "those who fail to learn from history's mistakes are doomed to repeat them". By studying the lives of our predecessors we may better our own. It is also my intention to teach others outside of the scholastic realm. I plan to become an active participant in an organization, Christian or otherwise, that staunchly instigates irenic resolution towards all the problems that we face personally and collectively. I am willing to speak publicly or write articles about my feeling on our nations involvement in war and the experiences I've had in the military. It is unfortunate that people are taught from birth that war is a necessary

evil. The idea that killing is an acceptable form of resistance to tyranny is so ingrained within their minds that it becomes hard to consider any alternative approaches. By spreading awareness of peaceable means to answer threats I hope to combat what has been the social norm. As long as people cling to the idea that violence solves problems they will be part of the vicious cycle that perpetuates it. The notion of a 'just war' can be abolished if enough people take a determined stand against it.

The aforementioned outline for my future may never come to pass. While I am very cognizant of what I want to accomplish I know nothing about what God desires for my life. What I envision my purpose on earth to be may be very different from what the Lord has planned. When I am discharged from the military a path may be revealed to me that I had never previously conceived of pursuing. It is entirely possible that my servitude to God involves volunteer work at home or abroad or perhaps becoming a member of the clergy. Whatever my future may hold I will be committed to fulfilling my role as a faithful disciple of my savior.

**c. Participation in organizations**

- (1) I have never been a member of any military organization or establishment before entering my term of service.
- (2) I have never officially been a member of a religious sect or organization.
- (3) I am currently affiliated with the Military Counseling Network. They are providing assistance with the processing of my conscientious objector application.

**d. References**

Letters of reference attached are from ...