

**A Short and Sincere Declaration, To Our Honorable Assembly, and All Others in High or Low Station of Administration, and to All Friends and Inhabitants of this Country to whose Sight this May Come, Be They English or Germans**

**Benjamin Hershey**

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In the first place we acknowledge us indebted to the most high God who created heaven and earth, the only good being, to thank him for all his great goodness and manifold mercies and love through our Saviour Jesus Christ who is come to save the souls of men, having all power in heaven and on earth.

Further we find ourselves indebted to be thankful to our late worthy Assembly for their giving so good an advice in these troublesome times to all ranks of people in Pennsylvania, particularly in allowing those, who by the doctrine of our Saviour Jesus Christ are persuaded in their consciences to love their enemies and not to resist Evil, to enjoy the liberty of their conscience for which, as also for all the good things we enjoyed under their care, we heartily thank that worthy body of Assembly and all high and low in office who have advised to such a peaceful measure, hoping and confiding that they and all others entrusted with power in this hitherto blessed province may be moved by the same spirit of grace which animated the first founder of this province, our late worthy Proprietor, William Penn, to grant liberty of conscience to all its inhabitants;

That they may in the great and memorable Day of Judgment be put on the right hand of the just Judge, who judges without respect of person, and hear of Him these blessed words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," etc.; "What ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done unto me," among which number (i.e., the least of Christ's brethren), we by His grace hope to be ranked; and every lenity and favor shown to such tender-conscienced, although weak followers of this our blessed Saviour, will not be forgotten by Him in that great day.

The advice to those who do not find freedom of conscience to take up arms, that they ought to be helpful to those who are in need and distressed circumstances, we receive with cheerfulness towards all men of what station they may be—it being our principle to feed the hungry and give the thirsty drink. We have dedicated ourselves to serve all men in every thing that can be helpful to the preservation of men's lives, but we find no freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in any thing by which men's lives are destroyed or hurt. We beg the patience of all those who believe we err in this point.

We are always ready, according to Christ's command to Peter, to pay the tribute, that we may offend no man; and so we are willing to pay taxes, "and to render unto Caesar those things that are Caesar's, and to God those things that are God's," although we think ourselves very weak to give God his due honor, He, being a Spirit and Life, and we, only dust and ashes.

We are also willing to be subject to the higher powers, and to give in the manner Paul directs us: "For he bears the Sword not in vain, for he is the minister of God, a avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

This testimony we lay down before our worthy Assembly and all other persons in government, letting them know that we are thankful, as above mentioned, and that we are

not at liberty in conscience to take up arms to conquer our enemies, but rather to pray to God, who has power in heaven and on earth, for us and them.

We also crave the patience of all the inhabitants of this country. What they think to see clearer in the doctrine of the blessed Jesus Christ we will leave to them and God, finding ourselves very poor. For faith is to proceed out of the Word of God, which is Life and spirit, and a Power of God, and our conscience is to be instructed by the same; therefore we beg for patience.

Our small gift, which we have given, we gave to those who have power over us that we may not offend them, as Christ taught us by the tribute penny.

We heartily pray that God would govern all hearts of our rulers, be they high or low, to meditate on those good things that will pertain to our and their happiness.

The above declaration [written by Benjamin Hershey, minister of the Menonist Church] signed by a number of elders and teachers of the Society of Menonists and some of the German Baptists, presented to the Honorable House of Assembly on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November 1775, was most graciously received.