

In October 2009 I submitted an application for discharge from the military based on conscientious objection. This document contains the portions of that application relevant to explaining my convictions and how they developed. I have modified the application only so that other people's identities are not disclosed.

g. A description of the nature of my belief:

I am a Christian. My Christian convictions preclude the use of violence: I cannot take someone else's life, nor can I aid others in doing so. Therefore, I cannot participate in war in any form.

I believe that Jesus Christ calls all men to love each other, under all circumstances. I believe his teaching forbids the use of violence. I take the sermon on the mount literally.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

- Luke 6:27-36*

I believe Christians can effectively resist evil with nonviolent action and are called to do so.

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat,
and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,
for you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.

- Proverbs 25:21,22

I believe in the sanctity of all human life, including the enemy. I believe man is made in the image of God, but is fallen and sinful. I believe that Christ came that all might be saved from their sin.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

- John 3:16-17

* Some additional verses that influenced my convictions are:
Isaiah 2:1-5, Mathew 5:9-12, Mathew 5:21-22, Mathew 5:38-48, Mathew 26:50-54,
John 18:36, Romans 2:1, Romans 12:14-21, James 3:13-18, 1 Peter 2:19-23, 1 Peter 3:9-17, 2 Corinthians 10:2-6, Revelation 13:9-10

I believe in the testimonies of the early church fathers and their nonviolent interpretation of the Gospel. I admire their faith and willingness to defend it peacefully unto death. The following excerpts from the early church fathers influenced my convictions:

We refrain from making war on our enemies, but gladly go to death for Christ's sake. Christians are warriors of a different world, peaceful fighters, but in fidelity to their cause and in readiness to die they excel all others.

- Justin Martyr

As simple and quiet sisters, peace and love require no arms. For it is not in war, but in peace, that we are trained.

- Clement of Alexandria

You cannot demand military service of Christians any more than you can of priests. We do not go forth as soldiers.

- Origen

Christians do not attack their assailants in return, for it is not lawful for the innocent to kill even the guilty.

- Cyprian

I am willing to suffer persecution or death for my beliefs. I cannot kill. I believe military service in any capacity is participation in war. My religious convictions forbid this.

h. Explanation of how my belief changed/developed:

I grew up in a moderately religious household with an older brother and a younger sister. My father was raised Catholic, and my mother Episcopalian. As a family, we attended church only occasionally. In sophomore year of high school I started to take church seriously when I joined Pacific Coast Church. This is a nondenominational church that was popular with kids at my high school. I began to read my Bible and pray daily. I became involved in the youth group. My senior year I was part of the Upper Class Leadership Team, which helped plan the Easter and Christmas parties, as well as other church events. Junior and senior years, my friends and I volunteered at Saddleback Church. Saddleback is a fairly large church with a lot of computer infrastructure. My friends and I knew a lot about computers. Our job was to repair broken computers, which were then used in offices, or distributed to more needy churches and families. These experiences taught me the value of having a religious community, and volunteering my talents to help that community.

I wanted to be in the military from a young age. I grew up surrounded by military influences. Both my grandfathers served in WWII. My hometown, San Clemente CA, borders the Marine base Camp Pendleton. Many of my friends in school had Marine parents. I was six when Operation Desert Storm began. I remember watching the news and being impressed with America's capabilities; I remember when the soldiers came home, and watching them parade triumphantly through the streets; I remember being enamored with their courage and competence.

I was homeschooled in the fourth grade, and my mom assigned me to read a biography of Colin Powell. He became my hero growing up, largely because of his military service. I admired how he lived the American Dream, going from poverty to national hero, and his desire to defend that dream. We went on a field trip where I met him at his book signing. I still own the autographed copy of his biography that he gave me. I wrote him encouraging him to run for the presidency in 1996 and still have the response he sent me hanging on my wall.

I was a high school sophomore on September 11, 2001. I felt the call to serve my country and began looking at the military academies. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 solidified my desire to serve.

I did well academically in high school. I graduated second in my class of 600, had a very high SAT, and was a National Merit Scholar. I had my choice of top schools, many with full tuition scholarship offers. I rejected these offers, deciding to attend the Naval Academy because I wanted to be a naval officer. I was enticed by the challenge the Academy presented, but mostly I felt the call to serve my country. The United States was at war and I firmly believed she needed my service. My family and religious leaders encouraged this decision.

At the Academy I continued my religious development through active involvement with church. Religious services were not mandatory. During plebe summer I sang in the chapel choir. Freshman year I attended the weekly Protestant services at the Academy chapel. I did not feel like I was being challenged to grow spiritually at these services, so I began attending different ones. I attended the contemporary Protestant services sophomore, junior, and senior years. I admired the faith and consistency in preaching of the chaplains I encountered. One of the chaplains was a Southern Baptist, and his preaching made me respect that denomination. Senior year, I attended Weems Creek Baptist Sunday mornings, and the Academy's contemporary service in the evenings. All these services taught that it was appropriate and necessary for Christians to engage in warfare.

I also began serious religious reflection outside of church. I continued to daily read my Bible and pray, but I also began reading other books about religion. The Academy made sure I was challenged to grow mentally and physically, and I made sure I was challenged to grow spiritually. I wanted to know why I should believe in the Bible. To this end I began reading Biblical commentaries, and looking into non-Biblical faiths. I read books arguing for atheism as well as histories of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. I purchased an English translation of the Qu'ran to see for myself what Muslims believe. I was especially interested in the historicity of the Biblical accounts of Jesus. I read about Biblical archeology, non-canonical writings of the early church, and commentaries on those writings. This helped me understand the ideas of sin and salvation, and greatly strengthened my faith. I did not yet see a conflict between Christianity and war. We were constantly surrounded at the Academy by the idea of warfare, but it wasn't until the last two years that I was formally introduced to its conduct. The first two years focused on teaching military discipline.

Junior summer I went on PROTRAMID, where I spent a week each with the submarine, air, and marine communities learning about their platforms and missions. This was the first hands on exposure I had to the fighting elements of the Navy. The technical capabilities of these

communities excited and inspired me. I also went on a month long Yard Patrol Craft cruise which introduced me to non-combat watchstanding responsibilities at sea. Junior year I took a military ethics class. In the ethics class, we studied the ethical responsibilities of an officer and how we use just war theory to provide legitimacy to our warfighting. The emphasis was on preventing war tragedies such as My Lai from reoccurring.

Senior summer I did an internship with a security agency, learning about our nation's capabilities for electronic and information warfare. I also trained the incoming freshman as a plebe summer cadre. Senior year I took a naval weapons class and a submarine practicum class. These classes taught me the basic capabilities and roles of modern weapons and how they are used to accomplish the Navy's missions. I saw formulas for calculating the number and types of casualties that would result from using each of our weapons systems. We calculated the extent of civilian casualties, and whether these numbers were politically acceptable for different types of targets. I accepted that this was the way things were done.

During my time at the Academy, I met and heard lectures by many people of all ranks in the military. The frankness with which people talked about killing surprised me, and I saw both good and bad in this. The good was that many people adopted a humble attitude towards killing: they regretted that it had to happen, but believed it was a necessary evil. Listening to stories of sailors and marines who had served in Iraq or Afghanistan, it was obvious they were deeply affected by their experiences, but also believed in the cause for which they were fighting. The bad was that I saw this respect for human life erode in many people as a result of our training. Training when conducted by marines emphasized a dehumanization of the enemy. The marine with the most confirmed kills in combat commands the most respect. Training when conducted by the other communities emphasized the ability of our technology. The people killed by an F-18's bombs were an afterthought to the challenges posed by maintaining an air wing. Everywhere, I saw a lack of respect for noncombatant casualties. I believed our profession was emphasizing the wrong things. This training did not respect the ideals of the just war as I envisioned them. This strengthened my desire to serve. I believed it was my responsibility as a Christian to make my service conform to the ideals of the just war, and in doing so bring others up to my standards.

I did well academically at the Academy. I tested out of many classes and finished the required course work by first semester senior year. I was selected to begin early graduate education through the VGEP program along with 24 other midshipmen. I began taking graduate classes at Johns Hopkins during my final semester at the Academy.

Senior year, we selected which community we would enter upon graduation. I chose the submarine community for three reasons. First, I believed its missions were critical to national security. Second, I wanted the technical challenge. Third, I respected the submariners I had met and wanted to work with individuals like them.

When I graduated from the Academy I was excited about my service. I believed it was my calling as a Christian. I wanted to have a positive impact on the world by having one on the Navy. My assignment upon graduation was to continue pursuing a masters degree at Johns Hopkins University. With the stresses imposed by Academy life suddenly

removed, I had more time to pursue my studies and engage in other activities.

One of the first things I did was find a church. I chose First Baptist Church in Laurel, MD. I became actively involved in church activities: I attended weekly Bible studies in addition to the main service and volunteered my free time doing general maintenance and tutoring math. My Academy friends had mostly gone off to their first assignment, so most of my leisure time was spent with friends I met through church.

I used my free time to undertake a rigorous religious study, including studying Hebrew. The summer before my senior year at the Academy, I saw an exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the National History Museum in San Diego. I was fascinated, and decided I wanted to learn Hebrew. I started while still at the Academy, but didn't have the time to get serious about it until after graduating. I set aside time every day to do this, and I soon had worked through every beginning and intermediate level workbook I could find. I continued by reading the books of Genesis, Exodus, Judges, Ruth, and Jonah in the original Hebrew. I purchased a 400 year old Hebrew scroll of Exodus from the Israeli Antiquity Authority which I diligently preserve.

I decided to read books that would make me a better naval officer. To learn about naval history, I read about the sinking of the whaleship Essex, the Shackleton expedition, and the mutiny on board the HMS Bounty. I greatly admire the loyal crews of these expeditions for the conditions they endured and their nautical skills. To learn about the war on terror, I read case studies from counterinsurgency operations in Malaya and Vietnam, the role of civilian contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the problems of preserving sacred and historic artifacts during the invasion of Baghdad. I also read a first hand account of the civil wars of Sierra Leone, the story of an American conscripted into the Iraqi army during the Iran-Iraq War, and the story of an American who started an aid agency building schools in Afghanistan. This reading helped me realize how complicated war really is, and the unintended effects of war on civilian populations.

I decided to look into Christian perspectives on warfare. Reading the book Choosing Against War, by John Roth was a turning point in my religious life. This book presented the first Biblical argument I saw that Christians were called to nonviolence. Reading the book, I found that I already agreed with the author's basic premises: that all humans are flawed, that Christians are called to love their enemies, and that Jesus commands Christians to turn the other cheek when struck. He concluded that Christians should not contribute to war for any reason.

I resolved to reconcile my beliefs with Mr. Roth's. My initial reaction was that even if Christians are called not to participate in most wars, surely there must be some cases where it is allowed. Like most people, I felt intuitively that WWII was justified. I reexamined just war theory. I found that it can be used to justify practically any conflict, and usually both sides appeal to it. When I saw how it could be used to justify obviously evil acts, I had to conclude that it was not a legitimate moral theory.

By graduation from Johns Hopkins, I was not yet convinced that war was wrong in all circumstances. I thought that I could still participate in war as a Christian. I planned to continue my military service.

When I arrived at NNPTC, a priority was to find a church. I chose Northwood Baptist church because I had friends there. I attended this church regularly from January to August, and I was as actively involved as my schedule allowed. Besides the main service, there are more in-depth Bible studies Sunday mornings and evenings, and Wednesday evenings which I attended when I could. In August, my friends and I decided to try a different style of worship and began attending Seacoast Church in Summerville. Attending this new church has allowed me to spend more time with my religious friends than I otherwise would be able to because of the demanding schedule at NPTU.

During indoctrination week at NNPTC I took the required psychological evaluation test. On the test I indicated that I would not launch a nuclear missile if given the order. While taking this test, I felt that I could not be responsible for a nuclear war. This flagged me for psychiatric evaluation. I met with the psychologist to discuss my answers on the test. I was scheduled for a follow up appointment.

The psychological test and interview bothered me. These events reminded me that my role in the military would be to directly contribute to warfare and killing. I began making sure that I could perform these obligations. I prayed, read my Bible, and consulted church leaders.

I met with the psychologist again. He cleared me for nuclear service, saying that I do not have a psychological problem. I still hoped that my beliefs could be reconciled with my military service. This hope continued for a considerable period of time. I now know, however, that my religious convictions prevent me from participating in war in any form.

- i. Explanation of when and why these beliefs became incompatible with military service:

My convictions evolved over time. I became a conscientious objector to war in early summer of 2009. I spent the months of January to April exploring the ideas of religion and war. I thought that I could reconcile the two, and I used every means available to me to do so. I prayed. I talked to many people during this time period: military chaplains, civilian religious leaders, and family. I was encouraged to explore the issues thoroughly, and to take my time to ensure that I came to the right decision. I read my Bible. I read about the history of nonviolence, the biography of a Christian soldier, about the types of just war theories, theological treatises on what the Christian lifestyle should look like, the effects of foreign aid on reducing war, political methods for reducing war, and case studies of nonviolent action.

I was exposed to the idea that I might be a conscientious objector in April when talking to the military chaplains. I was encouraged to begin writing down and clarifying my thoughts. I continued to seek guidance from religious leaders and family as I went through this process. By early summer I realized that I could not reconcile my religious convictions and participation in war. I realized that I was conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form.

- j. Explanation of the circumstances under which I believe in the use of force:

I believe there is a difference between violence and force. My convictions are against the use of violence, not the use of force. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. used nonviolent force to effect change in the Civil Rights Movement. This type of force is both legitimate and necessary. I am not willing to sit by and watch as people do evil, but I will not repay evil for evil. As a Christian, I believe I am called to use nonviolent methods to fight evil.

I believe there is a difference between the violence employed by the military and police. The military trains specifically in killing enemies, whereas police training uses killing as a last resort.

- k. Explanation of how my current lifestyle has changed as a result of my belief, and the future actions I plan to continue in support of my belief:

My lifestyle has changed significantly. I pray about this subject daily. I read my Bible, and every religious text I can get my hands on. Everyday after coming home from NNPTC I would spend the rest of the night reading these religious texts. I have consulted religious leaders, including military chaplains and civilian ones. The advice I received from the religious leaders and my family was to thoroughly explore the issue of conscientious objection. Almost all of my free time while stationed in South Carolina has been spent exploring and trying to resolve this issue. It is now clear to me that my convictions are firm and fixed and that I am conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form.

These convictions have changed practically every aspect of my life. I have sacrificed a large amount of time exploring my beliefs. My beliefs are constantly on my mind and heart. This has been very stressful because my preoccupation with religious matters has adversely affected my opportunities for socializing. When I am with people in the military, practically all I can think about is my religious convictions. This has prevented me from developing close friendships with the officers I work with. I feel like an outsider, and that I cannot open up to them.

I cannot serve my country in a military capacity, but I still want to serve her in other capacities. In the future, I would like to continue this service by pursuing a job as either a UN weapons inspector or a smokejumper. I would most like to be a weapons inspector. It would enable me to use the nuclear training I have received from the navy to actively reduce the threat of violence around the world in a way consistent with my beliefs. Smokejumpers are an organization of firefighters founded by conscientious objectors during World War II. They can rapidly respond to fires that conventional firefighters cannot by parachuting onto the scene.

I also plan to do humanitarian work with either the Mennonite Central Committee or Christian Peacemaker Teams. These groups are nonviolent Christian ministries. Their primary mission is not to proselytize, but rather to respond to violence and evil around the world the way I believe Christians are called to do so: with love. Examples of what workers might do are: journalism in "hot spots" around the world, provide aid to nonviolent resisters, teach at foreign schools, academic

research into nonviolence, provide disaster relief, or provide policy recommendations.

I also plan to continue my study of Hebrew and study the ancient religious languages, such as Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Arabic. I would like to more thoroughly investigate the effects of violence on the world and the effectiveness of nonviolent processes. I intend to further my studies in these areas whether I get the chance to do so formally or not.

1. Explanation of what, in my opinion, most conspicuously demonstrates the consistency and depth of my beliefs which gave rise to this application:

The fact that I am giving up a promising and prestigious career demonstrates the consistency and depth of my conscientious objector convictions. I never wanted these convictions. In high school I decided I wanted to be a naval officer and accomplishing this has been my greatest goal and achievement. I am proud of the respect and honor that being a naval officer has earned me. Since reporting to NNPTC, I have been daily reminded about the courage and competence of US sailors. My training at NNPTC and NPTU has given me a greater appreciation for the technical and leadership responsibilities of a naval officer. I regret that I will neither have that type of responsibility, nor any of the other opportunities provided by a naval career. I am proud to have been part of the naval tradition.

I am now convicted, however, that as a Christian I cannot participate in war in any form. I believe submitting this application will be one of the most important moments of my life. I have prayed extensively, and I believe that seeking discharge is the only way to reconcile my convictions with my military service.

I have examined the issues of religion and warfare extensively. This is not a whimsical decision, but rather the culmination of many strenuous hours of prayer, study, and reflection.

I intend to refuse any order which goes against the convictions I express in this application against participation in war. I am willing to accept whatever negative consequences this may entail.

- p. A description of the creed or official statements (if any, and if known) of said religious sect or organization in relation to participation in war:

I am a nondenominational Christian, and have been attending a Baptist and a nondenominational church. Christian denominations generally support both those people whose convictions allow them to serve in the military, and those who object to participation in the military based upon their religious convictions.