Editor's Note

In this issue of *Church & Society* we depart a little from our usual style in that the "articles" have all been prepared by one person. Though they have been critiqued and edited both for content and style by at least six other persons, they still have a consistency in style, content, assumptions and methodologies which is different from our usual *C&S* efforts at diversity. However, we believe that the occasion of the reunion of the UPCUSA and the PCUS calls for a gathering together of the separate parts of our heritage in order to understand how that heritage was formed. And so, this issue of *Church & Society* is just such a gathering: an examination of the "how" and the "what." It constitutes a first step in our renewed efforts as a new church toward understanding our obedience to Christ.

It is our expectation that future issues of *Church & Society* will continue to explore in our traditional, more dialogical, style why and how the church comes to positions on public concerns, what those positions can be, and how they relate to the faith and faithfulness of each one of us. This current issue is the beginning of that longer and more difficult process in the renewed church.

Esther C. Stine

Preface

This overview of Presbyterian social teachings is designed to pinpoint the consistent and contextual social ethic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It illumines the pattern of Presbyterian social concern and it articulates basic principles of public ethics that are prominent in the cumulative record of General Assembly statements.

The title of this publication begins *without* the definite article because we do not pretend that it comprehends all of, or the only, social teachings of the Presbyterian Church. First, the limits of space kept us from examining every subject on which General Assemblies have made social policy statements.* Second, we know that Christian social teachings have to do with an ethos that is larger than the sum of public policy issues; social teachings also encompass interpersonal relationships and the mutual, worldwide mission of the churches. Third, the community of faith teaches by the social responsibility it embodies in all of its life, including worship, education, pastoral care, stewardship and ministry at work, as well as human services, community organizations, and action to change public policy.

Social teachings of the Presbyterian Church are always *contextual* or prophetically responsive to new occasions which teach new duties. As our contemporary Confession puts it:

> In each time and place there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. (*Confession of 1967*)

These timely words and deeds of social responsibility in particular situations are also of *continuing* interest for the ethical clarity with which they illumine persistent national and international problems.

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the responsibility of the Presbyterian General Assembly (as well as synods, presbyteries and sessions) to speak to both church and society concerning "life

*For example, we did not discuss national health policy, a subject treated in detail in *Church & Society*, January/February 1984, and a matter of current social policy study by the Presbyterian General Assembly agencies.

in all its dimensions— personal and social, private and public, individual and corporate" (*Book of Order*, S-6.05). General Assembly statements help "the people of God to work for the transformation of society," counteracting a pernicious "human tendency to idolatry and tyranny" (G-2.05). Presbyterian reports on church and society concerns thoughtfully assess the pattern of social need and they propose how to move toward justice and peace through public policy, community life and the church's ministry. Within that ongoing deliberative activity, the church articulates a public philosophy or social ethic that is our primary concern here.

As the reunited Presbyterian Church continues to participate in public witness and ministry, it can do more coherent social education among Presbyterians and in public life by utilizing this issue of *Church & Society*. This publication is a basis for teaching and interpretation in parishes, regional governing bodies and General Assembly agencies. It is an educational tool for ordinands, for adults and older youth, and for committees that are exploring and taking social policy stances. Not only is it an aid to significant moral discourse throughout the church, it also facilitates the task of interpreting the church's social teachings to the larger society, in the media, among public officials, and wherever there is interfaith dialogue or action.

The manuscript was authored by James D. Beumler, a graduate of the College of Wooster and of Union Theological Seminary, N.Y., who has entered the Ph.D. program in American Religious History at Princeton University. Jim prepared for this assignment by doing painstaking homework on a detailed "Social Policy Compilation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)," which is being revised and will be published in 1985 by the Advisory Council on Church and Society.

I designed, commissioned, thoroughly revised and edited this overview of Presbyterian social teachings, consulting along the way with the author as well as experienced national staff and ethicists in both streams of the reunited church. Special thanks are due to Church Education Services of the Program Agency for financial support of this project; to Dean H. Lewis, Director of the Advisory Council on Church and Society, for incisive critique and additional budgetary support; and to Esther C. Stine, editor of *Church & Society*, for helping to render the whole into an altered and more readable *Church & Society* magazine style and format.

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Introduction

Nearly 75 years ago, the German theologian Earnst Troeltsch published the first edition of his now famous *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. One of his key insights was that the church has always taught its members something about how they should relate to the world around them. At times, Christian churches have counselled celibacy, at times marriage; sometimes they advocated total pacifism and other times the duty of Christians to obey as good citizen-soldiers the orders of their princes. Troeltsch's insight goes right to the heart of the relation between church and society, for it reminds us that even the church which says "we discuss only spiritual matters and leave political questions to the consciences of individual Christians" is engaged in social teaching.

The question for recently reunited Presbyterians is: What have we taught about social responsibility? To what degree is this body of teaching ethically coherent? To what extent is this teaching expressive of Christian witness?

When we look for basic "social teachings of the Presbyterian Church," there are a number of places where we might begin our search. We could examine Christian education resources of the denomination to see what kind of social values were reflected and taught to church school children, youth and adults. We could read thousands of sermon manuscripts to achieve a sense of the range of social problems addressed, and how they were addressed, from the pulpit. We could even ask a representative sample of Presbyterians what the church had taught them about social responsibility and what they are doing about public issues. Each of these approaches would be instructive, but our inquiry here will focus on a body of documents and actions coming from the General Assemblies of the past 50 years.

The teachings of Presbyterian General Assemblies have been known by a variety of names—social pronouncements, deliverances, policy statements—but all have a common intent: to provide understanding and direction, consistent with Christian faith, for response to problems and issues encountered in society. The social teachings of the General Assembly have been initiated in a variety of ways as well. On some matters where the issue is clear-cut or urgent, as in the case of imprisoned Christians

facing execution in a foreign country, a General Assembly may act directly and quickly on a resolution proposed by a presbytery, a commissioner or one of its committees. In other instances, the Assembly will draw on past comprehensive statements to approve a resolution proposed by one of its agencies or others regarding some new development, as in the case of Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

In the process leading to major teaching and policy on issues of complex and recurring nature, General Assemblies have usually assigned the task of studying the issues and recommending appropriate action by a later assembly to a special committee or to one of the agencies formed specifically for such work. In recent history, that has meant the Advisory Council on Church and Society (ACCS) or the Council on Theology and Culture (CTC). These agencies have had authority to initiate studies on their own, but most of their work has been shaped by assignments from the denomination's presbyteries.

On the most sensitive or difficult issues, then, the basic work of preparing material by which a later General Assembly can shape a social teaching occurs in the continuing work of the CTC and the ACCS in between meetings. A typical study committee or task force of these councils contains experts in the technical aspects of the problem—theologians, biblical scholars, clergy persons and lay people—all representing ethnically, racially and theologically diverse segments of the church. These study groups not only seek input from the membership of the church but also from those who are most intimately affected by the problem being ad-

dressed. Thus, when the issue was Mexican migration to the U.S.A., the joint UPC–PCUS study team sought advice from both sides of the Mexico–United States border. These committees have increasingly sought to hear from the victims of social conditions along with the experts who are insiders or powerful.

Gathering facts, probing for biblical insights, exploring theological ramifications and finding appropriate specific actions to recommend to the church and society take time. Often, two or more years elapse between the time a General Assembly calls for a study and the time the ACCS or CTC or a special committee presents a report and recommendations to a succeeding Assembly for debate and decision. The lapse of time between a study's commissioning and its completion serves a stabilizing function in General Assembly social policy making.

In the midst of changing commissioners and changing leadership there emerges a picture of continuity in the church's social thought.

One might expect that the positions of General Assemblies would regularly change on the most controversial of issues. While these things have occasionally happened, their infrequency indicates an enduring character to the Reformed theological view of the world, and it allows us to see the work of particular General Assemblies as contributing authentically to the social teachings of the church. So while in the predominantly northern United Presbyterian Church (UPC) every Assembly spoke only for itself, and in the southern Presbyterian Church, U.S. (PCUS) the Assembly set a position that remained the position of the General Assembly until reversed, each church regularly saw its Assemblies reaffirming the work of their predecessors. Thus, in the midst of changing commissioners and changing leadership, there emerges a picture of continuity in the church's social thought.

But why do General Assemblies act on public affairs matters at all? And further, why have the Presbyterian General Assemblies taken different stands on social issues than some other Christian leaders like Pope John Paul II and the Rev. Jerry Falwell? The answer to the first question is that the Presbyterian Church is a part of the Reformed branch of the Christian faith which traces its theological origins back to John Calvin. The kind of reformation that Calvin sought was a reformation of religious and civil life that acknowledges God as sovereign over all of life, and sees Christian vocation as essentially a call to serve God in the public order. Concern that God's will "be done on earth, as it is in heaven" meant for Calvin and his Reformed and Presbyterian followers that the social order must be transformed to correspond to the will of Christ.

Presbyterians are not the only Christian social transformers, but when Presbyterians have been at their best they have applied their motto *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (a church reformed, always needing to reform) to the totality of human existence and experience. They have concerned themselves with all the good and evil that takes place in the world, not confining themselves or their church's comment and action to spiritual matters alone. This search for God's will can mean that Presbyterians gathered together in a General Assembly may not agree with the opinion held by a majority of church members, for it is a basic principle of Presbyterian polity that presbyters gathered to wrestle and decide "are not simply to reflect the will of the people but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ." (*Book of Order*, G–4.0301,d.) Seeking the divine will in all things, therefore, is the church's basis for involvement in public affairs and issues.

Presbyterians are not the only Christians who adopt social policy statements and it does not take much effort to notice that other Christian groups and individuals sometimes take stands different from those favored by the Presbyterian General Assemblies. The reason for such differences among people of faith can arise from any of a number of factors that enter into Christian ethical decision-making: the social location of those who view the situation; the theological beliefs and traditions of the decider; the analysis of the facts of the case; the style of biblical interpretation employed in relating biblical teachings to contemporary problems; the means that are deemed fit by the decider to be used in addressing the problem; the process for reaching a decision; and so on. A disjuncture among groups in any one of these areas may result in very different final stands on a particular ethical dilemma.

One way of understanding how Christians, and Presbyterians in particular, arrive at a position on a social-moral issue is to adapt those factors listed above into a model for ethical decision-making. At the risk of oversimplification, we will assert that when a church or group of Christians is confronted by the events of the world, four bases must be touched in the course of making a complete ethical decision about what to do and say in the situation. The four bases are:

- an examination of the biblical/theological vision expressed in scripture and tradition;

- an analysis of the human/social situation—gaining familiarity with the issues and persons and powers involved;

- the formation of middle-range principles that approximate the vision and that apply in this particular situation;
- the choice of specific policy options and programs of action.*

These bases are not, however, touched sequentially. Ethical decision-making can begin at any base. Sometimes the violation of human rights will be so heinous that the church will engage the issue first, situationally, by gathering a few facts and rushing to the support of specific policy choices expressed in a resolution that tacitly draws in theology and social principles along the way. Sometimes the church will be presented with a specific policy choice: Should we support or oppose a particular plan for National Health Insurance? The church, represented by its General Assembly, then turns to its past teaching and theology and analyzes the present facts as it makes its decisions.

In the course of preparing any particular action for General Assembly adoption, the preparers may touch on each base repeatedly and in any order. In reality, people making ethical decisions think in non-linear fashion. They do the work leading to a decision in several areas simultaneously, and the discoveries of one area often affect others.

Of the four bases, here we are most interested in the principles that can be applied in specific cases. These middle-range principles—formed as they are in the interrelation of theological truth and social realities—represent the core of the church's social teaching. These principles are also useful in relating the church's beliefs to new situations.

As a reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), our task is to discover what it is that both streams of our church have taught. We do this to celebrate and appreciate our heritage and to appropriate a valuable body of church social thought as we face new social realities. The pages that follow are designed to surface church social teachings in many (but not all) areas of contemporary public interest. They focus not only on what the church has come to teach but also on the ways that the church has engaged the issues and has drawn on its referential bases in developing its social teachings. At the end of each section, an attempt is made to gather together the **key principles** of social teaching that the church has affirmed through its past actions and which form the ethical framework for future public witness and ministry.

*See Dieter T. Hessel, "A Whole Ministry of (Social) Education," *Religious Education*, 78, 4 (Fall, 1983), pp. 554 ff., for an overview of these four aspects of ethical decision-making.

PART ONE:
The Rights and Dignity of Persons

The Fundamental Right of Conscience

If there is one social principle which is the basis for Presbyterian social teachings as a whole, it is the right of individual conscience. To quite a spectrum of ethical issues—birth control, abortion, sexuality, homosexuality, divorce, alcohol, military service and others—the General Assemblies have said: "People have the right to make their own moral choices and should be assured the freedom within a society to exercise that right."

Long before the right of private judgment had a social incarnation in the teachings of the church, conscience held great significance as a theological principle. In the years following the American Revolution, the Presbyterian church on American soil began to wrestle with the theological principles it wished to embody as it organized its life in the new nation. Two of the eight "preliminary Principles of Church Order" upheld the right of conscience. The first, echoing the Westminster Confession, read:

> (1) God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men* which are in anything contrary to [God's] Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.
>
> Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and inalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others. (*Book of Order*, G.-1.0301)
>
> *Applying to all persons.

The first paragraph of that principle was pure Calvinism: Christians must always follow the sovereign God and are not bound to temporal authorities which stand in the way of faithful obedience to God's Word.

The second paragraph was the theological conclusion reached by Presbyterians in fitting their Christian faith to the new American situation. Presbyterians, although an influential group, were nowhere in the 13 new states

the beneficiaries of legal establishment. Their claim that they did "not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power" can be seen to be a plea for impartiality in the privileges accorded to the various denominations at the time. But this eighteenth century theological application was to become the cornerstone of church teachings, not only on church-state relations but also on many moral issues where a difference of opinion existed between and among religious groups as to what was the "right thing to do."

The fifth principle took the point of respect for another's conscience further:

> (5) While under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which [persons] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other. (*Book of Order*, G.-1.0305)

The fourth principle concerned the "inseperable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty," making Presbyterians cultural transformers—people who believe in changing society to accord with their faith. The honest championing of "God alone" as Lord of conscience meant, however, that the transforming impulse had to be pursued with respect for the consciences of others. The living out of this model has not proved to be easy. Persons persuaded that they have an exclusive hold on the truth naturally desire to use all the means within their power to effect corresponding social changes. At times, Presbyterians have been among those who sought to ensure moral behavior through Sunday blue laws, prohibition of alcohol, compulsory school Bible reading, and limiting access to contraceptives.

The twin beliefs—that Christians are called to transform the social structures in accord with the will of God, and that there are legitimate differences of opinion as to the content of God's will—have continued to play an important role in shaping Presbyterian social thought and action. These two affirmations when combined have, over time, resulted in a praxis—a way of acting and reflecting—that favors: 1) moral education or moral suasion as a principle method of arriving at social change in areas of personal morality; and, 2) a "pro-choice" social climate where persons are truly free to take personal responsibility in acting upon their moral decisions.

The first major use of the "rights of conscience" approach to a social issue occured in the context of slavery. The General Assembly of 1818, faced with abolitionist demands that the church take a stand against slavery, equivocated and called slavery "a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature," but also declared:

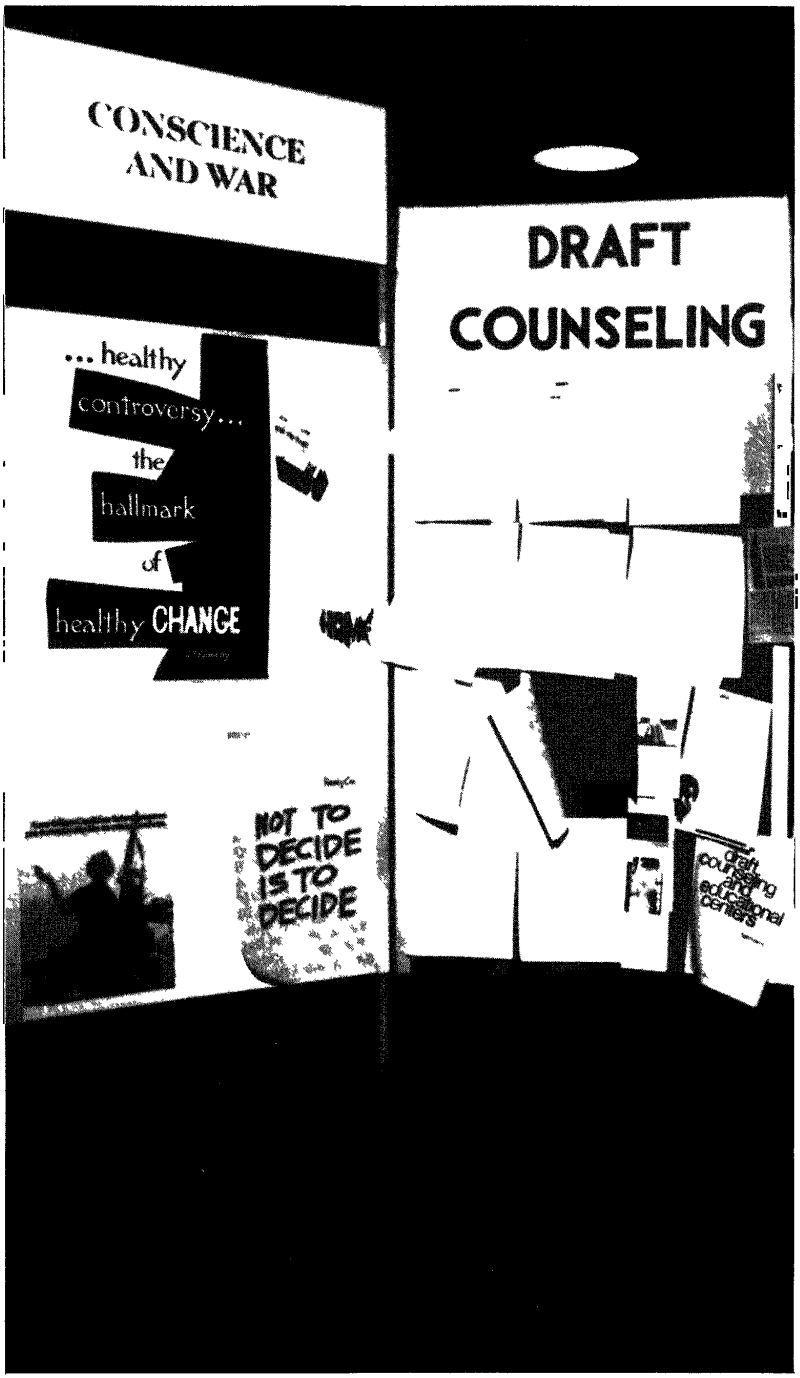
> We, at the same time, exhort others to forbear harsh censures, and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves, whom they cannot immediately set free; but who, at the same time, are really using all their influence, and all their endeavors, to bring them into a state of freedom as soon as a door for it can be safely opened.

The 1818 Assembly's position was a model of church committee compromise.

The Assemblies of the next 18 years avoided the issue of slavery by allowing it to remain one of the matters on which people of good Christian character could and did disagree. This unfortunate use of the principle of the right of conscience contributed to the tragedy of church complicity in the continuation of slavery. Eventually it was overcome by the use of another distinction: What one does with one's own life is largely a matter of individual conscience; what one does to other persons is a matter of public concern. The groundwork was being laid for a distinction between public and private morality and the process by which standards for each kind of morality were to be set and enforced.

For many years, before the right to individual conscience began to be applied to issues of personal morality, these same issues were viewed through the lenses of "spiritual malaise" and "moral affront to public decency." The issue of beverage alcohol provides an insight into the moral reasoning of the churches up through the early decades of the twentieth century. The churches became involved in supporting legislative prohibitions of certain "immoral" activities because they identified personal behavior with social consequences. Total abstinence was the only correct choice, in the view of the church, because the use of alcoholic beverages invariably resulted in the social ills of neglected families, industrial and farm accidents, decreased productivity and laziness as well as the personal tragedy of alcohol addiction. The alcoholic was an affront to God, a threat to social order and a menace to others. General Assembly after General Assembly, north and south, decried alcohol consumption and "humbly petitioned" the government for impediments to liquor sales and purchases. Likewise, General Assemblies petitioned for public recognition and respect of the Lord's Day and against prostitution or "sex delinquency," "salacious publications" and "frivolous entertainments" such as motion pictures. The two Presbyterian Churches, in seeming contradiction to their belief in avoiding "political questions," constantly sought political support for their positions on "moral questions."

Two things occured to change the shape of the churches' social teachings. Chronologically first was a reassertion during the First World War of the social implications of the right of individual conscience. The second development was an increase in American society's toleration of what had formerly been identified as vices.


CONSCIENCE AND WAR
... healthy controversy... the hallmark of healthy CHANCE
NOT TO DECIDE IS TO DECIDE
DRAFT COUNSELING

World War I, though supported by most church and civic groups, produced an American nationalism that carried over into the 1920s and 1930s. This development, along with the "red scare" of the early 1920s left a bad taste in the mouths of many American Christians, and fledgling peace movements began within most mainline American denominations. In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., increased concern to protect the civil rights of persons conscientiously opposed to settling conflicts through warfare led to a remarkable series of pronouncements based on the church's theological belief in the right of conscience. A resolution from the 1930 Assembly demonstrates this social dimension of the right of conscience:

> *Whereas*, the General Assembly has repeatedly declared the Church's aversion to the settlement of international differences by war or by the appeal to arms, and its belief in the substitution thereof of peaceful processes of conference and adjudication, and
>
> *Whereas*, the standards of the Church declare that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and
>
> *Whereas*, the Church has always taught that it is the duty of [persons] to obey the conscience in the fear of God and the fidelity to [God's] word, and
>
> *Whereas*, men and women should stand on the same basis of principle, enjoying equal rights and having equal duties in the Church and State.
>
> Therefore, be it *Resolved*, that the Assembly declares its belief that the right and duty of citizenship should not be conditioned upon the test of the ability or willingness, contrary to conscience, to bear arms or to take part as a combatant of war. (PUSA, 1930, p. 67)*

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*This and all other citations listed throughout this issue are coded as follows:

ORIGINATING CHURCH:
PCUS = Presbyterian Church in the United States
PUSA = Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
UPNA = United Presbyterian Church of North America
UPC = United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
PCUSA = Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

THE YEAR and PAGE NUMBER: of that set of General Assembly *Minutes*.

The full text of each statement cited can be obtained from the present office locations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1201, New York, NY 10115—AC(212) 870-2040; or 341 Ponce de Leon Avenue, NE, Atlanta, GA 30365—AC(404) 873-1531.

Half a century later, the Presbyterian Church does not teach a single response to war which all members must accept. Since the 1969 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, we have affirmed that:

> God is Lord of conscience, not only of a participant in war for moral reasons, or of the objector to all war on pacifist grounds, but also of those who conclude that a particular conflict is morally unconscionable and indefensible. (UPC, 1969, p. 696)

Such application to social situations of the right to make conscientious decisions is of far-reaching public policy significance.

The second major transformation taking place in the church and society arose from changes in the way subjects of sexuality, family life, substance abuse and health were viewed. In the years following the Second World War, American society was saturated by the results of research into the nature of alcoholism, sexual behavior and personality. The news from the social scientists forced a general reexamination of long-held analyses of the causes and effects of social problems.

The remarkable rise in the post war divorce rate, for example, brought

the right of all persons to make free, responsible decisions on matters affecting their daily lives and relationship to God should also be the basis of social policy.

Presbyterian denominations to reconsider teachings on marriage and divorce. The Yale studies on alcohol and alcoholism established that alcoholism is a disease, not a malicious vice. These studies also disturbed the cherished myth that any and all drinking resulted in social collapse. Again the churches were led to a reappraisal of their posture.

An even more compelling reason churches were drawn into the debates over acceptable forms of moral behavior was that a large proportion of Presbyterian members were personally involved. The fact that Presbyterians were getting divorced and asking to be remarried with the church's blessing meant that the church had to address the problems with a livelier sense of moral dilemma.* The fact that more adult Presbyterians consumed beverage alcohol than refrained from drinking made it difficult for the churches to keep saying "no Christian can morally drink."

Simultaneously, American society was becoming more tolerant and the churches' memberships reflected that shift. As the standpoint of the commissioners to General Assemblies changed, that affected their analysis of the human social situation and also the specific policy options that seemed appropriate to advocate in their milieu. Societal toleration and the principle

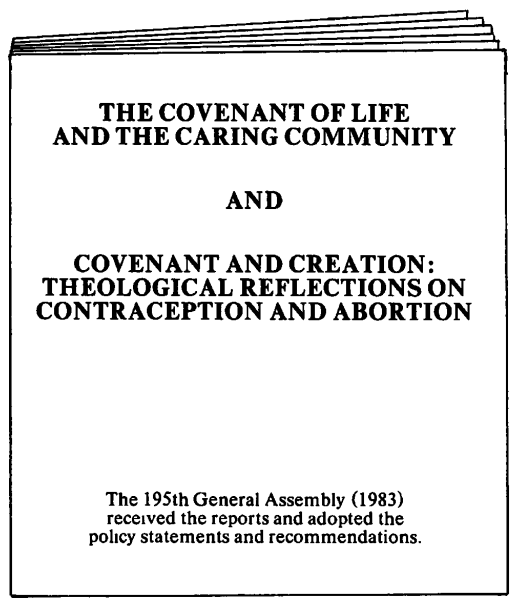
*The fact that Presbyterian families and congregations have responsible gay and lesbian members has also led the church to moderate its traditional hostility toward homosexuality and to advocate the civil rights of homosexual persons.

of Christian liberty—represented in the two Preliminary Principles we have cited above—converged in the minds of Assembly commissioners and churchleaders and came to characterize the social teachings that they endorsed.

The principle which has been affirmed repeatedly in the last 25 years of General Assembly social teachings is that the right of all persons to make free, responsible decisions on matters affecting their daily lives and relationship to God should also be the basis of social policy. A sampling of General Assembly statements illustrated the use of the principle:

> The God whose creative grace makes possible the blessing of children through marriage likewise vests man and woman with moral responsibility in the exercise of the procreative function. . . . it will follow that access to information about birth control is the right of all married couples, and the provision of this information the duty of a responsible society. (PCUS, 1954, p. 75)

> Believing that the law should provide for the optimal condition of physical and mental health, and should allow for the optimal exercise of private moral judgment and choices in matters related to the sexual sphere of life; and recognizing that religious convictions held by individuals should not be imposed by law on the secular society; the General Assembly . . . calls for the repeal of laws hampering access to contraceptive help and equipment . . . calls upon judicatories and churches to support and give leadership in movements toward the elimination of laws governing the private sexual behavior of consenting adults. (UPC, 1970, pp. 469, 891)



> God has given each of us the freedom and obligation to make responsible personal decisions about whether, where, when, and under what circumstances drinking is appropriate for us. (PCUS, 1970, p. 123)

> The General Assembly affirms the right of older persons to stipulate that technology shall not be used to prolong biological functions when there is no medical hope of restoration to meaningful existence. . . . (UPC, 1974, p. 199)

> The Presbyterian Church exists within a very pluralistic environment. Its own members hold a variety of views. It is exactly this plurality of beliefs which leads us to the conviction that decisions regarding abortion must remain with the individual, to be made on the basis of conscience and personal religious principles, and free from governmental interference. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 369)

The chief complaint against this reasoning is that it appears to put the church on record in favor of drinking, abortion, homosexual acts, euthanasia and promiscuous sexuality. A careful reading of General Assembly statements provides an answer to these critics. The church teaches that decisions in these areas do involve questions of moral right and wrong. On the issue of divorce, for example, the 1980 PCUS Assembly recognized that "Christians, who are also sinners, do divorce," and thus did not minimize the gravity of a broken marriage. But that Assembly went on to state that rather than being a judging community, "the church is to be a community of forgiveness, and it should mediate forgiveness in the brokenness of divorce among its members." (PCUS, 1980, p. 173) Two decades earlier, the UPC Assembly went on record in favor of honoring personal choice in the use of or non-use of alcohol while making its moral concern clear: "the 173rd General Assembly unequivocally condemns immoderate drinking as an irresponsible act." (UPC, 1961, p. 442) And on the controversial issue of abortion, the church has repeatedly acted to emphasize that its position "does not condone abortions of convenience" and affirms the sanctity of life, but at the same time "affirms the importance of individual moral choices prayerfully made and affirms the exceptional conditions justifying abortions." (1980, PCUS, p. 222 [PCUS reaffirmation of previous statements on abortion])

In addition to stressing that decisions on these issues do have a moral dimension, the Assemblies have endorsed efforts to provide moral education so that individuals may be led to make more informed ethical decisions. In deciding that "the proper concern of the church is not with alcohol itself but with persons," the 1970 PCUS Assembly decided that a faithful ministry to persons included educating them in responsible decision-making and about using alcohol and the problems related to alcohol abuse. The 1976 UPC Assembly approved an educational booklet entitled *Problem Pregnancies: Toward a Responsible Decision* for study and distribution to all congregations. In viewing the dilemma of teenage pregnancy, the church found a need for greater education about human sexuality and

contraception, declaring: "The church is called to exercise social responsibility by advocating more effective contraceptives for males as well as females, and to educate our own membership that family planning must be the concern and responsibility of both sexual partners." (1983, PCUSA, p. 362)

From the examples cited, it should be apparent that the Assemblies believe there are moral considerations at stake in the decision to drink or not to drink; to have an abortion or not to have an abortion; to use artificial means of birth control; to divorce; to prolong life by technological means; to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. The Assemblies' position statements usually go into a great amount of detail about what the church sees as guidelines involved in making a decision about a particular issue. Moreover, the church can often be heard to say through these statements that considerations such as quality of life, intent, socio-economic circumstances of the parties affected and the culture in which the decision is made may play a crucial role in the individual's final decision.

Since the 1960s, Presbyterian Assemblies have become more aware that socio-economic disadvantage can make free moral choice inaccessible. For example, low-income Vietnam GIs often lacked prior knowledge of legal provisions for conscientious objection; so to exercise conscientious opposition they could only desert. This reality led the church to include concern for the rights of deserters in its special ministry with the Vietnam generation.

A similar pattern of socio-economic disadvantage can be seen regarding the freedom to terminate problem pregnancies. Laws that severely restrict or prohibit publicly-funded contraceptive or abortion services actually jeopordize the exercise of responsible freedom by poor women. Thus, the church emphasizes that justice to the disadvantaged is at stake in public policies affecting access to the full range of medical services.

The church has backed away from teaching that says "this is always and in all situations the right thing to do," preferring to offer formative guidance rather than prescriptions or proscriptions. The church has also steadfastly resisted attempts to take these decisions away from the individual and turn them over to the state or other authority. Thus, the position of the Assemblies that abortion should not be "restricted by law except that it be performed under the direction and control of a properly licensed physician" (UPC, 1970, p. 891) or that the state has no valid interest in prohibiting the private sexual activities of consenting adult homosexual men and women (UPC, 1978, p. 266) are consistent with the "rights of conscience" philosophy of the church.

The individual's right of conscience in matters of personal morality has often been attacked in overtures to the General Assemblies and letters to denominational publications. Thanks to a Reformed understanding of re-

sponsible liberty, the individual's right of conscience has held up as a social teaching of the church in the face of pressure to abandon it in favor of a more restrictive morality which views every individual act as part of a greater public order (and thus the object of social regulation).

If people are going to be truly faithful, then they have to be free to be able to respond to God's grace in obedience. But the potential to obey necessarily involves the potential to disobey. The freedom necessary to follow Christ may be abused, but the Presbyterian churches in recent years have not seen fit to try to restrict that freedom. Instead, following the Apostle Paul's teaching about moral maturity in Romans 14, Presbyterians have taught the responsibility of people to act for the good of all in light of conscientious contextual inquiry, but not to expect that public regulation of personal morality will assure goodness

This does not mean that the Assemblies have endorsed slack morality. Rather, they have been clear about the distinction between personal responsibility and public law in achieving morality.

If we are to distill thousands of pages of General Assembly documents down to a few middle-range principles which apply the theological principle of the right of conscience to questions of social policy, five of these principles or social teachings will stand out clearly:

- **There are moral decisions which are best made by the persons they most intimately affect. These include decisions involving an individual's own body, health, sexuality and participation in war.**

- **Responsible personhood requires a society in which persons have free access to information and the means to effect their personal moral choices.**

- **The role of church and state in relation to the personal mores of individuals is properly one of ethical guidance and education, not coercion.**

- **The church affirms that not all moral choices are equal, that such choices have grave ramifications, but that the circumstances and conditions of the individual are often of such a determinative character as to necessitate a full measure of freedom consistent with Christian responsibility.**

- **Persons stand accountable before God, the Lord of conscience, for their moral decisions.**

Human Rights

The Presbyterian Church has taught that individuals have rights of conscience in areas of social concerns, but what happens when individuals and groups conflict in the exercise of their rights? The church is concerned with guaranteeing rights of all human beings concretely.

Tragic and systematic abuse of people at the hands of their governments has commanded the attention of the Presbyterian General Assemblies with ever-increasing regularity, as this sampling of human rights actions over the years shows:

- The UPC Assemblies of 1952-1958 repeatedly registered their protest over the persecution of Protestant Evangelicals in officially Roman Catholic Colombia.
- Since 1960, the South African government's policy of apartheid has been strenuously opposed by Assemblies of both churches.
- In the Vietnam war years, the Assemblies protested both the treatment of South Vietnam's political prisoners and the treatment of children of American-Asian origin, as well as repression of dissenting groups in the U.S. Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Assemblies have often spoken out against the human rights abuses endemic to the region.
- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, General Assemblies reacted to suppression of public criticism and conscientious dissent within the U.S. by demanding that civil liberties be upheld and that "law and order not serve as mere protection for vested interests over against the rights and needs of those who are exploited and oppressed in our society." (PCUS, 1972, p. 102)
- Throughout the 1970s, the General Assemblies appealed to Japanese political and business leaders to stop treating Koreans living in Japan as an "inferior race" and deplored the oppression of South Koreans in their own country, by their own government.
- The 1972 UPC Assembly endorsed a statement to the Soviet Union concerning the position of Soviet Jewry, which included these words: "We appeal to the Soviet authorities—let them live as Jews, or let them leave to be Jews. We are deeply disturbed by the reports of growing acts of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and confinement of Jews and dissenters to mental institutions. We appeal to the Soviet Government to end this policy of wanton oppression and fear." (UPC, 1972, p. 114)
- The Assemblies of recent years have stood staunchly opposed to the tolerance of death squads in El Salvador, and also have cautioned our own government that in seeking to deport persons seeking first asylum, it may be violating the

human rights of those persons who come to seek freedom and sanctuary from reprisals.

- The first General Assembly of the reunited church requested that "the Ayatollah Khomeini stop the practice of imprisonment without trial . . . that all methods of torture be stopped." (PCUSA 1983, p. 824)
- The 1984 PCUSA Assembly called "upon the Secretary of State to grant voluntary departure status to central American refugees;" and commended "Presbyterian congregations that, at risk to themselves, have declared their churches as places of sanctuary for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and thus by their action have chosen to affirm the sanctity of human life over conformity with government policies." (PCUSA, 1984, p. 335)

The General Assembly actions in the short list above indicate how the church is drawn into the issue of human rights: events take place with adverse consequences to particular human beings; the church becomes concerned; the church responds in solidarity with the oppressed. The challenge/response nature of church involvement with the issue of human rights may seem to negate the four aspects of the ethical decision-making model offered in the introduction. But though the church does seem to be primarily reacting to outside events, the church's response is guided by biblical faith and values. Moreover, the General Assemblies, faced with the recurrent phenomena of human rights abuses over time, have also been moved to pull together general and middle-range principles of human rights into theologically-focused social teaching on human rights.

The Confession of 1967, written after the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949) but before the acceleration of religious and secular human rights advocacy in the 1970s, contributed the concept of "Universal Family" to the human rights dialogue:

> God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In reconciling love God overcomes the barriers between brothers and sisters and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. (*Confession of 1967*, 9.44, rendered inclusively)

Obviously, the Confession's authors had racism in America uppermost in their minds when drafting those words. Yet C-67 marked the first time any Presbyterian body had *confessionally* affirmed that all men and women have certain God-given rights. Now the church was heard to proclaim that the children of God—all human beings as members of God's universal family—have the right to marry, to have and be part of a family, to exercise religious and political beliefs, and to have access to shelter, education and work.

In 1974, these "human family rights" were being clearly challenged by

the actions of our own and others' governments which, in effect, said: "Human rights are dependent on the national interest and the state's domestic tranquility." This challenge harkens back to the question that started this chapter: "Do some rights have precedence over others?" The UPC General Assembly answered that challenge by siding with the rights of the common people over and against the rights of the rich and powerful:

> It is important that the church express its concern for human beings and the preservation of personal values essential to a humane life-style. The attempt by

a totalitarian state to sacrifice liberties for the sake of attaining economic growth, military security, or domestic tranquility cannot go unchallenged.

American Christians, who live under the mandates of the gospel and who share the rights and privileges of constitutional government and the freedoms attached thereto, must speak out to defend human rights everywhere, particularly when their taxes and their leaders support oppression and tyranny, denying those principles which this nation affirms and seeks to uphold. (UPC, 1974, p. 595)

In the late 1970s the PCUS produced a statement entitled "Declaration

This interaction between universal principles of rights and concrete instances of life gives the teaching of the church on human rights a sense of contemporaneity.

of Human Rights." Its theological ethic, based on the creation story in Genesis, comes through loud and clear:

We . . . affirm:

Human beings are created in the image of God. John Calvin said, "Scripture helps us in the best way when it teaches that we are not to consider that persons have merit of themselves but look upon the image of God in all persons, to which we owe all honor and love." Human rights are not grounded in a "yet-to-be-defined" human nature, nor in a charter granted by the state, but in God's own claim upon us.

Every person is of intrinsic worth before God. Because human beings are created in the image of God as fully revealed in Jesus Christ, God has laid claim upon us and clothed us with worth and dignity. Human rights to life, freedom, community, and self-determination are grounded in, and made possible by, the very terms of the promise by which God binds human beings to the Divine Being. Human beings are called (destined) to reflect God's own image. For this reason God is exerting pressure on institutions, politics, and people in the name of that dignity which, in exemplary fashion, was bestowed by God upon the slaves which were brought out of Egypt, and fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a community of believers we make common cause with persons of good will everywhere who recognize and promote human dignity and solidarity, whenever we can do so in faithfulness to God revealed in Jesus Christ. (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

The 1978 "Declaration of Human Rights" demonstrates well the interplay between biblical, classical and contemporary theology present in the best social policy statements of the General Assembly. In the section above, the Assembly began its social teaching by affirming its belief in an element of the biblical witness which could not be challenged: "God created them, male and female, . . . in God's own image." The teaching moves on to illumine the meaning of humanity's being created in God's image by turning to Calvin's Reformed theology. The appeal to Calvin communicates several things. First, our Reformed Presbyterian "roots"

are important to us. Secondly, over and against those who would use Calvin to assert that the Sovereignty of God necessitates a low view of human worth, we read Calvin as saying that God's greatness requires the utmost care and respect for human beings whom God chose to bear the divine image. Each person—and not just humanity in general—is of intrinsic worth before God and has rights that are grounded in the human-divine relationship. The Declaration argues further that the spirit of "God is exerting pressure on institutions, politics, and people in the name" of those human rights and dignities. The claim that God acts on behalf of the oppressed is backed by reference to the Bible's account of God's intervention to deliver the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. It also forms the theological basis of the contemporary confession that follows " because God is working for human rights and calls us to do so, we stand ready also to exert pressure on institutions, politics and people. Moreover, the church declares the extent and terms of its human rights activity: "As a community of believers we make common cause with persons of good will everywhere who recognize and promote human dignity and solidarity. . . ."

The social teaching of the church is more than general statements of theology concerning social situations. A whole social teaching of the church provides guidance for specific situations and it articulates middle-range social principles that guide our response to emergent problems and crises. And so, the Declaration, in seeking to illumine a middle

ground between Christian faith and particular actions of the PCUS in support of human rights, also provides a list of the rights that are derived from the Creator:

> *The right of freedom to exist*—"no human agency has the right to own, manipulate, brainwash, torture, physically eliminate, experiment with, or deny the existence of any human being."
>
> *The right to basic subsistence*—"adequate work, food, clothing, and shelter."
>
> *The right of freedom of conscience*—"liberty of thought, conscience, and religion."
>
> *The right to participation in community.*
> *The right to meaningful existence.*
>
> (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

The Assemblies have not been content merely to call the attention of governments and powers-that-be to the principles of human dignity that the church affirms. Instead, the continual restatement of these previously articulated principles in the context of particular struggles for human rights suggests that the Assemblies consider each denial of dignity a matter of concern in itself. This interaction between universal principles of rights and concrete instances of life gives the teaching of the church on human rights a sense of contemporaneity.

For example, the right to freedom to exist and the right to meaningful participation in community belong to all, including the imprisoned in the U.S. This understanding of human rights has led both Presbyterian streams to oppose capital punishment which is "an expression of vengeance which contradicts the justice of God on the cross." (PCUS, 1978, p. 202) And it resulted in specific advocacy of constitutional protection for unconvicted defendents and provisions of meaningful community life for convicted offenders. ("Justice and the Imprisoned," UPC, 1973, p. 426)

We can summarize the social teaching of the Presbyterian Church on human rights in these principles:

- **God has created a universal family of human beings in the divine image. Anyone who excludes, dominates or patronizes other members of the human family offers no acceptable worship of God but rather resists the divine purpose for humankind.**

- **Human rights derived from the Creator include the rights to existence, sustenance, work, conscience and participation in family and society.**

- **These human rights to justice are prior to interests of nations and economic entities, or necessities of public security.**

Race and Racial Justice

Racism is the single greatest tragedy or anomaly of our national life, and was the most obvious source of division among Presbyterians in the Civil War era. No other issue has so prominently engaged the General Assemblies as that of race and racism. Even as the church has sought to end racial discrimination and prejudice in society, it has also been forced to confront racial discrimination within the body of Christ.

Beginning with the 1946 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. which declared: "This General Assembly renounces the principle of segregation in race relations as undemocratic and unChristian" (PUSA, 1946, p. 211), the church has affirmed the struggle for racial justice and supported specific measures to establish racial equality in society and church. For a period of more than a decade, culminating in the *Confession of 1967*, the United Presbyterian Church supported the full agenda of the civil rights movement—pertaining to rights of peaceable assembly, guarantees of voting rights, enforcement of desegregation in public accommodations, education and housing, and provisions for equal employment opportunity. Then, in 1963, noting a disparity between its social pronouncements and the church's own actions, the General Assembly created the first Commission on Religion and Race of a mainline denomination to "design a comprehensive strategy for the UPC's approach to race relations." (UPC, 1963, p. 141) The Commission was not a mere advisory group; it was expected to guide the denomination's response. In 1968, the Assembly adopted a church-wide affirmative action plan submitted by the Commission and reconstituted it into a permanent Council on Church and Race.

The complete story of Presbyterians and racial issues is a long and involved one and the events through the first half of the 1960s are well chronicled by Andrew Murray in *Presbyterians and the Negro* (a book in the Presbyterian Historical Society series). Since then, the Presbyterian Church has continued both to react apprehensively to the growing power of people of color and to respond constructively with policies of racial justice.

A 1978 PCUS "Declaration of Human Rights" began with the words:

> In confronting this issue the PCUS must first confess unfaithfulness. As a denomination the PCUS began its history in the context of a war that was fought primarily over the question of slavery. In this situation, and others, through

> acquiescence or self-serving rationalization, the church, as sinful individual and corporate structure, often has legitimized an unjust social order from which has been derived socio-economic advantage. Our institutionalized life as a church has, in no few instances, often uncritically assimilated the standards and world views of the society at large. (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

The "confession of unfaithfulness" made by the 1978 southern Assembly could well apply to both former churches. It shows the link which the church has perceived between race and human rights. More importantly, it admits the role played by the church in the greatest single tragedy in the life of a nation dedicated to equality and freedom: the fact that, on account of racial discrimination, the fruits of these ideals have been repeatedly denied to nonwhite Americans.

Presbyterian social teachings on race over the last 35 years developed in three distinct periods of emphasis covering, roughly, the years 1950–1964, 1964–1970 and 1970 to present. In each of these periods the church approached the issue of racial justice in a different way, building on past teachings and adding new ones.

1950–1964: A Nonsegregated Church and a Nonsegregated Society

The keynote of early General Assembly attempts at addressing the issue of race in America was Christian "brotherhood." Even the small and generally socially conservative United Presbyterian Church in North America (UPNA) departed from its practice of only addressing "moral welfare" questions like temperance or "biblically-mandated" concerns like hunger to sound the note of brotherhood and stress the role of intra-Christian virtues like charity, forbearance, love and celebration of a common faith as a way out of racial misunderstanding and prejudice. It was the other part of what became the UPC, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., however, which joined with the National Council of Churches of Christ in 1946 and again in 1950 to declare the goal of a "nonsegregated church and nonsegregated society." (PUSA, 1950, p. 239) The thrust of the churches' teaching in these years was that if people would practice the faith they proclaimed, then discrimination would fall away and equality would reign.

There was, perhaps, a naive optimism in early social deliverances on race relations about how easily a centuries-old pattern of racial discrimination could be shed. Still, the full recognition that the church was deeply involved in racism led to a commitment to equal opportunity. The 1951 PUSA Assembly declared: "Particularly must the church demonstrate in every phase of its life and work the reality of brotherhood in which no person or group is penalized by virtue of minority status." (PUSA, 1951, p. 257) The following year, the Assembly asked its members to press their legislators for civil rights legislation, and in 1953 the PCUS acted to affirm

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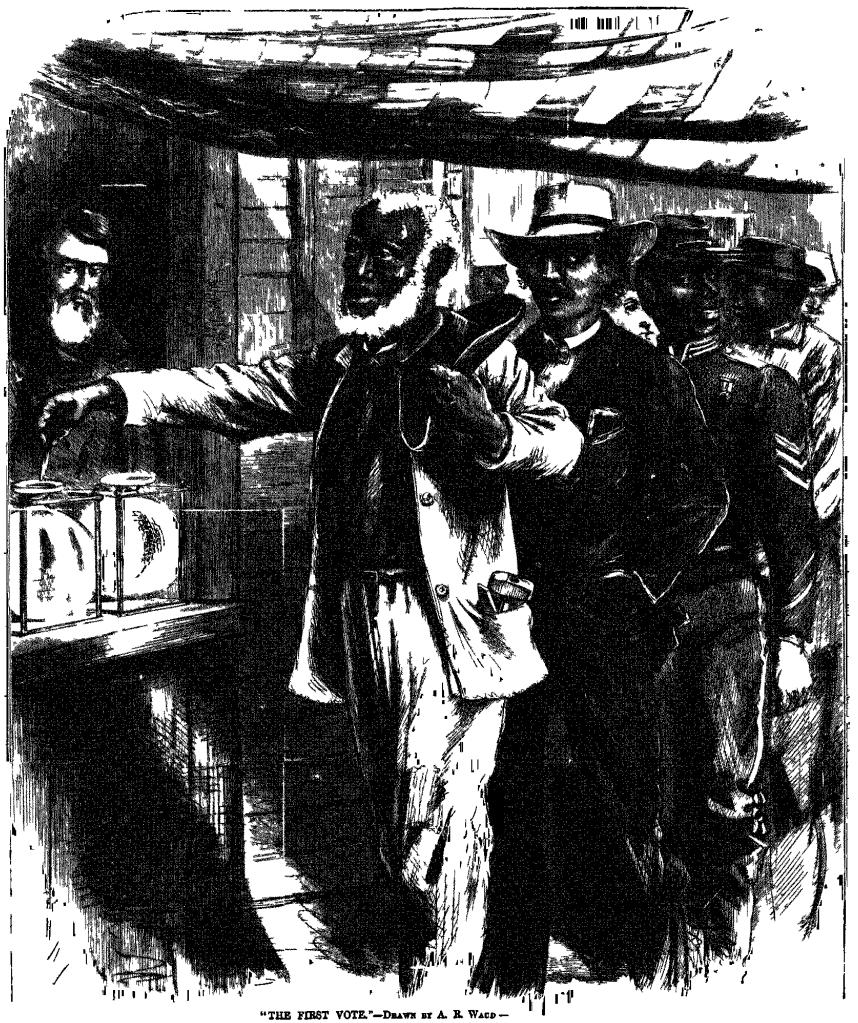


"THE FIRST VOTE."—Drawn by A. R. Waud.—

its opposition to the exploitation of racial prejudice for political purposes.

To prevent racial injustice from being viewed as only a southern phenomenon, the 1956 PUSA General Assembly called on its members to "stop pointing the finger of accusation at areas of high tension or conflict" and to work to break the pattern of discrimination wherever they were located. In the southern context, meanwhile, the PCUS reminded its members of the inability of law by itself to guarantee justice. Noting the inability of court decisions alone to effect racial justice, the 1959 General Assembly called on the church to become an agent of racial reconciliation.

By the early 1960s the logic of equal opportunity was beginning to take hold in American society. The idea that no one should be legally disadvantaged because of his or her color—determined at birth—genuinely made sense. And so the General Assemblies of the early 1960s continued to call for civil rights legislation, vowing "neither to rest nor become silent until all citizens of our country have equal access to the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizenship, and all Christians can find full participation in the work and worship of Christ's church." (UPC, 1960, p. 354)

The social teaching of this first period is memorable for its well-grounded theological arguments that affirm the provision of equal standing under the law for all persons, regardless of race, and for identifying both church and society as places that need to break down the barriers of segregation. When the legal barriers began to fall, it soon became apparent that social barriers of custom, prejudice and institutional discrimination loomed large as factors preventing the attainment of true racial justice. The goal of nonsegregation in church and society would be carried forward into a new period of Christian social engagement, but the churches' racial justice agenda would also be broadened to include other ends and objectives.

1964–1970: Affirmative Action Is Required

The primary goal of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and the early 1960s was in no way radical. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins and Ralph Abernathy worked to achieve equal protection and treatment under the law for blacks; in short, the elimination of Jim Crow. While the church had stressed brotherhood and relational goals that went beyond this level, the church's political objective was the same as that of the Civil Rights Movement: equal treatment and opportunity to live within society without imposed disabilities, to compete in society on terms common to all members.

When real discrimination persisted in spite of court decisions striking down legal barriers to the free exercise of civil rights by black persons, a larger racial justice agenda emerged. The 1959 PCUS statement quoted above was a beginning of this realization for the church and its racial jus-

tice ministry. But recognition that a societal goal of equal opportunity is not enough dates from the 1964 UPC awareness that genuine racial equality is going to be costly because it requires "affirmative action." If there is any one General Assembly statement on racial justice that deserves a rereading and reaffirmation it is the 1964 pronouncement on Racial Freedom and Justice. In it, the General Assembly set forth a comprehensive racial justice agenda that still has not been implemented in society.

> Today in our society God is laying upon all Christians, many privileged and affluent, a responsibility to join others to right the wrongs that our society has imposed upon the Negro for three centuries. This responsibility "to set at liberty those who are oppressed" applies primarily, but not exclusively, to the fellowship of the church itself. It extends, however, to all of the church's manifold dealings with institutions, customs, patterns, procedures, politics and people. Specifically, it means that the church must repudiate the old clichés about doing everything "without regard to race" and take upon itself the burden of doing "everything" with "*due* regard to race." (UPC, 1964, p. 311)

The 1964 Assembly recognized two significant realities that argued for this new position. First, "The forces throughout our country and the world that are moving toward a full recognition of the rights and full humanity of all . . . cannot be turned back without a spiritual defeat of catastrophic proportions. . . . We have passed the point of no return." Second, "The denial of any [one's] humanity will not end with the simple removal of all overt forms of segregation and discrimination," because, "If every vestige of overt discrimination and segregation were removed tomorrow, the vast majority of Negroes would still be denied access to most of the rights and privileges the white majority take for granted." And anticipating the cry of "reverse discrimination," the Assembly went on to add that affirmative action "does not imply discrimination against whites. It does involve a frank recognition that in many situations in our society white persons have maintained a special privileged status by erecting barriers based on race . . . in voting, education, housing, public accommodations, service contracts, employment, church membership, social relations—virtually every public and private area of human activity and relationship."

This new social teaching coincided with the emergence of a new generation of black thinkers, leaders and activists who began to think about restoring power to blacks in America. H. Rap Brown, Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X—all presented a new angry face to white America. One young black theologian, James Cone, himself influenced deeply by the Reformed theology of Karl Barth, presented the demands of Black Power religiously: "We are not talking about reconciliation; what we are talking about is reparations!"

The General Assemblies of the years 1964–1970 tended to agree. Rejecting a false reconciliation as "cheap grace," the 1968 PCUS Assembly took notice of two summers of urban rioting and advised its members:

recognition that a societal goal of equal opportunity is not enough dates from the 1964 UPC awareness that genuine racial equality is going to be costly because it requires "affirmative action."

> Almost two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "no wonder the oppressed should rebel, and they will continue to rebel and raise disturbance until their civil rights are fully restored to them and all partial distinctions, exclusions and incapacities are restored." So it is today. The Negro rebellion arises from the Negro condition. . . . The Christian response to the Negro riots must be justice—full and undiluted. (PCUS, 1968, p. 99)

Structural racism requires structural solutions. Justice requires that compensatory consideration be given to blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and other disenfranchised minorities. This is a position which the Presbyterian Church has consistently advocated.

1970 to the Present: The Church As Embodiment of Racial Justice

Whether Black Power ran out of steam, whether the Nixon Administration succeeded in turning Americans against anti-poverty programs, busing, Head-Start and a whole host of other attempts to reach equality through compensatory social programs, or whether institutional racism simply won the day, the fact remains that the last 15 years have seen very little commitment to attaining true racial justice in this country. Whether the United Presbyterian Church was "trivialized" as John Fry wrote, or whether the Presbyterian churches simply reorganized in ways that recognized new social realities, the fact is that after 1970 the most important social teachings the Presbyterians have had to offer on racial justice are manifested in their institutional life together.

To see what the General Assemblies have taught since 1970 on racial justice, we have to go beyond our usual method of analyzing social policy statements. General Assemblies have produced very little new in the way of statements, but they have produced a great number of actions that offer another social teaching.

ITEM: Each church's General Assembly created a COCAR (Council or Commission on Church and Race) and retained those entities through reorganizations, giving them the responsibility not just to

be a racial/ethnic caucus, but to be bodies with direct access to the General Assemblies charged with recommending appropriate actions on racial justice issues to the General Assemblies.

ITEM: The time and labor spent in each church's reorganization on matters of affirmative action in church leadership and employment was tremendous. The pages of General Assembly *Minutes* contain carefully worked out strategies designed to embody the goals of racial inclusiveness in church employment.

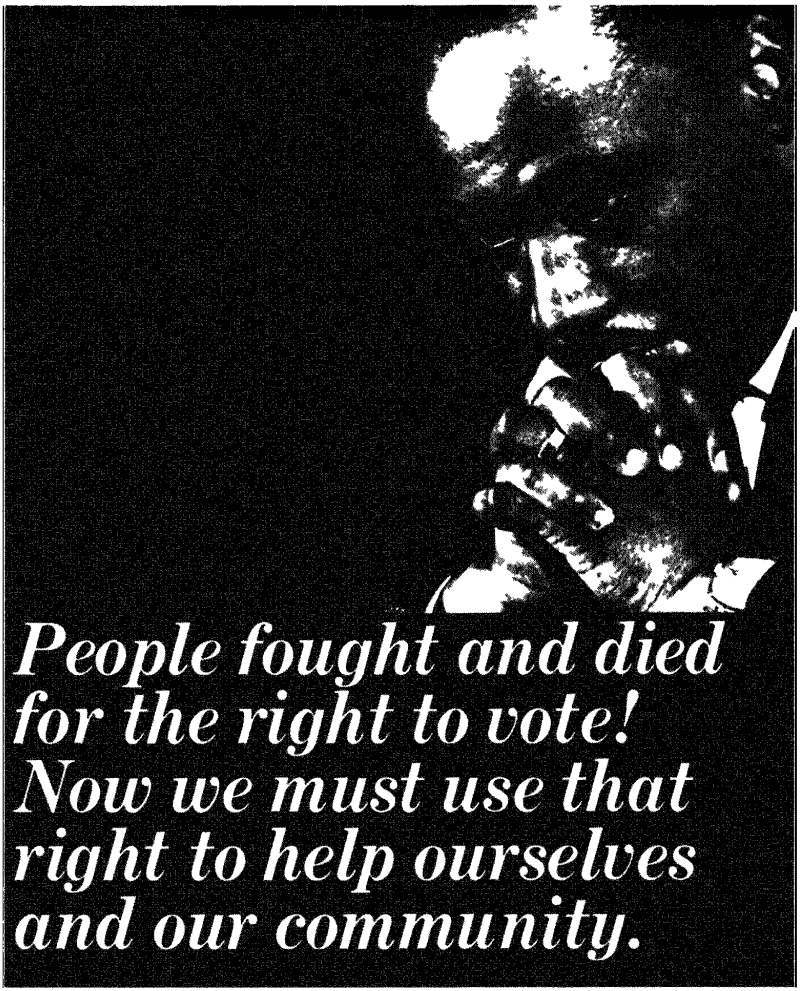
ITEM: Many Constitutional changes were adopted in the 1970s to incorporate the idea of racial inclusiveness as a necessary part of nomination and election of church officers at all levels.

ITEM: *The Plan for Reunion* added to each governing body's requirements that they have a Committee on Representation to assure that women and racial minorities were elected and appointed in fair proportion to all bodies and their boards, committees and commissions.

ITEM: Ministerial Relations committees (now Committees on Ministry) are responsible for affirmative action at the presbytery level applicable to the work of pastor nominating committees of local congregations.

Clearly, the racial justice focus of the Presbyterian churches in the last 15 years has been on the internal life of the church. In trying to arrive at racial justice within the small system of a denomination, the churches have provided a prophetic witness which seeks to model a more just society. But, providing a nonracist institutional model through the church has not been entirely successful. In 1981 the General Assembly adopted a paper entitled "The United Presbyterian Church's Witness in Racial Justice and Racial Ethnic Ministries" which analyzed past activities for racial justice, but does its groundbreaking work in identifying the continuing problem of cultural imperialism within the well-meaning predominantly white denomination:

> Despite the well-intentioned and nonracist attitudes of individuals, our religious and societal institutions, structures, and systems can and do perpetuate racial injustice. The point to be made is that irrespective of motives, often the final impact of our institutional styles of organization and management serve to exclude racial/ethnic groups from full and just participation. Too often our professed desires for authentic community and justice are sacrificed for the sake of institutional efficiency, good organizational management, and institutional success. "Business as usual" perpetuates "racism as usual." (UPC, 1981, p. 201)



In other words, the institutionalization of the racial agenda of the church in the 1970s had the built-in pitfall of sublimating justice objectives to standards of management. The human result, said the report, was this:

> With regard to attempts to overcome racial injustice, the church has failed to accept the perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of racial/ethnic groups in determining the adequacy, appropriateness, success, or failure of those attempts. Concurrently, the church has failed to recognize or accept the gifts that racial/ethnic peoples have to bring to its being and mission. (UPC, 1981, p. 201)

These criticisms of trying to work for racial justice primarily through changing the structures of institutional church life led not to an abandon-

ment of that one goal but to the overdue assertion of the 1983 PC(U.S.A.) Assembly that the time had come to broaden the agenda once again. That Assembly endorsed a "Comprehensive Strategy for Racial Justice in the 1980s" which put forward the new goal of a Presbyterian Church "participating in and providing a preview of God's Kingdom through its *work in each and every dimension of racial justice* through its inclusion of all members and entities in such work, and through its creative *use of a variety of activities and tactics* to achieve justice." (PCUSA, 1983, p. 458; emphasis added)

The strategy that was adopted included a complete list of obstacles to overcome in achieving the comprehensive goal but, nonetheless, discerned

For a period of more than a decade, culminating in the Confession of 1967, the United Presbyterian Church supported the full agenda of the civil rights movement.

four fronts on which the church should be working for racial justice: Racial Justice Perspective; Witness in Church Life; Witness in Society; and Leadership Development.

The Presbyterian Church, after discovering how deeply entrenched racism is, has reaffirmed all of its historic goals for racial justice at once, convinced that no single approach to racial justice in isolation from the others will assure its attainment. We can summarize the church's contemporary social teaching in this area as follows:

- **Racism and racial discrimination are persistent realities in our society and in our church and are sin in the eye of God.**

- **We, as Christians, are called by Jesus Christ to be reconciled with our neighbors in order to render justice. For this reason, we embrace all efforts that will restore the dignity and abilities of persons who because of their race have been placed at a historic disadvantage in church and society.**

- **The church is a living witness to the possibility for racial justice in God's Kingdom. We are called, therefore, not only to practice true reconciliation through equal opportunity and affirmative action in our church life but to demand it also of the society in which we live.**

The Rights of Women

In no other area has the church's social teaching changed so much in the last 50 years as in the area of women's rights and status in church and society. In these 50 years, the church's teaching on the status of women has moved from a position of regarding women as an inferior category of humanity to one of championing the cause of liberation.

In some respects, the change in the status of women in the churches and in the denominations' public witness parallels the changes in the status of black persons. Unlike the issue of race, however (and like the continuing resistance to ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians), women have had to contend not only with *de facto* discrimination but also with discrimination by church law. The Presbyterian churches never had a "no Negroes may be ordained" rule, but such rules did apply to women. Not until 1930 were women ordained as elders in the PUSA, and not until 1956 were presbyteries permitted to ordain women to pastoral office. PCUS ordination of women as elders and pastors finally began to occur in 1962. The fact that women were barred from ordination in the *Form of Government* reflects a deeply-held theological belief.

One cannot, therefore, simply look at the public policy stands of the General Assemblies on women's issues and say that those stands represent the social teachings of the Presbyterian Church on the status of women. It is impossible to discuss the *social* teachings of the church on women and their status without reference to how the church treats women in its belief and practice. To speak of the status of women in church and society, it is necessary to observe progress in three spheres of church activity: ecclesiastical practice, theological belief, and corporate social witness.

We have already noted that the Presbyterian churches have—along with most other Christian churches—an ecclesiology that assigns women second-class status because of a theology that assumes women to be inferior. The theological inferiority of women has been based on a particular kind of biblical exegesis which took the specific commands of the Bible at a premium value and assigned ethical principles a secondary value. Thus, "Women should not speak in church" was much more determinative for the life of the church than an idea like "In Christ there is neither male nor female." It would take a new way of reading the Bible to break the church out of its moralistic and paternalistic, even sexist, habits and ways of

thinking. That is happening now and we can trace the shift in the dominant exegetical style through "push and pull" factors.

Contemporary theology and biblical criticism "pull" the church toward re-reading the scriptures "for the big picture." Meanwhile, Christian social concern that the Bible not be used to justify anti-semitism, racial prejudice, selfish laissez-faire capitalism and the continued oppression of women "pushes" the church to find more appropriate ways to relate the Bible to current social reality than biblical literalism allows. The specific prohibitions of women's activities within the early church were seen as time-bound accommodations to the cultural ethos and social customs of the ancient Near East and Hellenic Roman Empire. Moreover, the treatment of women by Jesus in his actions and teachings indicates a level of respect for women and their rights unparalleled in the rest of the Bible. Paul, too, recognized the ministries exercised by Phoebe and Mary and Prisca. (Romans 16) Phoebe, referred to in Greek as a deacon, had long been explained away as only a helper. Now the way was open to see Phoebe exactly as she was called.

The theological revolution as it pertained to women did not end with an announcement that "the Bible now says that women are able to do anything men can in the church." Indeed, theology has turned back to the Bible and begun asking afresh: "How does what we read and the way we read it affect our relationships to God and between genders?" The issue of language has been crucial to the continued development of a gender-conscious, gender-inclusive Christian theology. And it has also been important to the church's self-understanding and, in turn, its social proclamation.

Language is important. This is a social teaching of the church in and of itself. Language is determinative for it reveals what and how we think. Language about God reveals our conception of the deity. Language about the people of God indicates the respect we hold for various members and parts of the human family. The UPC Assembly of 1975 and the PCUS General Assembly of 1980 declared:

> Our liturgical use of language about God needs enrichment. In the recent past only a few biblical images of God have been employed along with an over-dependence upon the masculine pronoun. The Bible offers many more ways to speak about God. We need to make strenuous efforts in incorporating this wide range of imagery. Terms which unmask old stereotypes wait to be used. Addressing God as Sustainer, Redeemer, Helper, Fortress, Savior, Leader, Guide, Guardian, Shield, Creator . . . , etc., may provide immediate assistance. New humans, new prayers, new affirmations of faith, and liturgical-credal elements can be written and should be an order of high priority in view of the fact that language significantly influences the perceptions of those who use it. (UPC, 1975, p. 528; PCUS 1980, p. 172)

Language and thought about the human family lead us back to the issue of church order. In 1960, the UPC began to use gender-inclusive lan-

Inclusiveness in language was paralled by attempts at inclusiveness in church practices. As "fair talk" about the churches' members grew in acceptance, so too did the principle of fair representation.

guage, selectively, in its *Minutes* and *Book of Order.* This was the beginning of Presbyterian awareness of the role language plays in determining the way people think about women. The 1972 General Assembly directed all agencies, boards and councils of the United Presbyterian Church to use the Christian names of their constituents in their work so as to acknowledge married women's identities apart from their husbands. The inclusive language issue also gained acceptance in the southern church and by the mid-1970s sexist language was significantly reduced in each Assembly's proceedings.

Inclusiveness in language was paralleled by attempts at inclusiveness in church practices. As "fair talk" about the churches' members grew in acceptance, so too did the principle of fair representation. The 1971 UPC Assembly took the lead in guaranteeing representation and articulated "basic principles for the church's action on the status of women," making appeals to its church-related institutions to work toward equal representation on all boards. That same Assembly sent overtures D and E to its presbyteries, which provided for election to church offices in all judicatories "giving attention to a fair representation of both the male and female constituency" of the respective congregation, presbytery, commission, synod, Assembly, etc.

Throughout the 1970s due to women's advocacy, the Presbyterian churches began to incorporate language into their forms of government which not only opened the door for women to be leaders but also sought to guarantee that women would in fact make it through that figurative door. The churches came to realize that "We can conceive of no situation wherein a congregation will not find among its number women capable of exercising the ministry of church leadership." The United Presbyterian Church's 1979 Overture L mandating the election of "women and men," the PCUS's standard of a minimum of one-third women on any permanent committee of the General Assembly, and the Committees on Representation provided for in the Plan of Reunion for every governing body in the church above the level of sessions are expressions of support for women's equality in the Presbyterian Church. The church is saying, "it is not enough to say women *can* be elected elders and deacons, but women *must* be elected elders and deacons." Support for women's equality in the Pres-

byterian church, then, is not merely an endorsement of the principle of gender equality or approval of the end result of equality. Rather, it is support for programs of action that will result in the desired end.

Justice for Women in Society

When we turn to what the church has taught about women in society since acknowledging their equality before God and within the church, we discover that the church has taught not only social equality and the need for equality of opportunity but also the need for efforts to remedy present patterns of inequality.

Serious General Assembly concern with the status of women in society began when the 1967 UPC Assembly directed that a study be prepared on "Women in Society and the Church." A subsequent study was approved by the 1969 Assembly and a Task Force on Women was created that evolved into the Council on Woman and the Church, an ongoing body which advocates in the church on women's issues. In 1972, the PCUS adopted its paper, "Women in Church and Society." In the paper, the Assembly declared its "conviction" that "God calls upon the church to act in society to end discrimination on the basis of sex and to challenge anything which interferes with women's full development and wholeness." (PCUS, 1972, p. 178) The Assembly then outlined an agenda for women's rights in the coming decade:

> The General Assembly . . . urges its members to work in society to promote the equal status of women, specifically:
> a) To end discrimination in employment opportunities, benefits and pay for women.
> b) To affirm new life-styles for children which allow boys and girls to express their essential humanity, and which encourage them to consider vocational prospects unrestricted by sex bias.
> c) To provide suitable childcare facilities for parents who work outside the home.
> d) To call on their state legislatures, if they have not already done so, to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. (1972 PCUS, pp. 177–179)

When the PCUS threw its weight behind the E.R.A., it joined the UPC in supporting a cause that would receive more attention in the form of General Assembly resolutions over the next 12 years than any other single issue. The social witness of the Presbyterian churches has not relied on the passage of the E.R.A. as a necessary Constitutional guarantee of legal equality. The Assemblies have also endorsed means by which to arrive at full social equality for women.

The 1975 UPC Assembly took on sexism in the military, the 1976 PCUS General Assembly expressed its admiration of the goals of the U.N. Inter-

national Decade for Women. In 1979, two resolutions were passed which called for an end to sexual and domestic violence and declared the unacceptability of sexual harassment in any form.

The 1980s are realizing the fruits of increased women's issues advocacy which developed through the 1970s. The 1981 PCUS Assembly recommitted itself to seeking women's equality. The 1982 UPC Assembly considered the special problems faced by women immigrants and the adverse effects of federal budget cuts on American women, while also opposing the "Family Protection Act" and its more than 30 regressive measures which

affected women most heavily. The 1983 Assembly, the first meeting of the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirmed the urgency of the issue of the lack of economic justice for women, requested an exploration into female sexual slavery and violence, deplored all forms of exploitation and upheld its firm support of greater reproductive freedom for women.

In the 1984 General Assembly, three of the thirteen social policy resolutions were concerned with the role of women in society. One reaffirmed support for the Equal Rights Amendment and for the principle of legal

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equality. Another resolution voiced support for the goals of the United Nation's Decade for Women, a program supported by previous General Assemblies of both churches since its inception in the International Women's Year of 1975. This support is important because it again signals the church's teaching that it is not enough to declare equality. Support for the still unattained goals of the U.N. Decade for Women (complete integration of women into the development process; elimination of all forms of inequality between women and men; and broad participation in all efforts to strengthen peace and security throughout the world) necessitates action.

The third of the 1984 resolutions addressed "The Feminization of Poverty" or the pauperization of women and their families, with particular reference to the sharply increasing number of female-headed households and older women living alone who are entering the ranks of the poor. Some of the startling realities are : a) women still earn on average only 60¢ for every dollar men earn (for Black and Hispanic women, this figure is below 50¢); b) one out of three families depends on a woman for sole support, and one third of these families live below the poverty level because women's work is low paid or income support is woefully inadequate; c) older women are the fastest growing poverty group in the U.S.A.; and d) the poverty rate for children under age six was 25 percent in 1983.

Therefore, the Assembly (PCUSA, 1984, pp. 326-28) voted to support the concept of Earning Sharing Proposals and the goals of Economic Equity for homemakers, widows and divorced women. The Assembly also reaffirmed its endorsement of the legislature agenda named the Eco-

nomic Equity Act, and advocated more adequate services for children in the areas of health care, child care and education. This action anticipated a church-wide consultation of seven Presbyterian women's constituency groups united in common concern for economic justice and acting to change public policy and institutional practice in the area of economic justice for women, locally, nationally and worldwide.

This emphasis on economic justice for women, along with related concerns about female sexual slavery, sexual harassment, domestic violence and comparable worth legislation are all issues that elicit the involvement of secular feminists as well as Presbyterians. These are priority concerns in a world that continues to foster patterns that strip persons of sexual, relational and vocational dignity, in contrast to the church's covenant to preserve the full human dignity of each child of God, male and female. In its involvement, the church recognizes that the attainment of justice for women is the concern of all Christians and persons of goodwill. Moreover, women's equality will not be achieved in a society and church where equality is only sought by women. Thus, COWAC (Council on Women and the Church) and COWC (Committee on Women's Concerns) have included men in their recent work and welcome a community of women and men working together in faithfulness as equals

How then shall we summarize the social teaching of the church on the status of women in church and society? Three points seem to flow out of the actions of the General Assemblies over the years as guiding principles of Christian teaching with reference to more than 50 percent of humanity:

- **The church must confess its role in providing a religious justification for the historic subordination and unequal treatment of women. The time has come to end patriarchal language and practice. There is no valid reason for discrimination against women in church or society.**

- **The church pledges itself to the restoration of the rights and dignity of women everywhere and in all activities, taking upon itself the responsibility to assure the equal treatment and fair representation of women in all facets of church life.**

- **The church advocates those means which will bring about social and economic equality for women and transform unhealthy patterns of domination by men in sexual, economic, social, political and ecclesiastical relations.**

PART TWO:
Bread and Justice

Hunger

In 1979 the General Assemblies of the UPC and the PCUS, meeting jointly in Kansas City, issued a *Common Affirmation on Global Hunger*, including the following declaration:

> We are convinced that our response to the crisis of world hunger can be greatly strengthened by our joint efforts on behalf of a common nationwide hunger action program within our Presbyterian family in the United States. (PCUS, 1979, p. 189; UPC, 1979, p. 583)

Thus was inaugurated the merging of two impressive but previously separate Presbyterian hunger efforts into the common Presbyterian Hunger Program with an annual budget in excess of four million dollars; projects in the areas of international and domestic hunger relief, food-related development assistance, public policy advocacy, education and interpretation and lifestyle change; a detailed set of funding criteria; several full time staff; a governing board; and relationships with several dozen other groups and institutions seeking an end to global hunger.

How did this complex project come about? Where in biblical thought or Reformed tradition does God command a multi-million dollar hunger program? Nowhere, directly, but the Bible and tradition do call Christians to help feed hungry people. For centuries people have been moved by the words of Jesus when he revealed the terms of the great judgment:

> ". . . for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. . . ." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give you drink?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."
>
> . . . then he will say to those at his left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . . , as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me." (Matthew 25:31–46)

In many ways, the growth and development of the churches' involvement in hunger action provide a paradigm of how the church's social teachings build on the teachings of the prophets and of Jesus.

Beginning with the believer's responsibility to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, the church has throughout the ages encouraged the corporate and individual charity of its members. In the late Roman period, the Christian church was looked to as the guardian of the poor and as the sanctuary for those displaced by the social upheavals of the era. Then, medieval monasticism institutionalized charitable works supported by parish almoners and numerous male and female religious orders. In nineteenth century America, many Protestant home mission societies concerned themselves with a list of activities drawn straight from the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 25.

If action to feed the poor and hungry has characterized the history of the Christian church, the way in which it has been done and the extent of the church's involvement have been subject to change. In the Presbyterian churches, the key shift in attitude came during the years of the Great Depression. In the words of the 1937 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.:

> We believe that the time has come when the Church should address itself, not merely to the relief of poverty, but to its prevention and cure. (PUSA, 1937, p. 220)

This new approach on the part of the church to get to the root causes of hunger reflected a change in thinking about political economy in American society at large, featuring an optimism about using human skills and creativity to solve age-old problems, This hopefulness had a Christian manifestation, as this passage from the same General Assembly shows:

> We believe that if our economic system worked as it should, there would be an opportunity for all to make a living, and that conditions of dire poverty would exist, if at all, in very limited areas and for limited periods of time, We have such confidence in the natural resources with which God has blessed our land and in the technological skills of our industrial managers and workers that we dare to propose to churchmen everywhere the ideal of a community without poverty. (PUSA, 1937, p.220)

The fundamental shift taking place in the church's social teaching in the 1930s was to combine theological ideals with secular plans for redistribution of wealth. This afforded a new way of going about obeying Christ's command to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and give drink to the thirsty.

Change in the churches' approach to hunger, particularly after World War II, was also the result of a different perception of the United States' role in the world. The United States emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful nation on the earth, with material wealth second to none and a sense of having "saved the world." This sense of "America the good, America the powerful" pervaded the church as well as the na-

tion. The churches at this time began teaching about the responsibilities of power. One of these responsibilities was to feed the hungry of the world. The 1946 PCUS Assembly voted to "earnestly petition the Federal Authorities to . . . assure the immediate equitable distribution of the surplus food stocks . . . among those peoples now faced with the most amazing destitution known in human history." (PCUS, 1946, p.163)

The same kind of teaching was going on in the two northern branches of Presbyterianism. The 1951 UPNA Assembly addressed its members:

> No matter in what situation the world finds itself, the "inasmuch" of our Lord Jesus Christ will always remain an unchangeable standard for determining our possession of his spirit. No plea of inflation, heavy war debt or fear for our own resources can discharge the duty we have as one of the most fortunate and wealthiest nations in the world, to help feed the millions who starve in other lands today. (UPNA, 1951, p.1225)

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was even more pointed in its teaching, saying in 1956: "To the shallow expression, 'we never had it so good,' the Christian must reply, 'we never had such heavy demands upon the Christian conscience.'" (PUSA, 1956, p. 231)

The church began to emphasize food production statistics which showed

Feeding the masses in the age of abundance became the new goal of the churches. Justice as an ideal became, in a new way, justice as an issue of redistributing resources.

that enough food was being produced worldwide so that it was possible to feed all people. Feeding the masses in the age of abundance became the new goal of the churches. Justice as an ideal became, in a new way, justice as an issue of redistributing resources.

The actions taken by the Assemblies of the subsequent years were in service of this goal. They voted to support U.N. food programs, to call for U.S. foreign aid to be based solely on humanitarian need and consist primarily of technical assistance, and they endorsed moral appeals to produce and export surplus food to hungry nations and people. By the mid 1960s, however, it was becoming clear that inequities in the "age of abundance" were not disappearing and that hunger was actually growing. Frustration in the church over the wealthy nations' inability and/or unwillingness to feed hungry people led to a great outpouring of feeling in the 1969 PCUS Assembly:

> Hunger is the world's most deadly curable disease. We permit 15,000 people—10,000 of them children—to starve to death every day. Unlike cancer, however, their sickness has a known cause and a known cure: food.
>
> The General Assembly declares that world hunger is so real and grave that this problem is a top priority concern of the Presbyterian Church and that all possible

resources of the . . . Church, for at least the next five years, must be focused on ways and means of dealing with the problem (PCUS, 1969, p. 100)

Hunger is such a powerful social concern because it is so clearly a theological concern. People who starve to death are people for whom Christ died. The relief of hunger is so essential to a faithfulness as to require new

means. The new means, in this case, was the creation of a Hunger Program by the PCUS, the first hunger program in any denomination in the United States.

Meanwhile, the UPC began to deepen its analysis of the causes of poverty and hunger and to develop extensive mission programs with special regional committee structures financed by the mechanism of the annual Lenten Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing. Initially, this large fund supported World Relief activities utilizing church networks to alleviate disaster and famine as well as to resettle refugees. As the 1970s began, the church encountered the justice demands of Black Power and LaRaza. This pushed the UPC also to allocate part of this offering to a strategy of Self-Development of Peoples, which supports economic empowerment projects in poor communities of color. Then, after several years of prod-

The Presbyterian Hunger Program is a theologically-focused practical response- a meeting of the events of the time and timeless principles of faith.

ding by United Presbyterian Women to make hunger action a major mission priority, the 1975 UPC Assembly created a hunger program financed with about two million dollars of One Great Hour of Sharing funds annually. This program was most notable for delineating and implementing five emphases of hunger action which together address the problem systemically. These five emphases became the common agenda of the merged hunger programs in 1979. They are:

1. *Direct Food Relief*—so that immediate needs might be met;
2. *Development Assistance*—so that people might be enabled to feed themselves with the full dignity that being a child of God requires;
3. *Influencing Public Policy*—so that the channels of power and distribution might be directed toward the elimination of hunger, rather than its perpetuation;
4. *Lifestyle Integrity*—so that Presbyterians might know more about hunger and see ways in which they can live up to their Christian commitment to feed those who hunger. (PCUS, 1977, p. 181)

The public policy advocacy agenda was specified in UPC (1976) and PCUS (1977) statements concerning U.S. Food Policy, with particular reference to domestic nutrition and farm policy, and international food aid, trade, and development assistance.

The joint action of the 1979 Assemblies was the result of considerable institutional experience in dealing with the famine situations and with federal food programs. But their adopting action shows that the Presbyterian

Hunger Program is a theologically-focused practical response—a meeting of the events of the time and timeless principles of faith:

> We affirm that such a program priority is more than simply a response to the crisis itself, ominous as that may be. Rather, it is rooted in and grows out of our biblical faith:
> • That God our Creator has made the world for everyone, and desires that all shall have daily bread.
> • That God's prophets through the ages have pronounced judgment upon those who exploit and neglect the poor and hungry.
> • That Jesus Christ our savior identified with the world's poor and came to announce good news to them.
> • That Christ's Spirit is at work in the church, calling us to embody our savior's compassion and struggle for justice on the earth. (PCUS, 1979, p. 189; UPC, 1979, p. 383)

This contemporary response not only emerges from a lively tradition of social teaching and action, it also links up in a forward-looking way with the church's peacemaking vision—namely, that shalom is the intended order of the world with life abundant for all God's children, and there can be no durable peace without economic justice. Thus, a justice and self-development component is built into the local church's commitment to peacemaking (PCUSA, 1983, p. 438); and the Hunger Program has issued a special study of "The Things that Make for Peace," *Handles for Action*, 4,3 (Summer, 1984):

***Basic Social Teachings on Hunger*:**

- **The right to food is a God-given right; it is a Christian duty to feed those who hunger, wherever they are.**

- **Of those to whom more is given, more is required; Americans, who are blessed with an abundance of food, have a special moral obligation to combat hunger.**

- **In combatting hunger, God's justice requires us to move away from structures of dependence toward just systems where people can feed themselves and develop economically in communally healthy ways.**

- **An appropriate Christian response to hunger at home and abroad requires both direct food relief and continued action to deal with systemic causes of poverty, malnutrition, and famine.**

Economic Justice

We have already seen, in reviewing Presbyterian social teachings on Human Rights, Racial Justice, Justice for Women, Hunger Action, Energy and Environment, that economic injustice is a root cause or basic pattern in perpetuating oppression, inequality and deprivation. A decent job and income is a human right, as is a safe work place and environment. Wage equity is critical to equal status for women. Hunger often occurs because people have little access to agricultural land or they lack money to buy food. These dynamics very much concern a church which teaches that, as a matter of just public policy, everyone needs and should be enabled to obtain an adequate minimum income or opportunity to earn one, and that all deserve proper nutrition, adequate health care and decent housing. Southern as well as northern Presbyterian streams have thought this way, as can be seen in the PCUS pamphlet, "The General Assembly Speaks on Economic Justice, 1965–81."*

If this philosophy of economic justice has characterized Presbyterian social teachings since mid-century, it was quite a shift of focus from the traditional Protestant blessing of work as "vocation" and "calling." That emphasis did continue in Presbyterian economic thinking, as in these examples from PCUS Assemblies:

> Churches should undertake the responsibility of impressing men, women and young people of the value and significance of daily work as Christian vocation. (PCUS, 1953, p. 92)

> The means for such [industrial] relationships could manifest themselves in many ways, but in every case should speak to labor that a job is a vocational trust from God, and in the same manner should speak to management that the manipulation of men and women and materials for economic gain is a trust from God. . . . (PCUS, 1959, p. 160)

> Each Christian is called to be a servant of God in all of life, so that we must seek God's will for the work we do and for the manner in which we do it. Christian vocation may be found in any work where our own abilities and interests best meet the legitimate needs of God's world. (PCUS, 1962, p. 150)

*Available from the Office of the Washington Communicator, 110 Maryland Avenue, NE, Box 52, Washington, DC 20002.

The northern branch of the church also addressed economic relations up until the 1930s almost exclusively in terms of the goodness of God's providence, the need for some charity and above all the obligation to work. It was concern about scarce work that brought the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. into the field of economic justice and into social teachings concerning economic issues. In the context of the Great Depression the church began to explore the question: Why are the contributions of all persons to a

society not valued justly . . . or sometimes not even wanted?

Half a century later, during the worst recession since the 1930s, and as the industrial economy experienced major restructuring, the reunited Presbyterian Church (PCUSA, 1983, pp. 441–445) began to respond to the crisis of "economic dislocation" with fresh teaching and action focused on the needs of persons and communities facing permanent loss of high-wage jobs and constant pressure to settle for lower wages in existing jobs. As did

It was concern about scarce work that brought the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. into the field of economic justice and into social teachings concerning economic issues.

the first wave of automation (see the 1967 UPC study report on "The Church, the Christian, and Work"), the new economic crisis pushes the church to distinguish between vocation and employment, to foster "an understanding of human work that is not dependent upon being employed," and to show the love of God for displaced workers through a ministry of personal compassion and community empowerment. To support displaced workers and to help stabilize communities, the Assembly said:

> No industrial society, regardless of its ideological basis, has ever before faced the problems now confronting us. In this situation the church must seek new expressions of pastoral ministries in neighborhoods and communities to support and nurture those affected by economic dislocation, . . . assist the development of local and regional organizing efforts to undergird the legitimate aspirations of unemployed persons for the dignity of work and the stabilization of community life, and seek a lifestyle for its members based on mutual sharing of needs and benefits, modeled on the gathered community of the Lord's Supper, and a renewed diakonia. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 443)

Thus the church has begun to pay more attention to the systemic causes of joblessness and homelessness while working with those most affected.

Since the adoption of a "social creed" by the Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1912, Assemblies have advocated much-needed changes in industrial relations, working conditions, wages and insurance, and in protection of the most exploited workers—children and migrants. Much of this history is summarized in a 20-page overview of "The Church in Economic Affairs," (*Church & Society*, March/April 1984), and need not be repeated here. Taking into account the business-conservatism of many Presbyterian constituents before, during and after the Great Depression, we can appreciate the importance of the Assemblies' general support for the goals and rights of organized labor, even though the church may have ap-

proached the subject with an idealized image of industrial cooperation. After World War II, the PUSA viewed the Taft-Hartley Act as a positive step and it consistently opposed right-to-work laws because these gave industry unchecked, paternalistic power over organized workers who were forced into "compulsory open shops."

The 1948 Assembly went on record for protecting wage earners, recommended increased experimentation with an annual wage and private pensions and advocated the extension of old-age protection under Social Security to the millions of workers—including its own ministers—not yet covered by the act. In 1952, the same church's Assembly urged a "greater emphasis upon free collective bargaining in labor-management relations." The Assembly also suggested that Presbyterians "participate more actively in management organizations and labor unions as an expression of Christian vocation." This concern for workers was extended to the migrant farm laborers when the 1963 UPC General Assembly adopted a policy statement on ministry to migrant workers, which read in part: " 'Following the crops' is not a satisfactory way of life. The supply of migratory workers should be reduced to a minimum by the elimination of the economic and social misfortunes which cause people to migrate." The Assembly went on

there is a clear test of how well any economic system or policy is working: namely, how does it treat the poor?

to propose that fair wages be legislated for migrant workers and that some job guarantees be provided, even at the cost of higher food prices.

In Presbyterian social teachings on economic life, there is a presumption in favor of an equal sharing of economic benefits and burdens, and there is a clear test of how well any economic system or policy is working: namely, how does it treat the poor? How well does it help "the least" meet basic human needs for food, shelter, health care, work and community? In other words, Presbyterian thought on economic life demands a minimal sufficiency for all and a caring stewardship on the part of the rich and powerful to act with justice toward the poor.

The UPC, in its 1963 statement on Migratory Farm Labor, illustrates these principles by emphasizing that justice toward the disadvantaged requires that those with the greatest economic power, including growers and consumers, support workers' rights to adequate income, safe working conditions and collective bargaining procedures to maintain some balance of power between owner-managers and workers. The goal of this General Assembly statement is a more equitable distribution of total agricultural income, as well as protection of worker health and safety and provision of basic social services.

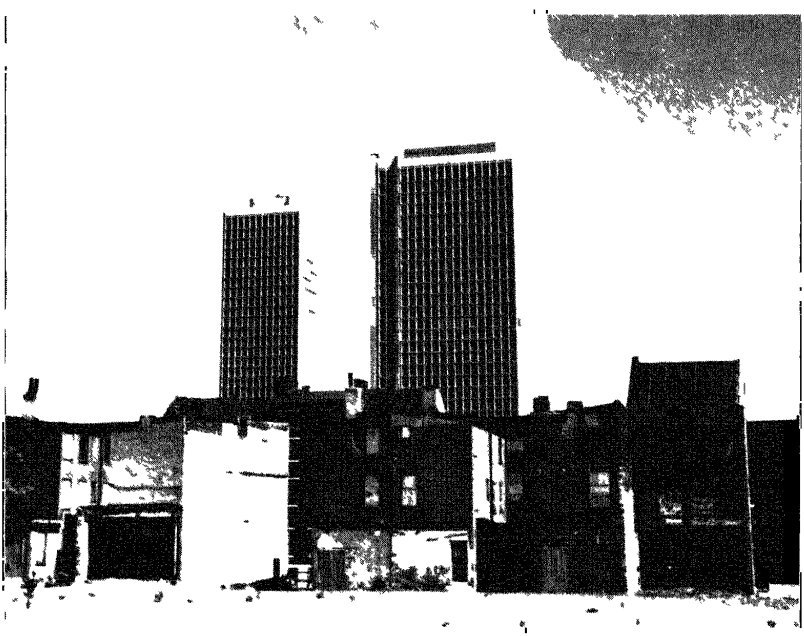
Yet, there was a critical analytical flaw in viewing economic justice as applying primarily to fairness between employer and employee, namely, not noticing the scarcity of good work as the economy continued to leave about one quarter of Americans unemployed or underemployed. And so, from just recompense for work, the church's concern broadened into other economic areas: what about those who through no fault of their own—because of educational disadvantage, racial discrimination, economic dislocation or structural unemployment—could not work? What about the aged, or infirm, the single women with children? What is our Christian economic responsibility to these people? How much is enough? Unemployment, full employment, tax reform, welfare reform, national income maintenance—responses to all of these questions rest on the church's belief that the economy should treat persons fairly.

The range of issues that the church has addressed through this fairness perspective on work are manifold:

On Poverty:

In 1956, the United Presbyterian Church General Assembly called on:

> churches to recognize their obligations and to ensure a continuing ministry to all persons regardless of their ability to pay for it, and work for public policies in such areas as housing, health, education, police protection, and public welfare programs, as instruments through which God can work in redeeming his creation. (UPC, 1956, p. 232)



In 1965, both Assemblies decried poverty. The United Presbyterian Church Assembly called upon its members to "repudiate all assumptions and attitudes that confuse respectability" with righteousness and preclude real identification with the poor." (UPC, 1965, p.391) Meanwhile, the PCUS went on to cite the role that poverty played as a "powerful accessory to our social ills." The Assembly noted that "as wealth is not the solution to every problem, so poverty is not the sole and basic cause of every problem." But then the Assembly added a big "but"—"the alleviation of poverty would bring many of these other problems nearer solution." (PCUS, 1965, p. 163)

On Unemployment:

In 1964, the United Presbyterian Church General Assembly confronted the plight of those who "can't work":

> Unemployment is not only an economic and social but moral and religious issue. It damages human beings. It challenges Christian compassion and stewardship. Prolonged unemployment wastes the skills, the talents and the dignity of those without work. It infects their children with hopelessness and despair." (UPC, 1964, p.303)

Both 1976 Assemblies called on public officials and church members to support legislation "directed toward the provisions of job opportunities for every American." (UPC, 1976, p. 154; PCUS, 1976, p. 87)

On Housing:

> A great responsibility of the Church is for the maintenance of Christian family life. Therefore, housing shortages, overcrowded slum conditions, dilapidated dwellings, which create group tensions, the degradation of persons, and the deterioration of family life demand Christian concern. (PUSA, 1954, p. 201)

On Federal Spending and Taxing:

General Assemblies have spoken on behalf of a federal economic policy which is humane and sensitive to the needs of persons, taxes on the basis of equity, and while supporting private initiative, does not allow private interest to trample the poor, disenfranchised or unemployed. Typical stands of the past include pleas not to solve inflation through increased unemployment, advocacy of maintaining a high level of spending for human services and government programs of job training and job creation. The Assemblies have also periodically addressed the issue of taxation and its injustices.

> A survey of biblical references to taxation illustrates the fact that inequitable taxation and taxpayer resistance are not new. The people of God have long struggled with taxes as an issue of social justice. As the struggle continues, the church must confront the social injustice evident in our tax structures in a manner that is consistent with our biblical and confessional traditions. [Progressive] reform of existing tax structures and specific taxes must be our goal. (UPC, 1973, p. 527)

On Welfare Reform:

The Assemblies have advocated major reforms of the welfare system including a Guaranteed Annual Income, assistance to one- and two-parent households, income primarily in money, strong incentives to work together with job training, and raising assistance levels genuinely to meet basic

In the 1970s Presbyterian Assemblies and Councils began to formulate policy for effective use of the church's own corporate resources in the struggle for justice.

needs. In their separate income policy statements of 1971, moreover, the two Assemblies made clear their view that, in the words of the UPC Assembly:

> Since God has created life and the material resources to sustain life, [human beings] do not have the right to deny life by withholding the means of existence to some. It is not something for [people] to give in expectation of gratitude or to grant or withhold as an economic inducement. Neither is it to be rationed out to those who deserve it, as though humankind could be divided into those who do and those who do not deserve what God has given freely and lovingly. (UPC, 1971, 652)

Presbyterian thought and action concerning economic justice has developed in three movements. First, building on social gospel thinking, the church of the 1930s and 1940s enunciated visionary measures for a just economic order. But the vision was to be achieved by a familiar method of voluntary and cooperative individual effort. Second, as the realities of poverty and unemployment gained the church's attention in the 1950s and 1960s, the Assemblies called for federal legislative initiatives to achieve realistic goals of public employment, job training, housing subsidy and income support. This shift of concern and strategy was a logical result of awakening to the sociological realities of organized power and institutional responsibility.

Finally, in the 1970s, Presbyterian Assemblies and councils began to formulate policy for effective use of the church's own corporate resources in the struggle for justice. This led the United Presbyterian Church of the early 1970s to support the United Farm Workers in boycotting grapes, wine and lettuce. A boycott was deemed appropriate in that case and again in 1979 for products of J.P. Stevens and the Nestlé Corporation as there was no effective legislative or shareholders' strategy to reach the same goal. Selective buying (boycott) underscores the need for self-determination by powerless people, coupled with supportive action by people with money, for the sake of economic justice (UPC, 1973).

As investor as well as purchaser, the church can at least "put the power of its dollar on the side of the right." (PCUS, 1968, p. 99) The 1971 Assembly (UPC, p. 597) affirmed "ethical criteria and guidelines for church investors in pursuit of peace, racial justice, economic and social justice, and in the establishment of environmental responsibility," growing out of the *Confession of 1967*. Implementation of these guidelines by the Committee on Mission Responsibility through Investment brought the Presbyterian Church as a power-conscious body into direct and continuing institutional engagement with corporations, and into important disagreements among church agencies, in the search to be effective for change and to live with integrity. (See *Church & Society*, March/April 1984, pp. 115–117.) Currently, this strategy features some important decisions about divestment of stocks in large weapons-making corporations and in businesses active in South Africa.

In addition to the above issues within the U.S. economy, the church has become increasingly concerned with international economic justice and a constructive overseas role for "mixed" economic enterprise. This concern emerged after World War II and the sudden realization of the United States' role as a world economic power. Very quickly, the General Assemblies began raising the question of how we were responsible for the material welfare of persons in other lands. The church became quite vocal about foreign aid objectives, support for programs of international sharing of agricultural techniques, trade policies and international development.

In recent years, these several areas of concern have been grouped into a category called international economic justice and the General Assemblies have recommended specific actions toward this end including lowering trade barriers to the products of developing nations, stabilization of world commodity prices at just levels, automatic mechanisms to transfer some resources from the rich to the poor nations, easing the debt burden for developing nations and a reorientation of development strategies away from urban growth to strategies that enhance traditional societies and cultures. In a statement on international economic justice policy the PCUS offered a general economic ethic that emphasized:

> Economic activity and material well being are in principle good. . . . Economic activity is inherently social; and when understood and practiced properly, promotes the common good. . . . Economic activity as we know it, however, is distorted by human sinfulness. . . . God wills justice in the ordering of economic life; and God calls and empowers us to struggle for justice against the powerful human tendency to injustice. . . . Justice in Biblical perspective requires particular attention to the needs of the poor. Whatever else justice may involve, it means at least that none shall, against his or her will, be deprived of the means to acquire the basic necessities of life as long as there are resources to provide them. (PCUS, 1980, p. 197)

The 1980 statement anticipated a major study document on "Christian Faith and Economic Justice" approved by the PCUSA 1984 Assembly. That document draws together several important threads of a biblical/theological perspective on economics and specifies the following requirements of an ethic of justice in economics: equal respect and concern for all, special concern for the poor and oppressed, response to basic human needs, respect for human freedom, contributions to the well-being of the community, and the fulfillment of our obligations to future generations. That study document, coupled with the 1983 report on "The Church and Transnational Corporations," illumines the massive transformations taking place in the global economy, and underscores the need to develop ethical guidelines for economic conduct across national boundaries.

The following principles of economic justice are part of the church's social teachings:

- **Work is good and each contribution to the welfare of God's world for the benefit of humankind deserves to be recognized and compensated fairly. However, each person has a right to a just share of his or her society's economic produce including the means of life—adequate food, clothing, shelter and education—regardless of that person's ability to work or the availability of good jobs.**

- **Each person has a right and a responsibility to contribute to the general welfare to the best of his or her ability. Every economic system has the obligation to provide opportunities for its members to do useful work or to receive sufficient income support.**

- **Participation in the economy is vital to human dignity and human self-worth. A just political economy does not accept significant unemployment nor disregard the health of its workers.**

- **Workers as well as owners and managers have a right to share in the profit of productive labor and need opportunities to bargain collectively for justice, as well as to have safe working conditions. Even well-intentioned paternalism robs persons of their dignity and must be opposed.**

- **The church's investments, divestments, and purchases should be utilized to express mission responsibility, with the goal of being faithful and effective in the quest for corporate social accountability.**

Energy and the Environment

The two issues that concern us here—energy and the environment—first came into their own as "crises of the year." The environment became an important public concern in 1969–1975, producing teach-ins, ecology buttons, an Earth Day and the beginnings of new environmental protection legislation. Likewise, the "energy crisis" of 1974–1975 created new concern about conservation, alternatives to traditional sources of power and a spate of legislative acts aimed at energy independence for the United States. Both of these times of peak social awareness also produced ethical reflection from the church.

The first word from either Presbyterian Church on the environment was a 1970 statement entitled "The Environmental Tragedy" which was received by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. The statement, as is appropriate to a first venture into ethical teaching about a subject, drew on the *four bases of ethical decision-making* outlined in the Introduction: an interpretation of the biblical vision and theological tradition, an analysis of the situation, a statement of social principles and a statement of policy choices.

Biblically

The biblical injunction to [humanity] to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28–29) cannot be interpreted as a license to destroy. It is a commission to care for the whole creation.

Theologically

Many factors have contributed to our developing environmental tragedy . . . one is the assumption that [humanity] could exploit nature and its resources without risk to it himself. One commentator has indicted our Christian heritage for contributing to this attitude. We need, therefore, to reexamine seriously our present value system as one that has justified [humanity's] unquestioned superiority over and exploitation of nature

Analytically

The equating of technological advance with inevitable progress has often

masked the recognition that modern technological enterprises are set within an economic system that encourages individual components to serve their own limited interests rather than those of the general welfare. It is not enough to find a technological answer to the problem . . . given the self-interest of . . . producers and consumers.

Setting forward social principles for ethical choices

Stewardship involves saying both yes and no to potentialities and opportunities open to [humanity]. There is no inevitable necessity that requires any particular technological development. Consequences must be weighed. Criteria of physical health and social benefit, as determined by competent and informed persons and groups, must provide a primary frame of reference for shaping what is to be done and what is to be left undone.

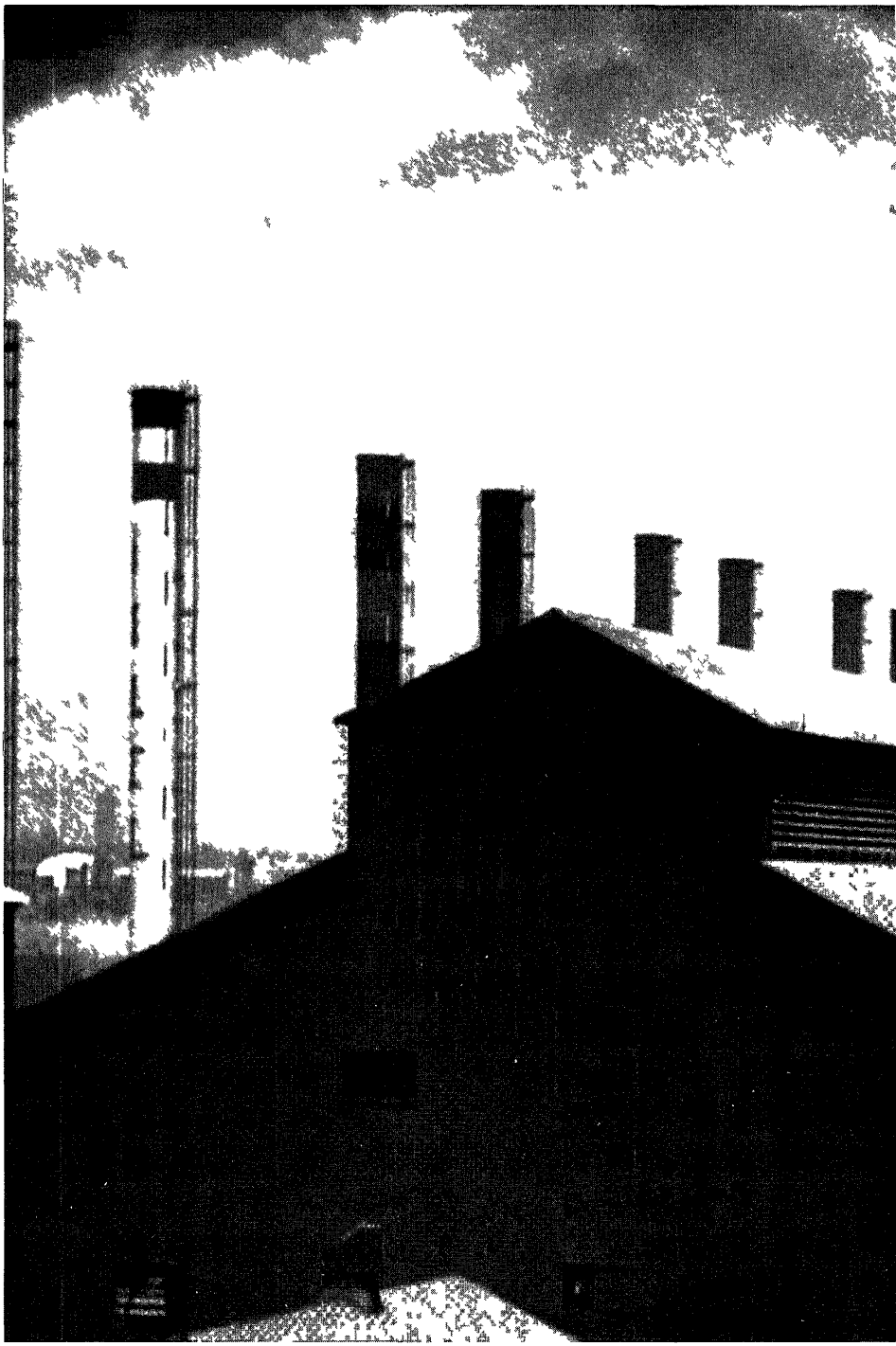
Recommending specific actions

. . . the church must a) educate its own constituency; b) insist upon value setting which results in environmental goals for the international community, nation, state, city, and neighborhood; c) insist that priorities within these goals be selected; d) participate actively in the formation of goals and selection of priorities at every level.

"The Environmental Tragedy" did not become official General Assembly policy. The 1970 Assembly, bogged down in its discussion of some of the other issues in the Church and Society report for that year, found time running out and a commissioner moved that the balance of the report be "received for information." This meant that many of the 1970 issues returned to the 1971 Assembly for a full hearing and for General Assembly action, including the issue of the environment. Unlike other issues, however, the content of the paper on the environment changed and deepened in the year between Assembly meetings.

The 1971 paper "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" was twice as long as its predecessor. It also was more to the point and still reads well nearly 15 years after it was written. Three affirmations from this reworked statement stand out as crucial to the social teaching of the church:

1. There must be economic justice for persons within the limits imposed by the need for a sustainable environment;
2. People and all other living things are to be valued above the rights of property and its development;
3. Technology is to be regarded as servant and not as master.



On the first point, the statement distinguished the church's position from that of other environmentalist groups and did so most poignantly:

> The environmental crisis has three major dimensions: destruction, deprivation, and disamenities. Outright destruction of plants and animals, life support systems, and natural resources continues throughout the country and the world. Conservation groups have concentrated on curtailing outright destruction. Now attention is also being given to the disamenities of a developed society: crowding, noise, foul air and water, ugly construction, wasted land.
>
> Far less attention has been focused, as yet, on environmental deprivation. For the poor, the environmental issue is hunger, rats, slumlords, junkies, and lack of public services. Middle-class adherents of the "eco-movement" need to recognize this physical deprivation as the most urgent environmental problem for the poor. There will be no healthy environments without policies of distributive justice. Those who already consume more than they need must not remain preoccupied with disamenities for which most of the world would gladly trade their misery. (UPC, 1971, p. 575)

The 1971 Assembly found, again, that economic structures tend to reward people and institutions for following their self-interests in the most limited sense. But now it took the position that not all rights within a society are equal and that particularly the right to a safe environment takes precedence over any "rights" to economic gain. Along with the attempt to de-mythologize the economic order with reference to environmental issues, the statement stressed the need to view technology as instrument and not master which must invariably be obeyed. "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" set for the church the task of breaking false idols, not by rejecting either the economic order or technology but by assigning them their proper role in life. The statement also laid down a principle for balancing progress with preservation:

> The burden of proof must fall upon those who advocate new processes and projects. They must show how the techniques they advocate will enhance life and will not damage ecosystems. All of us must learn how to respect and cooperate with "the natural" instead of ruthlessly trying to conquer it, only to find ourselves defeated. (UPC, 1971, p. 580)

By drawing on the theological principles of stewardship, servanthood, priority of life over property, and the "ecology of God" which establishes *shalom*, the writers of "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" brought to the 1971 Assembly a statement for adoption that enriched the church's social teaching.

The "energy crunch" also produced timely comment by the church when, in 1974, the UPC General Assembly adopted "Christian Responsibility in the Energy Crunch." From the title on, the statement was deliberate in its stylistic and philosophical links to the 1971 statement on environmental renewal. This summary paragraph from the 1974 *Minutes* gives a flavor of the church's earliest foray into energy ethics:

> There are no imminent technological solutions to the shortage of critical resources. And even if there were, should we use available technology to continue our energy-wasting way of life? Do we not have a much more urgent obligation to curtail our consumption of energy and to share energy resources with the rest of the world? Not only deprived people, but also a polluted nature would benefit from such a basic reorientation of lifestyles and social policy. (UPC, 1974, p. 607)

In this balanced statement, concern for the present is tempered by concern for the future. Social justice and the need for public information on the energy industry are both stressed. Perhaps most importantly, though, the General Assembly urged "United Presbyterians to study and reflect on the biblical themes of justice and stewardship." (UPC, 1974, p. 611) With or without this admonition, Christians began renewed explorations into the relation of faith to energy/environment. The other major impetus to such reflection was, of course, that the energy shortage settled in as a long-term reality of American life.

Upon the suggestion at several levels of national government that Americans would consider using military intervention to safeguard the continued

The church especially should evaluate all energy policy choices in terms of their impact on the poor and powerless, as well as their impact on future generations.

flow of oil from the Middle East, both the UPC and PCUS General Assemblies cried "foul!" If previous social teaching on energy could be reduced to "We all should cut down on our energy usage so that there will be enough to go around," the new position post-1975 was closer to: "While energy is necessary to our way of life, there are limits which it is immoral to exceed in the pursuit of energy." Though war was the specific evil that was not justified by the maintenance of American standards of living (or luxury), the church was beginning to look at the whole matter of what *was* justified to maintain a high standard of living, and to turn the question around: "Is such a 'high' standard of living justifiable given the trade-offs that appear necessary?"

In 1979, the commissioners of both Assemblies went to the heart of the question of social justice and energy use in issuing a joint energy ethics letter, including the following:

> Concern for the future cannot allow us to withhold care for "the least" who live now. We have no right to choose who lives and who dies in order to serve current economic ideologies or a privileged posterity. We have no right to squander the world's energy resources for short-term benefit. We are called to live simply and share liberally, while advocating the common good of all.
>
> The church especially should evaluate all energy policy choices in terms of

> their impact on the poor and powerless, as well as their impact on future generations, and insist that governments and institutions observe this basic principle of justice. The needs of the poor have priority over the comfort of the rich. (UPC, 1979, p. 274)

A pattern was again being repeated. The church starts speaking where its people are. Most Presbyterians and certainly the commissioners to a General Assembly have an above average standard of living and at least a fair share of the good gifts the American economy has to offer. The first statements made by a church body almost invariably reflect the social position of that body's members. Both "The Environmental Tragedy" and the 1974 energy statement were social teachings from the vantage point of Christians in a largely white, middle- to upper-middle-class American setting. Despite the church's social location, however, the Assemblies have attempted after deeper reflection to position themselves on the side of the poor and dispossessed. This is a reflection of a belief that might be rendered as "God's side of the story includes others besides people like me."

The 1971 statement on "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" and the 1979 commissioners' letter were deeper statements in theology and in world view than their antecedents. The emphasis had shifted from "this is how we see it" to "this is how we are called by God to see the issues in light of divine concern for all, particularly powerless persons and an abused environment."

One of the discernible patterns of development in Presbyterian social teaching has been that the Assemblies have increasingly addressed the dynamic of power first in economics, then in race, now in energy—power held by some, denied to others. In fact, power became the metaphor for addressing the energy issue again in the 1981 joint PCUS/UPC energy statement:

> Energy is much more than economic and technical decisions about alternative systems. It is also a symbol of power. Energy has for some time been closely associated in the minds of most Americans with economic growth, the fruits of modern technology, and the existing arrangement of economic and political power.
>
> To Presbyterians the present energy situation should symbolize judgment on the misuse of power and hope for a new era of energy responsibility. It should also be the occasion for speaking truth about energy and power to those who make decisions. (UPC, 1981, p. 293)

The energy statement went on to introduce an "Ethic of Ecological Justice" which was based on commitments to: *justice* in the form of fairness or equitability; *sustainable sufficiency* as the best way to achieve a balance in "the long range capacity of an energy system to supply basic needs at a reasonable cost to society and the environment"; and *participation* as a standard of mutual responsibility and decision-making in human relations.

Once again, a deepening ethical grasp was taking place as the General Assembly spoke to energy and environmental issues.

We seek economic justice for human beings within the limits imposed by the need for environmental health.

How does this "deepening ethical grasp" occur so that successive Assemblies find new ground to break on social issues? The Assemblies have a special relationship to the scholars and thinkers of the church. The Assemblies themselves do not really research issues; they ratify, amend, or reject the thoughts and recommendations brought to them. Presbyterian social teaching is what its name implies, then, when a General Assembly adopts as its own, with or without modifications, the ethical insights brought to it through its agencies and councils. And the source of these ethical insights are often pastors, concerned expert members, public officials, professors or seasoned staff. A brief examination of the cadre of thinkers on the issues of energy and the environment can help uncover where the Assemblies' new ideas and perspectives come from, and also suggest something of the relationship between the social ethicists of the church and the church's official social teachings.

When the 1971 Statement on Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal picked up the Hebrew concept of *Shalom* as applying to the environment as well as to its usual meaning of peace, it was piggybacking on the insights offered earlier in the year by Jack Stotts in an occasional paper entitled, "Environment and Theology." Stotts wrote:

> *Shalom* is a particular environmental state. It is a state of existence where the claims and needs of all that is are statisfied, where there is a relationship of communion between and among God and [humanity] and nature, where there is a balancing of all claims and needs. (*Issues*, No. 1, p. 9, United Presbyterian Church Board of Christian Education.)

The contribution of this biblical ideal was crucial to the theological integrity of the General Assembly's statement, which related God's environmental intention—or the "ecology of God"—to the Christian duty to seek that intention. Likewise, the writings of Norman Faramelli of Boston and William Gibson of Ithaca, New York, resulted in a 1976 General Assembly study paper entitled "Economic Justice Within Environmental Limits" and in the "eco-justice" perspective that has guided subsequent church social teachings on lifestyle change. If the harmony of *shalom* is our goal, how are we to arrive at it? In short, by balancing resources and needs to try

to achieve the most just mix attainable. To summarize the General Assemblies' teachings on energy/ecology issues, one could amplify the title of the 1976 study paper to say: "We seek economic justice for human beings within the limits imposed by the need for environmental health."

The General Assembly advocates eco-justice by balancing needs and claims, and working toward a responsible energy/environmental system of "sustainable sufficiency."

Other Presbyterian ethicists also have been responsible for bringing ideas and ethical insights into the work of General Assembly drafting committees. The 1979 commissioners' letter on energy bears a striking resemblance thematically to Dieter Hessel's Friendship Press book of the same year entitled *Energy Ethics: A Christian Response*. Positively defining the appropriate limits within which to seek energy and environmental justice was the subject of Robert Stivers' book *The Sustainable Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). It was also the subject of the background analysis for the 1981 Joint UPC–PCUS Energy Statement in which Stivers offered the concept of "sustainable sufficiency" as the new working goal for Presbyterian social action efforts on behalf of eco-justice. Meanwhile, the PCUS, through the staff work of Gaspar Langella, was preparing, and later produced, a study booklet entitled, *The Energy Question: An Exploration into Meaning and Values* (MDS #00008993, PCUSA, 341 Ponce de Leon Avenue, NE, Atlanta, GA 30365, 75¢).

Even when we turn to the latest Presbyterian word on an environmental/energy issue we find that the 1984 Assembly's resolution was the direct descendent of a statement from the January 1984 consultation of Canadian and U.S. religious bodies held in Toronto involving some of the same Presbyterian ethicists. The important thing about the statement, though, is not its authorship but that, even when faced with the difficult problem of acid rain, the church relies on its previous ethical position of seeking to harmonize human and ecological needs. In affirming the report of the consultation as "consistent with the policy and goals of the General Assembly" it endorsed a statement which analyzed, theologized and then put forward a four-part public policy guideline calling for industrial and pollution abatement/control strategies, calling for strategies that:

a) are environmentally sound;

b) preserve existing jobs and create new ones;

c) protect the poor;

d) encourage energy conservation and renewable energy systems.

Once again, the General Assembly advocates eco-justice by balancing needs and claims, and working toward a responsible energy/environmental system of "sustainable sufficiency." So, here perhaps more than in other areas, the social teachings of the church have been built on top of one another. This makes it easy to restate the guiding principles of Presbyterian social teaching on energy and the environment:

- **The God who created human beings also created the rest of the earth and its creatures. We have despoiled and abused our environment and denied the stewardship of God's creation. Yet God still calls us to a renewal of the shalom we have lost through our disobedience.**

- **The Creator–Deliverer acts in the ecological–social crisis of our time to demonstrate that same divine love which was manifested in the cross of Christ; and we as a covenant people are called to increase our stewardship, in relation both to nature and to political economy, to a level commensurate with the peril and the promise with which God confronts us in this crisis.**

- **As stewards we seek a political economy which works to protect both the environment and the poor of the world and which is directed toward the goal of sufficient and sustainable sustenance of all people and creatures.**

- **As stewards, we accept the responsibility of using political processes to check the abuses of power that would otherwise continue to victimize the earth and the poor; and we insist that the costs of restoring the polluted environment and structuring sustainable practices and institutions be distributed equitably throughout our society.**

PART THREE:
International Peacemaking

Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling

In the case of peacemaking, the General Assembly itself clarified a basic pattern in its social teachings. Rarely does the church gather together to clarify its past actions. Even more rarely does the effort succeed. "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" (UPC, 1980; PCUS, 1981) was just such a rare success and as such forms a logical basis for the examination of the church's statements on international affairs.

The report "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" was commissioned by the United Presbyterian General Assembly of 1975, which requested the Advisory Council on Church and Society to reassess the "concept of peacemaking and the direction of our country's foreign policy in the light of our biblical and confessional faith and a markedly changed situation in the world today." (UPC, 1980, p. 200) Thus the 1975 Assembly advanced a biblical concept—"peacemaking"—as the vessel for Presbyterian teaching on war, peace, international justice and foreign policy. It was the Advisory Council's job to bring the vessel back filled with the appropriate contents for a Presbyterian peacemaking witness. The situation of the world in 1975 contributed to the shape of the request. The prologue of the report notes that the Assembly's request was:

- born in part from the United States' defeat in Southeast Asia and the loss of prestige and power in the changing world situation;
- born in part from the unwillingness of the emerging nations to accept the continued domination of the developed nations;
- born in part from the increasing insecurity over the perilous nuclear weapons stalemate in which any miscalculation could annihilate humanity;
- born in part from concern for the hungry and oppressed of the world. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

The challenge was to produce a report that not only said something to the concerns raised in 1975, but which also said something of lasting value to the church about its faith and mission in relation to the continuing issues of

international responsibility, the arms race and the material welfare of all members of God's human family. Therefore, the Special Committee on Peacemaking convened by ACCS made its goal different from that of most Presbyterian social policymaking. As summed up by these words from the introduction:

> The report does not contain extensive analysis of specific social policy issues nor does it recommend specific positional stances in relation to them. It instead asks the General Assembly to focus for the church a fundamental dimension of biblical faithfulness in a moment of great peril and to call the church to a new seriousness in obedience. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

Peacemaking, from the very beginning of the report, is taught not as an extra course of social action that Christians may (or may not) pursue but rather as a "fundamental dimension of biblical faithfulness." In other words, "peacemaking *is* the believers' calling."

"Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" is not, however, a total departure from past social teachings of the church.

> We United Presbyterians have had our peace pronouncements and advocacy programs, and we have been on the right track. But they have been inadequate as a response to the world's peril, our nation's policies and God's promise. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

The aim of the Peacemaking document then was twofold: to affirm the church's previous foreign policy concerns and to nurture the members of the church to be peacemakers while nourishing the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in the world.

The report itself approaches a perfect paradigm of social teaching as we have sketched it in the introduction to this overview. It begins with a call to future action together with an awareness of what has been good and helpful in the past life of the church. It then proceeds to lay out a set of recommendations to be implemented by the church in a renewed commitment to making peace. The report shares with interested readers the reasoning that goes into the "Call to Peacemaking." Featured in this background material are: 1) an analysis of the human/social situation (The New Global Reality); 2) the biblical/theological bases for peacemaking as a necessary endeavor of the church; and 3) a set of middle-range axioms, namely, appropriate Theological and Ethical Bases for Policymaking. Finally, the report is rounded out with two appendices, one summarizing existing General Assembly positions (again placing the present teaching in context with the stream of tradition) and the other an Outline of Potential Program Activities (to help bridge the distance between social teaching and social action).

In sum, the Peacemaking report presented to the 1980 United Presbyterian Assembly was a complete piece of social teaching. The 1980 General

Assembly, meeting in Detroit, had the rare opportunity to say, "Yes, this is what we do in fact believe." Moreover, although this document was composed on the basis of General Assembly material solely from the UPC, the PCUS Assembly of the following year passed the document as its own. Southern leadership and commissioners acted to say, in effect, "Yes, in-

The fact of interrelatedness has both tragic and hopeful elements.

deed, this is what we believe also and what we have tried to teach." In endorsing the Peacemaking statement in 1981, the PCUS was following a practice developed over the years of endorsing as its own statements from ecumenical church bodies with which it agreed.

The report conveys four primary social teachings:

One: The oneness of humanity and the interrelatedness of people and their conditions.

This theme is sounded repeatedly in the Call to Peacemaking. It is identified as "The New Global Reality" but also as the result of God's grace. Here the church teaches that interdependence is a fact of life: not simply a way of viewing the world but the way the world is. The fact of interrelatedness has both tragic and hopeful elements:

> There is a new sense of the oneness of the world in our time. Humankind's initial forays into space have created a new perspective, a dramatic sense of the earth—the whole earth—as home. The era of satellite communication systems and the migration of millions of people from continent to continent have produced a new awareness of conditions of life everywhere on the globe.
>
> It is not possible, in such a time, to avoid awareness of the economic disparities and political oppression besetting the human family. It is not possible to escape the knowledge of human suffering, and it is not possible to ignore the incongruous juxtaposition of affluence and arms on the one hand, and poverty and oppression on the other. The futility of nuclear war on a small planet as a solution to human problems is apparent. (UPC, 1980, p. 202)

The essential oneness of humanity means that people are responsible for distant as well as near neighbors. The interrelatedness of persons means that no person, group, corporation or nation can pursue its own interest in isolation. Particularly, the rich nations and groups must face the extent to which their wealth is gained at the expense of the poor. The question of peace in our time is fundamentally related to reciprocity among the world's people. The church begins its teaching on peace, therefore, by emphasizing the closeness—the reconciliation—of rich and poor, of races, of cultures, of nations, of superpowers.

This leads to the next major affirmation:

Two: Peace consists not in securing an absence of war but in attaining justice.

The peace movement in the United States is not strictly a religious movement. Indeed, many of those who seek an end to the nation's long bout with nuclear madness act out of the simple human will to survive. We have become accustomed to seeing television news clips of elementary school children drawing pictures or producing plays "for peace" or "for the freeze," who, when asked "Why are you doing this?" respond, "Because I don't want to die." But fear alone is not an adequate basis for attaining peace:

> The dangerous signs of the times raised up around us may prompt many to seek peace because of fear. While fear may lead to the timid avoidance of conflict resulting in the acceptance of injustice, faith enables Christians to perceive God's will and find the courage to grasp the opportunity of new situations. (UPC, 1980, p. 207)

The church teaches that peace requires justice on two grounds. First, the church has long recognized that evil cannot be overcome without conflict, and that so long as injustice remains, the prospects for mutuality and harmony are dim. Secondly, the church speaks in confession when it bids its members not to seek "too easy a peace," for its members' perceived self-interests too often lie on the side of maintaining the status quo. To deny others the means to justice in the name of preserving peace is to cry "Peace! Peace! where there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14) and to come under prophetic judgment.

Presbyterians can therefore teach that justice is love distributed; Christian love requires social and economic justice as the alternative to war and the response to inhuman conditions which promote warfare. (Compare the words of "Call to Peacemaking" and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace," issued three years later.)*

If justice is to be the measure of peace, then the church draws out a corollary teaching that self-interest is not an adequate basis for conducting relations with other people. This has far-reaching implications:

> The criterion of justice compels the continual reexamination of personal and national policies and actions. The first question changes from "What is its consequence for us?" to "What are the consequences of this set of actions upon

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> others and upon our relationship to others?" Justice does not require the abject negation of self-interest, but it does require that the legitimacy of that interest be weighed in relationship to the claims of others. (UPC, 1980, p. 211)

All of this—peace as more than nonwar, justice as the measure of peace, and Christian love of others as the necessary corrective to personal and national selfishness—finds its expression in these words from the "Call to peacemaking":

> We know that there can be no national security without global security and no global security without political and economic justice. As God's people, we will not cry "Peace, peace" without the fullness of God's shalom. As God's people, we will seek the security of the whole human family—all for whom Christ died. As God's people, we will celebrate the dignity of each of God's children. (UPC, 1980, p. 202)

Three: The church in obedience to Christ is recommissioned to become the special agent of peacemaking.

The "Call to Peacemaking" affirms: a) "The church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking." b) "The church is obedient to Christ when it nurtures and equips God's people as peacemakers."

Thus, the church teaches peacemaking in all its dimensions as a Christian responsibility. The church is not only to lead individual Christians into faithful obedience to Christ through peacemaking but is also to work as a body which is more than the collective sum of its members—at peacemaking.

This point—the church as the agent of peacemaking—builds on the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," and notes that Jesus the Christ was also given the title the Prince of Peace. When the "Call to Peacemaking" speaks of the need for the church to nurture God's people as peacemakers, it recalls the reliance of the church on the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit as described in Ephesians 4:6. The cosmic dominion of God expressed in the Psalms is juxtaposed against the false dominions of nations and armies in our time. The prophets' assurance that God wills shalom undergirds the church's duty of peacemaking. And Paul's appeal to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 12) to participate in the body of Christ is a precedent for corporate church involvement in peacemaking.

The church has often begun calls to corporate action with an explanation of why there should be any corporate church action on social matters. Thus, in "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling":

> Among some people a privatized pietism has made such inroads that even disarmament is seen as a "secular" matter and not a proper concern of the church—surely a strange posture for the spiritual descendants of John Calvin,

who was deeply involved in the public issues of his time. The Reformed tradition of Christian faith has been historically committed to world transforming action. Reconciliation to God has included reconciliation to the neighbor and action in the social, political, and economic realms for the sake of just order and peace. (UPC, 1980, p. 201)

Where the church is obedient to Christ, congregations will come alive in peacemaking..

Christ alone is our peace. As part of his body in the whole church, we experience the brokenness of this world in our own life. Today we stand at a turning point in history. Our structures of military might, economic relations, political institutions, and cultural patterns fail to meet the needs of our time. At stake is our future and our integrity as God's people.

Where the church is obedient to Christ, congregations will come alive in peacemaking. . . . at the Lord's Table we discover our brothers and sisters around the world; in baptism we are united in solidarity with the whole body; in prayer we lift our concern for the victims of injustice, oppression, and warfare; in praise we celebrate the gift of life, the Prince of Peace; in study we focus on foreign policy subjects in light of biblical and theological considerations. (UPC, 1980, pp. 202-203)

In the first quoted paragraph, the case for institutional church response is based on the Reformed theological tradition. In the other two paragraphs, however, the Assembly makes its point by linking biblical images of the church's activities—prayer, baptism, communion—with the social institutions bearing upon peace. The church as the *body of Christ* is to confront the bodies of power in other spheres—politics, economics, military readiness, etc.

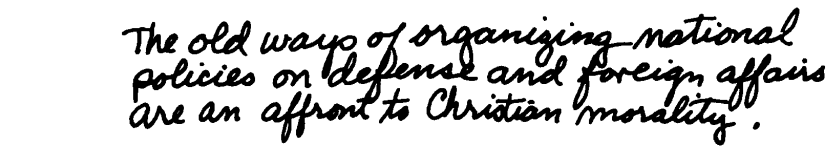
Four: The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world.

This is a teaching of the church to the church. It says, "We have a Christian mission to promote peace in the life and policies of our nation." Implicit in that statement is a claim by the church that it has something to offer the nation—something that the nation does not get from another source. In order to discover what the church's unique message to the nation might be, however, it is necessary to distinguish what are the normal operating criteria for national policy.

The background paper for "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" delineates three criteria as normative in American foreign policy: national *interest*—"based on the premise that each nation-state should formulate its actions according to that which best serves its self-interest, broadly de-

fined"; national *security*; and *power*—"expressed in the ability to damage those who do not follow our bidding, either through direct military intervention or the allotment of our material resources." The paper concludes that: "These criteria for foreign policy were arguably adequate in other times," but now "a new and different set of criteria is recommended [by the church] for guiding the formation of future policy, both because of Christian morality and because of the situational factors characterizing 'the new global reality.' "

The church is aware that the old ways of organizing national policies on defense and foreign affairs are not only antiquated but also an affront to Christian morality. Attention to Christian ethics requires that the nation be



addressed with a new message. The content of this "message to the nation" can be pieced together from the Peacemaking report:

> The gospel brings freedom from false security, chauvinism, and paranoia and empowers a new global vision of the human order that God intends.
>
> Peacemaking entails far more than a narrow focus on military might in defense of "national security" and "vital interests."
>
> Christians understand that only God is absolute. No political order has an absolute claim on people, nor does any political order so entirely lack aspects of God's purpose as to make its complete annihilation all that is called for. All nations are judged by the standards of divine justice.
>
> The interpretation of love drives us to affirm a bias in favor of the poor, an openness toward the enemy, negotiation for resolution of conflicts, the avoidance of war, and the protection of the weak.

Working to build up the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace is a matter of obedience to Christ. If national leaders discount the church's witness to peace as unrealistic, or others supporting peace do not share the church's concern for peace *with* justice, the church is still obligated to preach and practice its understanding of peacemaking: "At this critical moment in history, peacemaking is the central activity of all believers individually and corporately. It is at the heart of our life in Christ and a compelling responsibility of the church." (UPC, 1980, p. 202)

To recapitulate, these are the primary social teachings of the Presbyterian Church on Peacemaking (quotations incorporated in this summary are from the *Confession of 1967*, 9.45):

1. Humanity is one and people's conditions are globally interrelated. "Reconciliation among nations becomes particularly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons diverting their human resources and power from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of the world."

2. Peace consists not in the absence of war but in attaining justice. Peacemaking involves the responsible use of power to create conditions of justice, freedom, and reconciliation.
3. The church, in obedience to Christ, must become the agent of peacemaking. "The church, in its own life, is called to practice forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search of cooperation and peace."
4. The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world. The church urges "that nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, ***even at risk to national security***, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding."
5. Peacemaking service involves resistance to the powers of self in the world, whether these powers be collective or personal. The task is to redefine self-interest toward the needs and interests of others, especially the powerless, and to work for the ecumenical interest.

The crucial question is: Do the teachings offered in the "Call to Peacemaking" correspond to international affairs pronouncements of other Assemblies? This can be tested by examining the churches' statements on four major international conflicts: U.S.-Soviet Relations; the Arms Race; Apartheid in South Africa; and the Central American conflict.

United States-Soviet Relations

When one looks at the social pronouncements of the General Assemblies on U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations over the years, two of the peacemaking emphases emerge as crucial. The first of these is the idea that peacemaking requires relational work—through negotiations, through summit conferences, and through programs of mutual understanding which help the people of the respective countries understand their counterparts even when their governments pursue a course of enmity. Early on, the Presbyterian Church declared:

> As a nation, we must be prepared to spend years, if necessary, seeking equitable solutions to the multitude of problems dividing Russia and the Western World. We condemn all impassioned pressures for a resort to violence and war in the realization that the magnitude of our present crisis is largely the result of war. (PUSA, 1948, p. 202)

Thus the church emphasized the necessity of negotiation over violence, and the exercise of good will instead of military power in the search for peace.

At the same time as the 1948 Assembly was emphasizing that peacemaking was the route to go in relations with the Soviets, the Assembly was

living out another of the social principles—the role of the church as a peacemaking advocate to the nation. The church advocates the way of the Prince of Peace over the powers of war and darkness. These themes have continued to be joined together as recently as the 1983 and 1984 Assemblies of the reunited church, which both called for a U.S.–U.S.S.R. summit meeting. The 1982 UPC Assembly even addressed these themes in succession when it called first upon Presbyterians to reexamine their "own perceptions and attitudes regarding the people of the Soviet Union, acknowledging that easy acquiescence in popular rhetoric and stereotyped perceptions can result in the sins of bearing false witness and self-righteousness." (UPC, 1982, p. 292)

In the next paragraph, the Assembly called upon governmental officials in both countries:

> . . . to refrain from the rhetoric of implacable opposition and enmity through which each casts the other in the role of an unchanging and unchangeable threat to basic existence and security and to abandon the pattern in which each interprets every problem or tension anywhere in the world as a demonically inspired work of the other. (UPC, 1980, p. 292)

Halting the Arms Race

The 1958 UPC Assembly called for a halt to the arms race, "not with the assurance that our civilization will thus be saved but in order that we may be obedient to God who calls us to pray and work for peace." Subsequent General Assemblies vigorously supported the goal of disarmament and mutual arms control with appropriate treaties and adequate inspection procedures. The Assemblies also opposed particular U.S. government policies of arms buildup such as "massive retaliation" (UPC, 1954, p. 185), "atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons" (UPC, 1964, p. 318), "anti-ballistic missile systems" (PCUS, 1969, p. 101), multiple warhead missiles, biological and chemical weapons programs, and all nuclear testing (UPC, 1972, p. 640), the B–1 bomber (UPC, 1977, p. 177), and the "M–X missile system" (UPC, 1980, p. 60).

Both Presbyterian Assemblies endorsed the "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race, a Proposal for a Mutual U.S.–Soviet Nuclear Weapons Freeze," as a result of which the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program enlisted many endorsements of the freeze by sessions, presbyteries and synods. Commitment to halt the arms race led to a 1982 UPC statement on "Confronting Idolatry," which emphasized that security will not be achieved by "disproportionate reliance on the development, multiplication, and redundancy of armaments," nor will the nation's social security


LETS
STAY
ALIVE
STOP
ARMS
RACE

be advanced by distorted federal budget outlays for military preparedness. Particularly, the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons is idolatrous, declared the Assembly:

> We are concerned with the evil inherent in nuclear weapons of mass destruction which, even if the validity of traditional just-war analysis is accepted, can in no way be justified. Such weapons violate the canons of proportionality and blur all distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Since the use of these weapons constitutes a human action that would result in the destruction of all humanity, the act in itself would be both blasphemous and idolatrous in the ultimate sense, a human abrogation of final judgment that belongs only to God. As their actual use can therefore have no justification we must question whether their very existence is morally acceptable. . . .
>
> What deep form of disobedience is it that causes us to express our idolatry of national security in terms that echo the prohibition of the Second Commandment (against graven images)? We are called to reflect on the vast offerings we devote annually on the altars of our (nation's) strategic triad of air, land, and sea-based missiles.*

If armed might does not bring real security, how can peace be established? Numerous General Assembly statements on international affairs have lifted up four elements of a just and durable peace, toward which nations generally and the U.S. particularly should: reduce militarism and work for disarmament, enhance world community by working through mulilateral and global organizations, seek economic equity and social well-being, and respect the dignity, integrity and wholeness of all persons.**

Apartheid in South Africa

Turning to the issue of apartheid in South Africa, we quickly see that the four principles of peacemaking are again present. But in contrast to its teaching on U.S.-Soviet relations, the General Assemblies have emphasized two of the principles to a much greater degree in their treatment of apartheid.

In no less than 17 resolutions since 1960, the Presbyterian General Assemblies have uniformly declared their moral outrage at apartheid and their positive conviction that humanity is one. Treating black, colored and Asian South Africans as different in kind from whites has been repeatedly attacked as a moral and theological absurdity—the World Alliance of Re-

**A Study and Action Guide on the Nuclear Arms Race and the "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race,"* Second Edition, April, 1983, Section IV. PDS: 804-01-002.

**See Robert F. Smylie, "A Presbyterian Witness on War and Peace: An Historical Interpretation," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Winter, 1981), pp. 498 ff.

formed Churches recently declared the pseudo-religious ideology and policy of apartheid to be heresy—reflecting a demonic view of human life and worth. The 1960 UPC Assembly set the tone for subsequent General Assembly teaching by not only expressing their horror over apartheid but also praying "that the churches of South Africa be faithful instruments of God's grace for reconciliation among all [people]." (UPC, 1960, p. 352) The Assembly thus was again emphasizing that the church (read all churches) to be faithful must lead its members to peacemaking. The special twist was

Presbyterian General Assemblies have uniformly declared their moral outrage at apartheid.

that an American church was both defending the South African churches' right to speak out and stating the South African churches' obligation to speak out against apartheid.

In the years that followed, the General Assemblies expanded on these two themes of humanity's oneness and the church's responsibility for peacemaking, most often using the language of "reconciliation" derived from the *Confession of 1967*. Affirming that humanity is one and people's conditions throughout the world are interrelated, the General Assemblies came to put pressure on American corporations and the U.S. government to stop collaboration with the white minority rulers, holding that South Africa's apartheid regime could not survive without U.S. economic and political assistance. (UPC, 1965, p. 404)

By 1977, the General Assemblies of both churches were issuing regular calls for the U.S. to place its diplomatic, economic and political weight behind full political, legal and social rights for the black majority in South Africa. When government and industry leaders maintained that U.S. interests were best served, and in fact justified, by support for the white "authoritarian" government in South Africa, the General Assemblies turned to the principle of there being no peace without justice to argue that there is no real stability or security without justice for all the people of South Africa. (UPC, 1981, p. 251) Later, the principle of the church's peacemaking duty figured in the General Assemblies' support of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' declaration that "apartheid is sin" and censure of any church in WARC which continued to support apartheid. (PCUS, 1982, p. 126) Again, the Assemblies emphasized the need of the church to nourish the moral life of the nation when it voiced solidarity with the South African Council of Churches after the South African regime cracked down on the council's activities. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 445)

For details, see Allan Boesak, "Apartheid after the WARC Decisions in Ottawa, 1982," *Black and Reformed* (Orbis, 1984), Ch. XII.

Central America

In Central America, the overwhelming concern of U.S. governments has been to maintain security through friendly regimes and to "keep another Cuba from happening." In contrast, the church has concerned itself with the condition of people and posed the question: "How does the drive for security affect common people?" The church has lived out contextually its role in nourishing the moral life of the nation by questioning any "security" that is built on the misery of others, and by becoming institutionally involved with political refugees and others seeking sanctuary from the chaos of the region. The distinction between militarized order and just peace was repeated in the comprehensive 1983 Central America report:

> Our nation is providing support for the powers of death in Central America. This has occurred because we have often been motivated by concern for national security more than by concern for justice. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 738)

The church contends that the real cause of unrest in Central America is not communist subversion but poverty, oppression and injustice:

> The demands for freedom and social change will continue as long as these conditions exist. The attempt to stifle these demands by reliance on arms and military strength has resulted in the spread of violence, destruction, oppression, and human suffering.

Moreover, this peacemaking perspective is nothing new, for the 1961 UPC Assembly had previously expressed its "opposition to attempts to resolve the complex problems of Latin America by external military means." (Quoted in PCUSA, 1983, p. 441)

The means that the church has advocated in the interim years revolve around the principles of negotiation and self-determination. In 1980 and 1981, the UPC Assemblies supported the rights of self-determination free of outside (U.S., Cuban or Soviet) intervention for the Nicaraguan people. On the subject of El Salvador, the 1980, 1981 and 1982 Assemblies not only advocated self-determination but also the need for a "political solution" to the country's problems. The Central American report of 1983, collaboratively prepared by UPC and PCUS, and approved by the reunited Assembly, likewise recommended working toward "negotiated rather than military solutions to regional conflicts in Central America." This Assembly, as did those in 1982 and 1984, reached across the line of military conflict to practice reconciliation by supporting congregations which have declared public sanctuary for refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala.

Our examination of General Assembly teaching on Central America illustrates disavowal of the idea that peace with justice necessitates military and terrorist solutions to disorder and conflict. This posture is not a pre-

scription for the continuance of the status quo or for the perpetuation of oppression, nor is it a condemnation of poor peoples' insurrection as a last resort to resist tyranny. It does condemn the use of force to maintain unjust order, and it espouses an end to military intervention to "solve" problems between groups in poor countries.

* * * * *

Space does not permit a review of Assembly statements on other conflicted regions (e.g., the Presbyterian response to events in the Middle East is very much in keeping with the categories attendant to peacemaking). Yet, we see that the principles of peacemaking do indeed describe the way that the Presbyterian Church approaches international conflict. We also see that the elements of peacemaking an Assembly stresses in any given statement on any particular regional conflict is a reflection of what the church thinks most needs to be said and heard situationally. Moreover, the means of peacemaking—negotiations, political solutions, policies of economic justice, and steps to break the cycle of violence and death—figure so significantly in the churches' social declarations that our "peacemaking principles" need to be revised to reflect the ethic they teach and how they are used in practice.

A revised list would be:

- **Humanity is one ecumenical household and the conditions of people in one part of the world are related to the conditions of all other people throughout the earth.**

- **Peace is more than the absence of war; peace exists when the causes of war are removed and wherever social justice is established. The goal of justice requires that just means be used to seek resolution to human conflict; therefore, a resort to violence (overt and covert) to establish repressive order or to stifle justice is unjustifiable.**

- **The church in obedience to Christ becomes the agent of peacemaking, seeking reconciliation with "enemies," and advocating, across all lines of division, policies of justice to the poor and the practical politics of negotiation, compromise, fair resource distribution, corporate responsibility, mutual respect and nonviolence.**

- **The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world. Churches in every nation share the burden of faithful witness in their own situations to the Prince of Peace who serves a loving justice. In their commitment to the ecumenical interest, churches advocate foreign policies that seek justice and peace by just and peaceful means.**

PART FOUR:
Issues in the Life of the Nation

Church and State

When the PCUS General Assembly of 1964 declared, "we have no right to claim that ours is and always has been a Christian nation," it joined its northern Presbyterian counterpart in acknowledging a new way of looking at the requirements of religious freedom in the United States: The UPC Assembly of 1963 had adopted a major report on "Relations between Church and State," which emphasized:

> The church has no theological ground for laying any claim upon the state for special favors. The church must regard its special status or favored position as a hindrance to the fulfilling of its mission. (UPC, 1963, p. 194)

Moreover, the same 1963 Assembly made clear its view that while the state should respect the religious beliefs of individuals, the state has no role in sponsoring religious observances of any kind—much less giving "due and proper recognition" of an "avowed faith" at every public occasion.

These affirmations represented a substantial departure from the consensus of Catholic and evangelical Christians during most of the history of the country. Generally, since the English landing at Jamestown, Americans expected that no one would be forced to subscribe to a *particular* brand of Christian beliefs, but that everyone would choose *one* from the denominational menu. To be sure, persons of the Jewish faith represented a problem and there were frictions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. But a "Christian America," as Robert Handy named it, was the dominant hope, expectation or even presupposition of nearly all Americans.

To see how deeply steeped the American ethos was in this image as a "nation with the soul of a church," one need go no further back in Presbyterian history than the 1947 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which declared:

> This Assembly respectfully requests our government constantly to be mindful of its avowed faith in Almighty God as the fountainhead of our rights and on every public occasion to give due and proper recognition of this faith. (PUSA, 1947 p. 110)

What happened to the nation, and indeed to the church, to make the church change its mind in those years between 1947 and 1963? *First* came the conflict with Roman Catholicism. The growing power of the Roman Catholic Church in mainstream American political life in the 1950s raised for many Protestant Americans a fear of supporting someone else's religion. This fear was particularly acute in the fight over public aid to parochial schools. Protestants, for the first time in the nation's history, were facing the possibility of having someone else's faith get in their way or to dilute public support for their children's education.

A *second* factor prompting a change in Presbyterian church-state philosophy was a series of Supreme Court decisions in First Amendment cases including *McCollum v. Board of Education* and *Zorach v. Clausen*. Again, as we have noted in other chapters, when the society at large changes, so often will the social teachings of the church, for its analysis of the human/social situation—a basic component in shaping a social teaching—also changes. Controversy over parochial aid, school Bible reading and prayer, congressional initiatives and state and federal court decisions all pushed the Presbyterian churches to reexamine the question: "What do we believe concerning the relation of church and state?"

The impact of religion on the American conscience is paradoxical - it supports both shallow spiritual complacency and a potent sensitivity to injustice.

A *third* factor emerged to pose the question of church-state philosophy: rapid growth of the church itself. Religion throughout the 1950s and early 1960s found itself in a golden age. Never had the absolute numbers of church members been higher. Never before had the percentage of Americans belonging to a church been as high. But numbers of churchgoers and Sunday service attendance figures did not, as it turned out, translate into a great and righteous society. Sociologist Yoshio Fukuyama has commented in this connection that the impact of religion on the American conscience is paradoxical—it supports both shallow spiritual complacency and a potent sensitivity to injustice. The Special Committee on National Purpose reported to the 1961 UPC General Assembly:

> It is precisely at the moment of largest adherence to religious loyalties and religious institutions in its history that the nation's life is marked by a disintegration in moral and ethical behavior. The "return to religion" in our day has produced no moral fruitage. On the contrary, while the curve of religious interest has been rising, that of moral health has been falling. Not "too little religion," but double-minded religion, its divorce from practice, is our sickness. This fact is a judgment upon the churches and the religion they have been content to foster. (UPC, 1961, p. 112)

Presbyterians had to reemphasize that not only did the risen Lord require that the gospel be "preached even unto the ends of the earth," but also that believers learn Jesus' commandments and be concerned with the quality of their obedience. The same God who gives the Great Commission says, "I despise your burnt offerings. . . . Let justice roll down like mighty waters."

Theologically, a rediscovery was underway which led to endorsement of the proposition that faith is too important for the church to assign any part of its observance to the state. Calvin had maintained that when the will of God and the magistrate (or state) diverge, the believer must follow God.

The terrible example of Nazi and Soviet cooptation of the churches had also spoken to the American churches' consciousness. Out of a close call due to McCarthyism in the early 1950s—when Christianity and allegiance to a narrow American nationalism were identified as being one and the same—the church's thinkers and leaders began to see Christian reasons to avoid identifying the will of God with any one national way of life (as in C-67, 9.45). The thoughts of those Presbyterian leaders echoed the Barmen Declaration's statements that:

> We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well.
>
> We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

Following this theological lead, the 1963 report on relations between church and state discards the concept of Christianizing politics and nation in favor of relating critically and constructively to a world and state which God has reconciled. Taking its lead from God's work of reconciliation:

> The church must call the state to a level of self-criticism which it cannot reach alone. . . . The church must be itself if the state is to be a state. American Presbyterians believe that the church must be relevant . . . [knowing Jesus' commands concretely and knowing our state and its problems critically]. In light of these considerations, we find a solid footing for relations with the state. The church must seek out those points at which the state, as it functions, is incompatible with the reconciliation of the world to God in Christ and challenge it to cease such activity. . . . Further, it must at the same time seek this same fact of reconciliation of the world to God in Christ and encourage it to continue and improve. A church seeking to be itself constantly challenges the state to be a true and authentic state. (UPC, 1963, p. 183-84)

The grassroots reception of the 1963 UPC and 1964 PCUS statements on church-state relations—coming on the heels of the unpopular Supreme Court decisions outlawing school prayer and Bible reading—was cool. The General Assemblies, it seemed, had sold out on Christian values, just as the Supreme Court of the land seemed to turn its back on the traditional values its members were sworn to uphold. Then, as now, twenty years later, people who opposed movements toward social

The law must not prohibit the free expression of religion in any place, including the school, so long as coercion of others is not involved.

and economic justice, and who worried about America's loss of power in the world, rallied behind patriotic Christianized religion. But the church-state relations statements of the two General Assemblies bear

examination precisely because of still-relevant Christian principles they uphold through the specific policies they recommend.

The first principle coming out of the statements on church-state relations is: *The state should not impose religion or enforce it upon its citizens*. Whether the people are opposed to enforced religion or not is beside the point. The issue, as the churches saw it, is that publicly mandated religion is rarely if ever authentic or good religion. Furthermore, a civil religion acceptable to all Americans or even all Christians is in the church's view unacceptable; a religion of the least common denominator in faith is antithetical to true faith, which consists in believing the truth as it is revealed to and interpreted by a believing community:

All should recognize the administration of religious training and observance as the domain of church and family.

Since the association of seasonal activities with religious holidays tends to pervert their religious significance, such association should be discouraged.

Religious observances should never be held in a public school.

In support of these principles, the Assemblies endorsed the following statements:

> We hold that the state should not impose religion in any of its expressions upon its citizens, The recent Court decision, overruling state laws requiring Bible reading and the Lord's prayer, are therefore in our judgment theologically sound. (PCUS, 1964, p. 153)

> The General Assembly . . . declares its opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment on school prayer, believing that officially sponsored religious exercises tend toward indoctrination or meaningless ritual, which compromise authentic faith and also threaten the erosion of constitutional protections. (UPC, 1982, p. 303).

The second principle of church-state relations involves how people are to live up to their obligation to practice their faith publicly and can be summarized in this way: *Voluntarism in the public practice of religious beliefs is consistent with the law of the land and with Christian faith*. The church teaches that people must be free to express their beliefs and to practice them in public as well as privately. ("One who acknowledges me not before others, I will not acknowledge before the Father.") The church also maintains that the law must not prohibit the free expression of religion in any place, including the school, so long as coercion of others is not involved. The church therefore has supported these measures as flowing from this principle:

Two decades after the church-state report, many of the same issues and dynamics that clustered about the relationship then are prominent again.

> Religious leaders should be free to speak in the public schools so long as their speaking does not "constitute religious indoctrination." (UPC, 1963, p. 193)

> We hold that religious ceremonies may be held in the public schools on a permissive, voluntary basis without violation of conscience. There is a valid distinction between the state's compelling its constituents to gather for a religious ceremony and the state's permitting those who have gathered to acknowledge a higher power and to invoke a blessing upon their corporate life in a way generally and prudently agreed upon by them. (PCUS, 1964, p. 64)

> The General Assembly urges United Presbyterians not to be misled by . . . allegations that their children do not now have the right to pray in public schools. (UPC, 1982, p. 303)

> In the Reformed view no action of the state should enshrine a particular religious view in law or constitution. On the other hand, no action of the state should preclude the open discussion of issues and advocacy of views by people moved by religious concern to gain public acceptance of policies rooted in a Christian understanding of justice for society and for persons. (PCUSA, 1983, I. p. 778)

The third principle is this: *An effective witness to Jesus Christ requires an unencumbered church . . . the church should not be obligated to the state*. The church is called to let nothing interfere with its mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving God. Obligations to the state for "favors" can get in the way of this primary obligation. So that the relation between church and state is free of the fact or appearance of favoritism, the Assemblies have taken these positions:

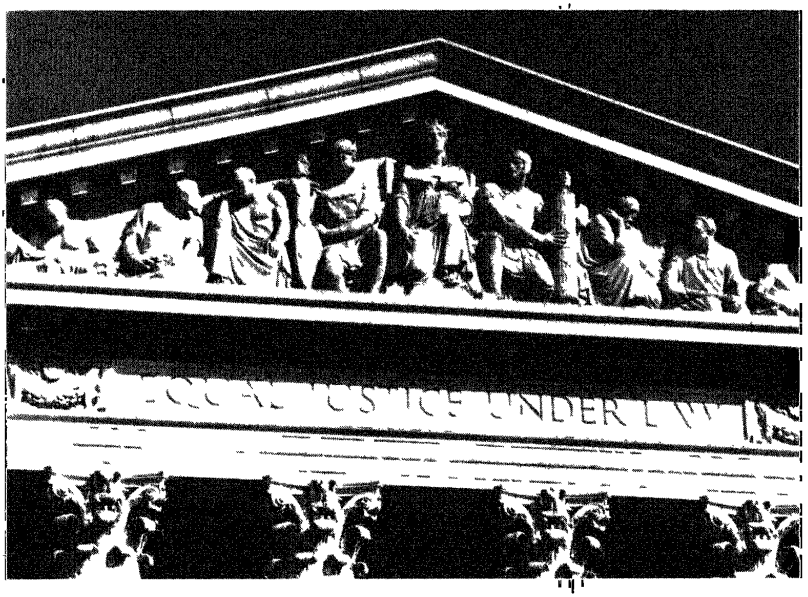
On tax exemption of religious bodies:

> United Presbyterians should study the nature of our church's involvement in economic activity and seek ways by which it can begin the process of extricating itself from the position of being obligated, or seeming to be obligated, to the state by virtue of special tax privileges extended to it. (Some congregations and church agencies voluntarily pay for public services in lieu of real estate taxes.) (UPC, 1963, p. 195)

On the use of public property for religious displays:

> Since such displays are usually not an effective witness to the Lordship of Christ. . . . Presbyterians are discouraged from seeking the public property for such displays. (UPC, 1963, I, p. 186)

The fourth principle amounts to a new golden rule of "do unto others' religion as you would have them do unto yours": *No one religion in fair-*



ness to others should seek to enforce its own moral standards upon others who do not share those standards or the beliefs upon which they are based. This principle has been an important factor in the Presbyterian position in recent years on blue laws, censorship and the availability of contraception and abortion as these statements show:

> The church bears sole responsibility for securing from its members a voluntary observance of the Lord's Day. The Church should not seek the coercive power of the state in order to facilitate Christian observance of the Lord's Day. (UPC, 1963, I, p. 189)

> United Presbyterians defend the right of a religious community to forbid its own members from exposing themselves to particular material . . . but oppose the use of civil authority to censor on religious grounds privately promulgated material offensive on the same grounds to any religious groups, including their own. (UPC, 1963, I, p. 192)

> Medical professionals should be free of legal restraint in therapeutic procedures generally accepted by their profession. No patient in a tax-supported agency should be denied treatment or advice . . . simply because such evidence or treatment is considered wrong by the religious group to which some professional personnel in that agency may belong. (UPC, 1963, p. 188)

The fifth and final principle is: *No person's religion or religious beliefs should penalize them in relation to society, nor should it put that person in a position of undue favor.* This proposition has had several important applications in General Assembly support for the policy of providing human

resources and welfare services to children, whether or not they go to public schools, and the teaching that candidates should be evaluated strictly on the basis of their religious affiliation. This principle also stands behind the General Assemblies' several attempts to remove exemptions from military duty and the payment of taxes on certain kinds of income from their own clergy.

Two decades after the church–state report, many of the same issues and dynamics that clustered about the relationship then are prominent again. The people of this country are going through a reluctant disestablishment of the church, and some groups of Christians, allied with the political Far Right, hope to roll back that disestablishment in favor of establishing a Christian America. So Presbyterians will need to speak forthrightly again, building on the following principles of church–state relations:

- **The state should not impose religion or enforce it upon citizens.**

- **Voluntarism in the public practice of religious beliefs is consistent with the law of the land and with Christian faith.**

- **An effective witness to Jesus Christ requires an unencumbered church . . . the church should not be obligated to the state.**

- **No one religion, in fairness to others, should seek to enforce its own moral standards upon others who do not share those standards or the beliefs upon which they are based.**

- **A person's religious beliefs should not penalize her or him in relation to society, nor should it place that person in a position of undue favor.**

Democratic Values in Times of Crisis

There have been times of crisis in our nation's history when the American people, gripped by eventful news but trapped in confusion have been forced to make major choices. During the second half of the twentieth century, we have lived through several of these times—McCarthyism, school desegregation, Watergate, the Vietnam war, the assassination of leaders, campus unrest, the Iranian hostage crisis, to name a few.

When the church has addressed the all-consuming concerns of such times, it has done so by offering guidance for responsible judgment in the crisis. The church's best responses to national crises have been fully contextual; they have come to grips with the facts being reported in the news media and discussed in people's livingrooms. At the same time, a social teaching has emerged out of a series of these episodes, emphasizing the kind of values that the American people must maintain during periods of confusion. The Presbyterian churches have spoken most helpfully when they have perceived the full tragic dimensions of a crisis and have spoken relevantly to those time-bound occasions in terms of transcendent values.

The greatest of these statements, many think, was "A Letter to Presbyterians." The Letter was issued by the General Council of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in October 1953 (and endorsed seven months later by the General Assembly) to provide a word of reasoned guidance in the midst of the "witch hunts" for communists led by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. "McCarthyism" gripped the country and, in its zeal to root out communists from positions of influence in all areas of life—politics, the movies, music, publishing, the press, academia, medicine—had trampled over constitutional guarantees of due process. The reputations of many Americans were damaged and even the innocent were often impugned; innuendo and circumstantial evidence replaced fact and proof as the currency of justice. Although many Americans were uncomfortable with McCarthy's methods, most were adamantly opposed to communism and could not reconcile the need to oppose communism with the desire to uphold traditional American freedoms. The loss of some cherished freedoms was seen by many to be a fair price for combatting communist totalitarianism.

The Letter was written largely by John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Seminary, then also the chairman of the General Council, and came to

be known as the Mackay Letter. Dr. Mackay was in turn inspired to draft the Letter by a sermon, "The Light from Beacon Hill," preached in the seminary's Miller Chapel by Professor Paul Lehman. He wanted to address both communism and McCarthyism through the categories of faith. In the process, he offered five foundational Christian social principles on the values of democracy.

The first of these principles rises out of Mackay's analysis of the events of the preceding three and a half years: "Treason and dissent are being confused," says the Letter. "The shrine of conscience and private judgment, which God alone has a right to enter, is being invaded. Un-American (note the ironic use of the term) attitudes toward ideas and books are becoming current. Attacks are being made upon citizens of integrity and social passion which are utterly alien to our democratic tradition." The Letter probes further: "They are particularly alien to the Protestant religious tradition which has been a main source of the freedoms which the people of the United States enjoy." Thus we are told that a social principle emanates from a theological one: religious toleration and religious liberty beget social toleration and liberty. Therefore, Christians who proclaim how much they cherish religious liberty must also work for the preservation of other forms of toleration. The straightforward teaching of the Letter is this: Dissent is not treason, and in a free society they must never be confused.

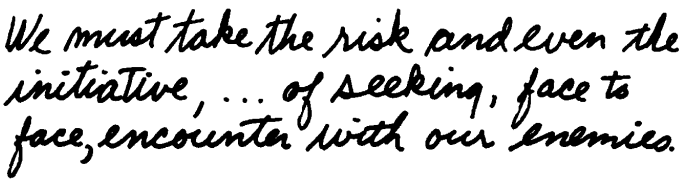
The second principle that the Letter put forward reads, "The Christian Church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every society and in every age." While we have touched on this teaching before, the way that the Mackay Letter articulated the proper relationship between the church and government is sufficiently clear and forceful to bear notice:

> While it is not the role of the Christian Church to present blueprints for the organization of society and the conduct of government, the Church owes it to its own members and to [people] in general, to draw attention to violations of those spiritual bases of human relationship which have been established by God. It has the obligation also to proclaim those principles, and to instill that spirit, which are essential for social health, and which form the indispensable foundations of sound and stable policies in the affairs of state.

This was perhaps the most concise argument for the prophetic function of the church ever offered in either branch of the Presbyterian church. It also went to the heart of the chief criticism of the prophetic role. To the complaint that the prophetic mode of address is unconstructive and negative, the Letter replied that it was not the role of the church to be constructive (to offer blueprints) but to assure the faithfulness of the government; just as it was not the biblical prophet's role to be king but, instead, to hold the king accountable to God.

Under the heading, "The majesty of truth must be preserved at all times and at all costs," the Letter put forward its third great principle of democracy: when it comes to truth, the end never justifies the means. Mackay found it particularly tragic that though communism was committed to a "philosophy of lying," "democracy, in fighting communism, is in danger of succumbing through fear and in the name of expediency, to the selfsame philosophy." Expediency is never to be deemed an adequate justification for falsehood or for withholding the truth. The long-term ramifications of such actions are too great. "People will become accustomed to going through life with no regard for rules or sanctities."

The fourth message delivered in the Letter was a reminder that "God's sovereign rule is the controlling factor in history." The import of this



affirmation relates to the ongoing debate about how much national defense makes for a secure nation. The Letter spoke of the ultimate futility of such a debate, saying: "That we have the obligation to make our nation as secure as possible, no one can dispute. But there is no absolute security in human affairs, nor is security the ultimate human obligation." The ultimate human obligation, in true Calvinist form, is to act "in accordance with the will of God."

The fifth social teaching inherent in the Letter to Presbyterians was that negotiation is the preferred way for persons committed to Christian values and democratic processes to solve differences—even with people and nations who do not share those values and commitments. "We must take the risk and even the initiative," reads the Letter, "of seeking, face to face, encounter with our enemies. We should meet them officially, whatever their ignominious record, and regardless of the suffering they have caused us." There is a great temptation to assume a position of moral superiority in human conflict and therefore to refuse to negotiate. But Mackay found that the Bible taught that this kind of positioning is inadequate and out of harmony with God's will, for "direct personal conference has been God's way with [humanity] from the beginning. 'Come now, and let us reason together' was the word of God to Israel through the prophet Isaiah."

In the coming years, Presbyterian General Assemblies would again repeat the themes enunciated in the Letter to Presbyterians. In the course of other crises, commissioners, both ministers and elders, would again perform "a distinct service of precisely the sort [for] which a free people looks."

Dissent and Civil Disobedience

The principle that dissent is not treason and is, instead, a necessary part of life in a free society was stressed repeatedly by the General Assemblies throughout the social upheaval of the 1960s. When students and clergy joined in demonstrations and "freedom rides" to protest racial segregation, the UPC General Assembly upheld their right peacefully to demonstrate. The Assembly stated its belief that the demonstrations, "while in some cases conflicting with local laws or customs, seem to be consistent with our Christian heritage, the Federal Constitution, and the moral consensus of our nation." Moreover, while urging demonstrators to "recognize the dangers to the civil order," the Assembly laid down a principle of support for those who, for the sake of conscience, participate in responsible, nonviolent acts of demonstration. (UPC, 1960, p. 335)

The PCUS further codified the Presbyterian churches' approval of acts of dissent in its 1965 statement on Civil Disobedience. It defined civil disobedience as "the open, non-violent and conscientious refusal to obey a law or laws, as a means of appeal to a higher authority, combined with the willing acceptance of the penalty" and affirmed that:

> The church exists to unite [human beings] by God's grace with themselves, with God, and with their fellows—to make them whole. Therefore, it should give the support of Christian compassion to any member who, following his [or her] conscience in obedience to the Word, engages in civil disobedience. (PCUS, 1965, p. 160)

UPC Assemblies of 1966 and 1967 affirmed the rights and responsibilities of student dissent and public protest as the Vietnam war intensified and, in response to quickened awareness of poverty, racism and urban blight, endorsed "democratic, indigenous community organizations which enhance the processes by which people, and especially poor people, can effectively participate in the solution of problems in housing, employment, and education."

The clearest support for civil disobedience in recent Presbyterian history was enunciated by the General Assembly of the UPC in 1969 in the context of the Vietnam war. That Assembly supported young men who conscientiously refused to participate in the war. It further recommended that the federal government provide a legally available option of selective conscientious objection to war in addition to the legal protection made available to those who oppose all wars. The Assembly stated:

> While granting the authority of the state, with its legitimate powers, we also acknowledge the freedom of the individual conscience under God which may lead a person, when he judges that the pretensions and injustices of the civil authorities endanger human welfare, to reject, ignore, or oppose the authority of the state. (UPC, 1969, p. 696)

Meanwhile, the PCUS Assemblies experienced annual struggles between supporters of "Law and Order" versus the majority who welcome constructive dissent. In 1969 the Assembly issued a strong statement recognizing the role of dissent in society:

> This General Assembly affirms its belief in the right of and necessity for conscientious dissent among all members of society, and its further belief that dissent is constructive and salutary when it does not deny the rights of others nor emperil those very institutions and structures it seeks to reform; and calls upon students and faculties to refrain from force or the threat of force in exercising that very right of dissent without which democracy would be a mockery and earnestly implores that they deny their support, both active and passive, to those who would resort to such force. (PCUS, 1969, p. 110)

The Church's Prophetic Function

When has the church played the role of prophet? In addition to its role in opposing McCarthyism and playing a significant role in the civil rights movement by decrying segregation and discrimination, the church has had other high moments of calling the nation to moral responsibility.

In 1970, in an emotional and conflict-ridden meeting, the UPC General Assembly adopted a firm position against continuing the war in Vietnam. The statement, "Not Lightly, But Under Grave Restraint," began with quotations from the Bible to establish the theological framework for the controversial position that would follow:

> Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. . . . Why will you die, O House of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn and live. (Ezekiel 18:31-2)
>
> Do everything possible on your part to live at peace with all [people]. (Romans 12:18) . . . his spirit fills us with power and love and self-control. (II Timothy 1:7)

The statement then spoke out of the anguish felt by commissioners as Christians and as Americans: "Like the biblical Israelites we feel the sharp tension between God's reconciling power and the momentum of national pride." (UPC, 1979, p. 883) But it went on to choose the side of peace rather than a peace conditional upon the preservation of honor. The General Assembly's position, which had been equivocal—we think the war is wrong, but there are problems with either escalation or withdrawal—was now unmistakable:

> The 182nd General Assembly (1970) of the United Presbyterian Church:
> 1. Declares its opposition to the continuation of military combat by the Armed Forces of the United States of America in Southeast Asia, particularly because the Congress has not declared a state of war with the government of North Vietnam.
> 2. Urges that, in the absence of a declaration of a state of war . . . , all military combat by U.S. Armed Forces in Southeast Asia be terminated. (UPC, 1970, p. 886)

There was more to the statement, but the Assembly had arrived at the point of prophetic certainty: this is wrong and we will oppose it.

Again, in 1971 and 1972, as the controversy over busing to achieve racial integration in the schools heated up, the Assemblies spoke in a prophetic way to resist policies that would scuttle public education in order to maintain segregated schools. The 1971 PCUS General Assembly declared itself "disturbed" by the creation of private academies to circumvent public school desegregation orders. The Assembly noted that there was a real danger that such academies would allow communities to avoid their responsibility to provide a quality education for all their children, regardless of race. The church added muscle to this position by calling it "inappropriate" for Presbyterian churches to allow their buildings to be used as sites for these "white-flight" schools. (PCUS, 1971, p. 95)

The 1972 UPC General Assembly tried to defuse the cross-district busing controversy by stating the case for quality education for all persons and then urged "members of local churches to exert influence in the public realm to attain quality, integrated education for all, which may in certain instances include transportation of students across boundaries of present school districts." (UPC, 1972, p. 1021)

The Preservation of Truth

What the Mackay Letter called the "majesty of truth" has been a rallying point for later General Assembly actions. If truth is essential to freedom, the free flow of information is essential to guaranteeing the truth. It was with this idea that the 1973 PCUS General Assembly expressed its concern over the excessive levels of secrecy practiced by some governmental agencies. This kind of concern, together with the fact that even the

The other side of the coin of freedom of information is the individual's right to privacy.

Congress had trouble gaining access to necessary information from the federal bureaucracy, led to the passage of the Freedom of Information Act.

The other side of the coin of freedom of information is the individual's right to privacy. The church has seen that one of the key elements of totalitarian repression is when the government has too much information and the people too little information for the good of society or for the maintenance of anything approaching objective truth. The repressive aspects of unwarranted government intrusion into the lives of its citizens, and the possibilities for an increase in the number and scope of invasions of privacy with the advent of the computer age, led the 1973 UPC General Assembly to adopt the Report of the Task Force on Privacy, which concluded:

> Today, in light of our theological and legal heritage, privacy must be safeguarded more specifically. This right needs to be developed in American law at a pace commensurate with the potential invasions of privacy made possible by changing technology and organizational practice. Nothing less than the quality of freedom is at stake in the effort to preserve areas of personal and associational privacy. (UPC, 1973, p. 535)

In the Letter to Presbyterians, the church was teaching that in a free society expediency and efficiency could never justify untruthfulness or the withholding of truth. Similarly the 1973 statement on privacy attacked the argument that indiscriminate information collection and sharing were justified by the standards of government expediency or business efficiency.

The following year, the UPC and PCUS both addressed the developing scandal of Watergate. The UPC framed its teaching along the lines indicated by the title of its statement, "Political Expedience and the Moral Crisis." The parallels between "Political Expedience" and the Mackay Letter are striking, as demonstrated in this excerpt from the statement:

> America, at an historical moment of great wealth and power, finds itself in a crisis of moral integrity and direction. The extent of political expediency in national life has been shocking, almost unbelievable to the American people.

> The very values of success, money, prestige, and power upon which America has depended are now exposed as the means by which the presidency and the inner councils of the national administration have been abused and corrupted. The very values that have been so pre-eminent are now the scourge of the American conscience. (UPC, 1974, pp. 619–20)

Again in Watergate, as in the McCarthy years, the national government or leadership had lost its moral base and had failed to uphold truth, freedom, fair play, due process and other cardinal virtues of American democracy at its finest. Moreover, the nation had allowed, perhaps even encouraged, its leadership to lose touch with those same virtues. Yet the church, once more, as in the Mackay Letter, sounded a note of hopefulness in affirming:

> It is the responsibility of the church to call ourselves and our nation to a vision and practice of righteousness. We speak out not in anger but in sadness. We speak out not in presumption but with humility. . . . we invite our people and all people of goodwill to join us in a self examination of our individual, corporate and national lives, to the end that we may change our ways and move toward moral integrity. (UPC, 1974, p. 621)

That note of repentance from the church, given the recriminations that abounded that spring, is poignant. It also represents a facet of church social teaching at its best. For here the church did not point the finger at an "other," but rather confessed that this is our problem . . . a social problem that all must help to solve. The church also recognized the depth of a tragedy while asserting the positive side of its faith: life does not have to be corrupt; God desires that we live in integrity with one another and in our national life. A starting point for moral integrity is the preservation of truthfulness.

Negotiations to Resolve Conflicts

Even as General Assemblies have endorsed negotiations in intranational conflicts, they have implicitly taught that conflict itself is necessary. Through conflict injustice is brought to light and people make a difficult transition to a situation of either increased or decreased social justice. Therefore, the church which seeks God's purpose should not oppose conflict per se, for that would be to close the door to the possibility of greater justice in human affairs. While conflict can be healthy, the church has been careful to argue that there are some ways of being in conflict that are evil or inappropriate.

A key theme over decades of General Assembly pronouncements is the churches' opposition to the politics of hatred. The church historically has stood against movements which utilize prejudice or hate to attain social goals.

The PCUS Assembly of 1947 began its history of civil rights involvement by issuing a statement directed at the kind of activities carried on by the Ku Klux Klan. The Assembly condemned all organizations and individuals whose aim was to hinder "any minorities in the exercise of their civil rights or to deny such rights on the basis of race, creed, class or color."

In the course of the 1960 Presidential election, both Assemblies confronted the religious bigotry that sought to deny John F. Kennedy's right even to be considered as a candidate on the basis of his Roman Catholic faith. The PCUS Assembly refused a request from one of its presbyteries that it take a stand against Protestants voting for "any Catholic" for public office. The UPC General Assembly, on the other hand, noted that it believed "that it is an act of irresponsible citizenship to support or oppose a candidate solely because of his religious affiliation." (UPC, 1960, p. 359)

After George Wallace was shot in an assassination attempt, the northern General Assembly declared:

> Murder cannot be permitted to become an expected risk in even the bitterest of campaigns for public office in America. Therefore, we call upon United Presbyterians and all Americans to reaffirm nonviolent modes of political activity and to make every effort to end violence as a means of political expression.
>
> We also, following God's will, deplore the killing of anyone, anywhere, for any reason. (UPC, 1972, p. 485)

In this action, as with all of the other actions above, the church was teaching that while conflict was both good and necessary, there were some methods—assassination, terrorism, kidnapping, intimidation, illicit manipulation of legal processes—that are intolerable ways of addressing conflicts. These methods, moreover, stand in the way of the true resolution of the matters and issues that divide people. By seeking to avoid a face-to-face confrontation with the other party, hate groups seek to submerge conflict. Any path but honest negotiation, in the church's view, amounts to a reversion to barbarism.

The key themes introduced by the Mackay Letter still speak to the democratic values Americans need to embrace in the midst of crises:

- **Dissent is not treason, it is rather a necessary part of life in a free society which seeks to improve itself.**

- **The church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every age and in every nation; the church must speak its conscience and urge the nation to faithfulness.**

- **Truth must be preserved at all costs, freedom depends on the free flow of information between government and the people and among people; at the same time the right of individual privacy is essential to the maintenance of an open society.**

- **Conflict provides the opportunity to realize a greater good, when the political process and political actors respect the rights and dignity of people and groups involved in conflict. There can be no substitute for honest negotiations to resolve conflicts over public policy.**

- **We believe that God is sovereign over history and stands in judgment of persons, events and movements. No human security or defense is ultimately secure. We therefore put our trust not in weapons but in God who is the only true security.**

Afterword

This concludes our examination of Presbyterian social teachings. Through them the church voices a compassionate and practical understanding of justice as the worldly distribution of love. Through these teachings the church shapes a social ethic that would attune church action and public policy to the liberality of the gospel and to a responsible civil process. To develop this social ethic, the church seeks to form the structures of consciousness as much as to reform the structures of society.

What the Assemblies have said, of course, should "not be regarded as universal rules or as some sort of twentieth century decalogue. Yet no conscientious Presbyterian should ignore the guidance of the General Assembly as representative of the whole Church," said the Church-State

Report. (UPC, 1963, p. 184) Presbyterian social teachings and our summary of them should be viewed critically. But critical analysis needs to be balanced by sensitivity to the prophetic honesty, moral reasoning and public relevance of these social teachings.

A church in the reformed tradition knows that humanizing change in established systems is necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose, and that such change occurs in large part through responsible public discourse and political activity. Therefore the church does not hesitate to call to account the powers of government, industry, technology, business, behavioral sciences, the professions and the arts, reminding those powers that they are not autonomous, that their power is often corrupted and wasted, and that new social needs and expectations call for constructive initiatives.

Calvinists characteristically acknowledge that the recovery of a living faith impels the church to *resist* social evils and to *cooperate* with government insofar as it works for peace, justice and the general welfare. Christians work with those who exercise power and those who struggle for power in ways that are responsive to human need. But Christians fight against pretensions and injustices that arise when power endangers human welfare. Christians pray that their own lives and the ministry of the church may manifest the loving justice of God rather than a love of cultural, political and economic idols.

The church also recognizes that each new social objective and governmental arrangement can only be provisional—i.e., both situational and tainted by sin. No proximate goals, political parties or particular policies are to be identified with God's transcendent purposes. Nevertheless, societies and people can move toward *shalom*, by mature political activity to attain a larger measure of justice and partially reconciled community. Faithful Christians do not resign themselves to despair when social hopes are frustrated or temporarily defeated by the principalities and powers of this world. Rather, Christians continue to participate in the social policy struggle with the sure knowledge that God's reign is already present as ferment in the world, stirring new hope and movements for freedom and fulfillment.

Index of Key General Assembly Statements Utilized in this Overview of Presbyterian Social Teachings*

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Common Affirmation on Global Hunger (UPC, 1979; PCUS, 1979)

*The complete text of these statements can be found in the General Assembly *Minutes* or in the annual General Assembly issue of *Church & Society* for the indicated year.

Economic Justice
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